

Critical Ethnographic Narrative Analysis: The Case for the **E** in CENA

Dr. Anna Kaiper

Institute for the Study of Adult Literacy

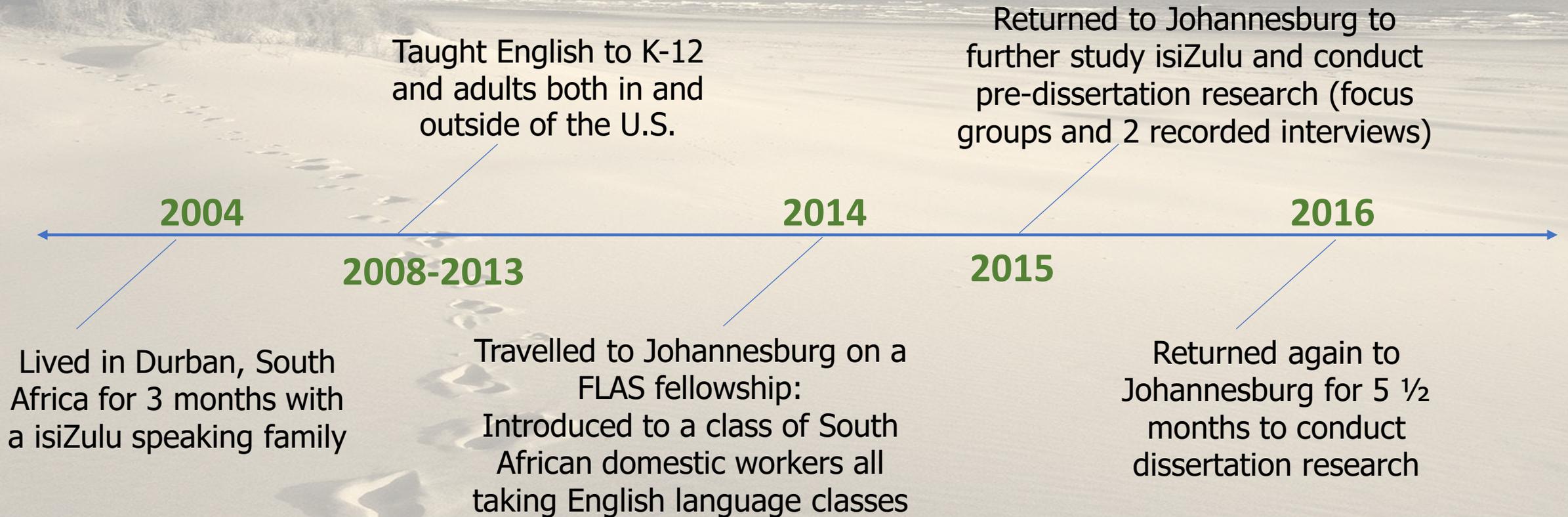
Goodling Institute for Research in Family Literacy

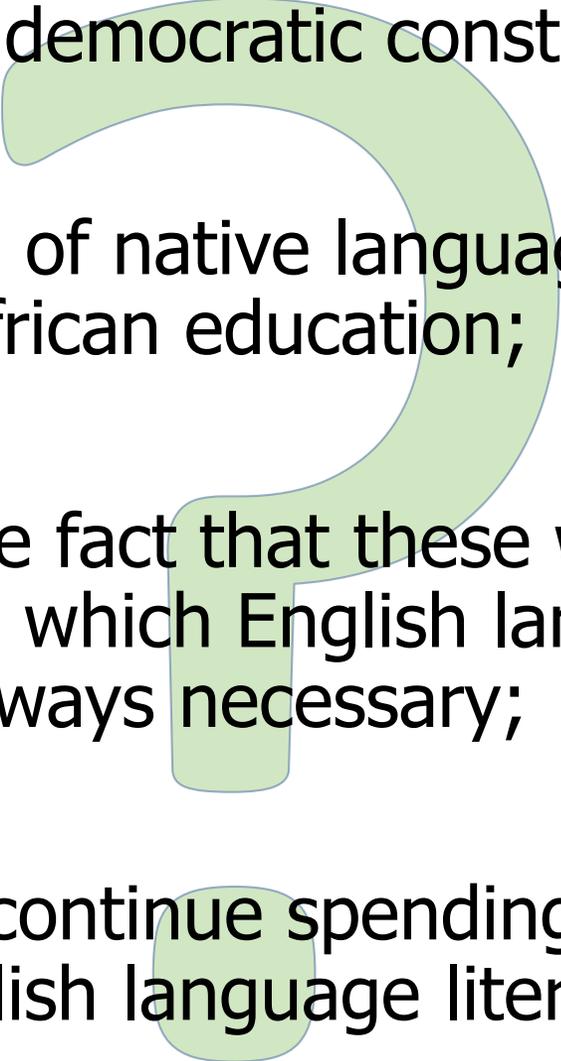
Pennsylvania State University

axk1222@psu.edu

Comparative and International Education Society Conference, 2019

A Brief Background of the Methodology



- 
- although eleven official languages were implemented in the post-apartheid democratic constitution;
 - despite the growing role of native language education in South African education;
 - and notwithstanding the fact that these women both live and work in environments in which English language literacy is not always necessary;
 - many domestic workers continue spending their limited free time attending English language literacy classes

The Data

Sites

3

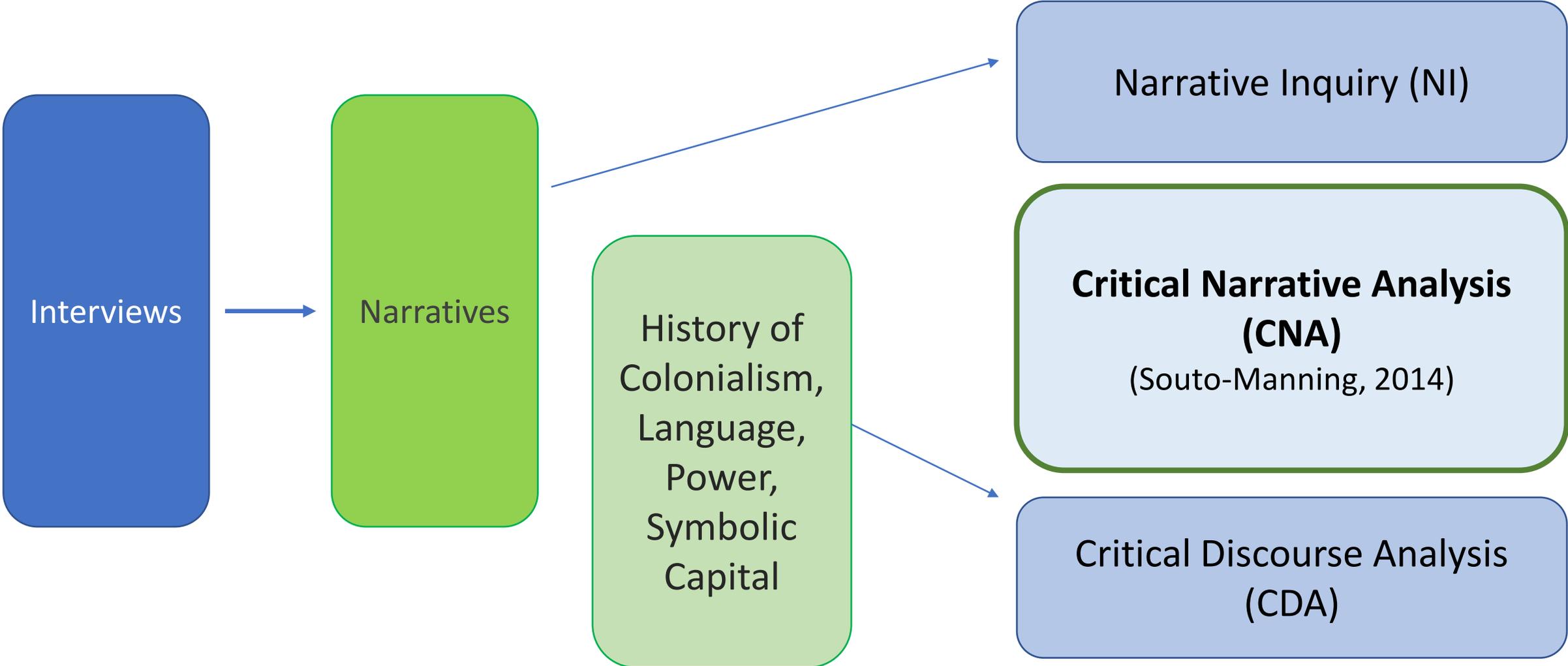
Interviews and Narratives
with Domestic Workers

28

Supplementary Interviews
with Researchers, Policy
Makers, and Instructors

7

Combined Methodologies



CNA unifies these two methodologies by allowing us to explore how people **“create their selves in constant social interactions at both personal and institutional levels, and how institutional discourses influence and are influenced by personal everyday narratives”**

(Souto-Manning, 2014, pp. 162-163)

And yet...

- My role as an “ethnographer;”
- My positionality as a white, young, American researcher;
- My experiences as a native English language speaker;
- My former life as an English language teacher;
- My understandings (or lack thereof) of South African language, education, and domestic work;

**ALL IMPACT BOTH HOW
THE NARRATIVES ARE
PRODUCED AND HOW THE
ANALYSES ARE MADE**

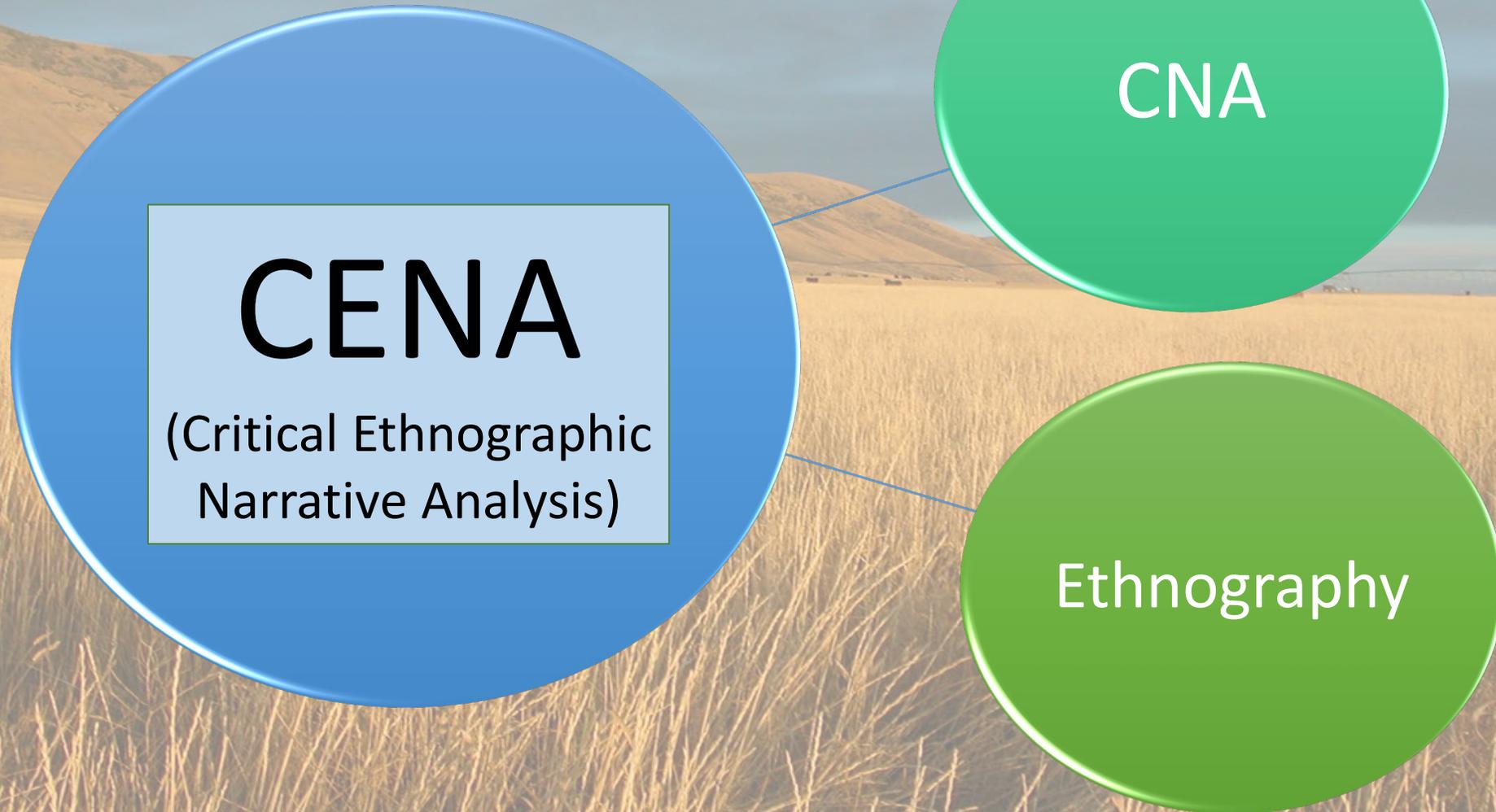
Moreover:

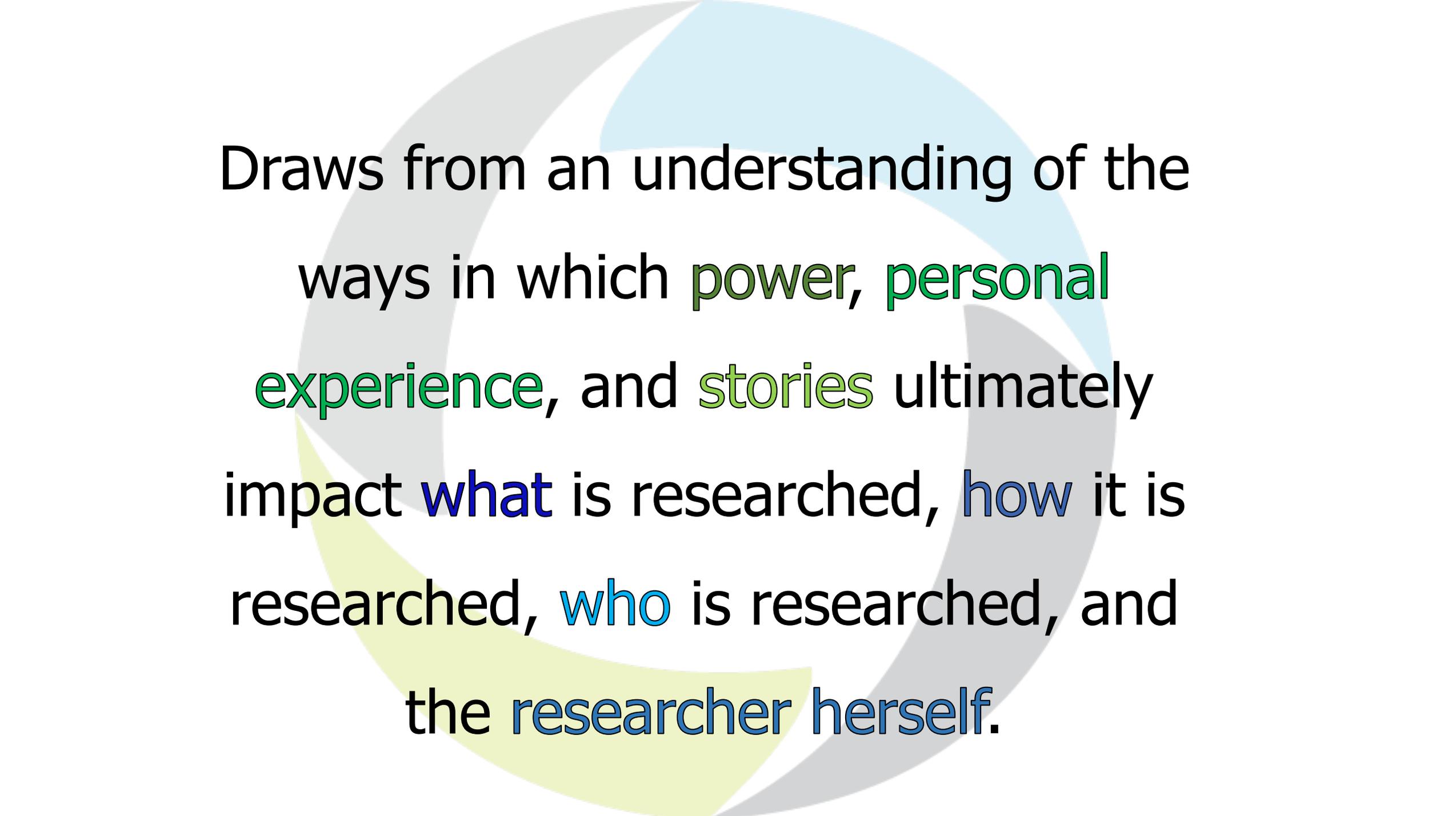
“Scholars have called for more ethnographies of literacy that not only describe cultural forms and situated literacy practices but also illuminate how these situated local practices are connected to larger sociohistorical influences, political processes, ideological questions, and power dimensions”

(Warriner, 2007, p. 201)



Consequently,





Draws from an understanding of the ways in which **power, personal experience, and stories** ultimately impact **what** is researched, **how** it is researched, **who** is researched, and the **researcher herself**.

CENA Exemplified

- Interview with **Zothile**, a 40 year-old domestic worker, and her 15 year-old son, **Amandla**
 - Been in domestic work for over **20 years**
 - **Mother** and **sister** were/are also domestic workers
 - Fluent in **isiZulu** and **Afrikaans**
 - Taken English language and literacy **classes** for **5 years**
- 

8 Z: To me proper English is to speak English 100%.

9 A: Yeah but you know, people who are English speakers make mistakes too.

10 Z: Yeah, I know that there's no master of English but at least- because even if the
11 phone rings when we are in the taxi, and you say, oh it's my boss, maybe I will
12 answer and people will laugh in the taxi and then you can't answer the phone.

13 A: Because you're embarrassed of your English?

14 Z: Yeah and then you say, oh the phone rang. When I get out of the taxi then I will
15 pick it up.

16 A: Even the taxis where everyone speaks Zulu? You're embarrassed?

17 Z: Yeah, one day I remember, I came from work and then one woman, her madam
18 phoned her and they speak English, neh? And then that woman was speaking
19 broken English and the people, they laughed at her. I didn't laugh at her and then I
20 just saw it and I felt so angry. And then I was so cross, I started crying. I said, why
21 did people laugh at her? Because she didn't go to school, she didn't go to school,
22 so she has to answer to her madam.

23 A: These were all black people and they were laughing at her?

24 Z: Yes, yes, yes. Black people, they laugh at you when you speak English and if you
25 don't know proper English they will laugh at you, I am telling the truth. They
26 don't care, they just laugh at you.

8 **Z:** To me proper English is to speak English 100%.
9 **A:** Yeah but you know, people who are English speakers make mistakes too.

- “Proper English” been widely discussed in literature (i.e. Bourdieu, 1991; Crowley, 2001)
- Drawing from my own understanding of the ways in which the term “proper English” is often used suggest linguistic hierarchies of the English language, I begin to confront this idea with Zothile
- Although I am trying to challenge problematic conceptions of “proper English” I am simultaneously using English to problematize this language
- I have previously supported Zothile in her English language learning by sitting in on her classes and helping teach grammar, spelling, and language use
- While I am “pushing back” on the use of English, I am concurrently reinforcing the need for English language use as a form of connection and communication

Consequently, Zothile Responds:

50 **Z:** I don't think they ask that question. I don't think they ask because they know that
51 lots of people speak English here in Joburg- especially here in Joburg, the people
52 they speak English. So they don't even ask where do you come from. Do you
53 speak English? or which language do you prefer to speak? No. If you speak broken
54 English they laugh at you, so that's why we're shy. So I said OK, let me go to
55 school to try to speak English proper. At least if I can put tenses together then I
56 know that everything will be fine.

23 A: These were all black people and they were laughing at her?
24 Z: Yes, yes, yes. Black people, they laugh at you when you speak English and if you
25 don't know proper English they will laugh at you, I am telling the truth. They
26 don't care, they just laugh at you.

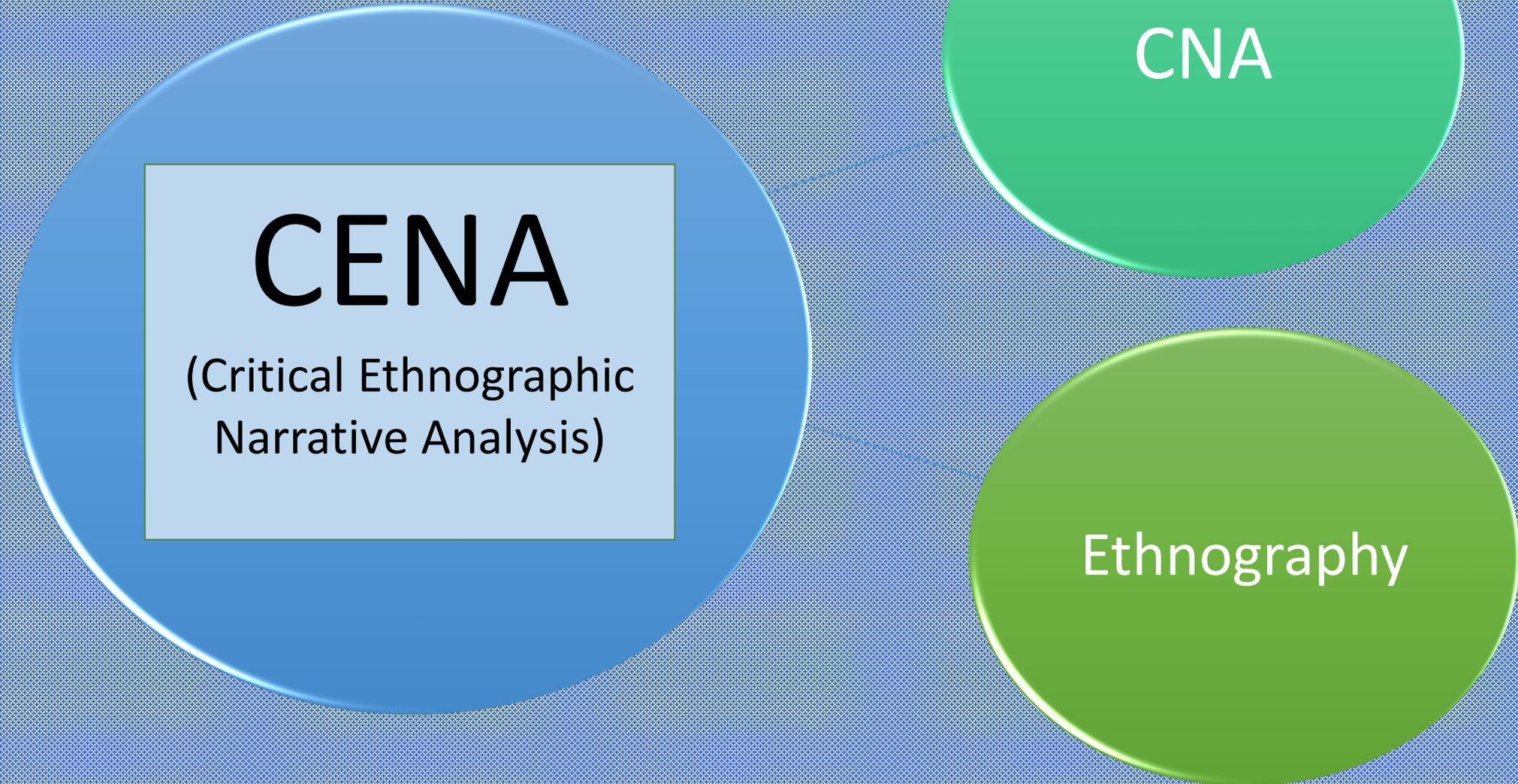
- Question derived from my own experiences taking the Johannesburg minibus taxis
- My question about the race of the passengers sparked the theme of the remaining portion of this excerpt involving race and language
- Numerous authors (i.e. McKinney, 2013; Prah, 2009) discuss how language is linked to race and social power in South Africa, BUT...
- It is only with my reference to race that Zothile begins to discuss how white people (different than "the Boers") will understand you when you speak "broken English" whereas black people will "laugh at you"

In Other Words...

While Zothile's narrative is essential in critically and discursively analyzing how her personal experiences link to broader histories of language and power throughout South Africa, also crucial to note are how my own (problematic) assumptions and experiences as a researcher and explicitly, as an "ethnographer," change and shape this narrative.



The Case for the **E** in CENA



Within the hybrid methodology of **CNA**, which



IN CONCLUSION

narratives being expressed.