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A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF THE PROFESSORiate AND THE  
EMBODIMENT OF EPISTEMIC COLONIALITY/WHITENESS: A CALL  
FOR A CONTEMPLATIVE APPROACH TO ACADEMIC FREEDOM

A Dissertation Presented

by

Faith V. Yacubian

to

The Faculty of the Graduate College

of

The University of Vermont

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
For the Degree of Doctor of Education  
Specializing in Educational Leadership & Policy Studies

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Dissertation Examination Committee:

Kelly Clark/Keefe, Ed.D., Advisor  
Jennifer Dickinson, Ph.D., Chairperson  
Brenda Solomon, Ph.D.  
Tracy Arámbula Ballysingh, Ph.D.  
Judith Aiken, Ed.D.  
Cynthia J. Forehand, Ph.D., Dean of the Graduate College

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## **Abstract**

Higher education in the United States has largely been influenced by colonial discourse. Archetypes of the academy, namely the professoriate, reflect and inhabit traces of Western or European schools of thought and colonial genealogy. Inspired by Black, Indigenous Students of Color (BISOC) at a small, private college in the Northeast, this writing aims to unveil the colonial lineage embodied by the professoriate through habits of whiteness. With the use of Critical Discourse Analysis and reflective anecdotes, observations are made about the professoriate's epistemology and academic freedom's role in reinforcing colonial epistemic principles, such as objectivity, mastery and autonomy. In so doing, critical questions about the epistemological tenets that prime the professoriate and academic freedom call upon more complex theories, such as sociomateriality, to rethink, or reorient, the professoriate.

*Key Words: professoriate, colonialism, epistemic whiteness, academic freedom*

## Acknowledgments

The African proverb, *it takes a village to raise a child*, has new meaning for me. I did not arrive at this place, of creating a body of work that I am fiercely proud of, alone. As I write the final portion of my dissertation, I hear the many voices of people who have been with me from the beginning. This work carries within it their wisdom that they generously imparted to me and compassion that they extended to me.

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## **Definition of Terms**

### **Neoco College**

This is a pseudonym for the college from which secondary data was extracted and the college where I teach.

### **Folx**

A term used to recognize gender as a limitless concept, rather than universally understood and accepted. It is also used to challenge Western duality, which presumes a fixed quality and bifurcation of genders.

### **BIPOC**

An acronym used to recognize the distinct experiences of Black and Indigenous persons within the term People or Persons of Color (williams, Owens, & Syedullah, 2016).

### **Epistemology**

Study of knowledge, or what we look to, to interpret and make meaning of an experience.

### **Whiteness**

The cultural norms, beliefs, and values shaped by Western colonial epistemology.

### **Student**

College-age (traditional or non-traditional) pupil that is currently enrolled and attending classes.

### **Professoriate**

The modality in which professors exist.

## Writing Conventions

### Verbing Nouns

Nouns turned to verbs, such as “artillerize,” are used intentionally to convey the way ordinary or unordinary objects and things can act on the world.

### Italicized Words

Italicized words signal either phrases, euphemisms, discipline terminology, or colloquial terms that can be found in both scholastic, instructional, and common text.

### Interchanging Voice

Throughout this work, you will notice the narration holding three first-person voices: “dissertation,” “writing,” and “I”. Certainly, my thinking plays a crucial role in what becomes part of the work, how scholars’ insights are incorporated, and how experiences are interpreted. The elasticity of voice, which an interchanging first-person voice communicates, is intended to demonstrate the relation between myself (“I”), the work being produced (“dissertation”), and the medium with which thought can be engaged (“writing”). All three are distinctive yet are constitutive of each other. The context – surrounding ideas, content, milieu – and rhetorical strategy at the time surely play a role in their presence being called upon. But, it would be imprudent to overlook the possibility that within each exists the other two.

### Capitalization of Adjectives

Capitalizing the first-letter of adjectives (e.g., White and BIPOC) emphasizes the salience of some descriptors, as in the case of a person’s or people’s identity or racial group affiliation. APA guidelines also suggest indiscriminately capitalizing descriptors.

### Letting It Be

In the *Introduction* of “Writing the Experiences and (Corporeal) Knowledge of Women of Color into Educational Studies: A Colloquium,” Armstrong-Carela-Martínez-Pérez-Ruiz Guerrero (2017) explained their rationale for leaving phrases, concepts, language, etc. unexplained. They write:

We encourage readers to seek information about some of the phrases we use that are not explicitly explained. This is how we’ve had to engage in most written word, forced to know and learn about white male histories for the majority of our educational careers, often with little guidance or prior understanding of dominant knowledge positioned as universal. We implore our readers to do the same as an act of solidarity—experiencing what Others have had to do to survive. (p. 2)

This dissertation recognizes, and risks appropriating, these authors’ response to colonial suppositions of Western knowledge as universal, accurate, and self-explanatory, instead of parochial, precise to some but not all, and needing lots of explanation. This dissertation does not intend to use the same reason for leaving ideas, content, or language

under-described. But, it does intend to show the effect of these women's insight on me as they contend colonial education.

As you read, you might notice transitions that introduce succeeding paragraphs and chapters. You may find sentences, thought patterns, more introspective sections unnerving, because nothing prepared you for the drop... the appearance of an unfinished thought... and experiencing discomfort in what has ordinarily felt comfortable. We likely have gained our sense of place, or location, from knowing our surroundings. As we will likely observe in this dissertation, the experience of *knowing* might give us a sense of place, but if we rely upon knowing where we are, we might miss what we can become. This is all to say that having a clear understanding of the writer's intention and looking for reassurance of one's accuracy are not always necessary. How you respond as a reader when you experience confusion or unmet wishful fulfillment might tell you something about how far you are willing to be changed.

## **Prelude to Chapter One: Grounding the Research**

In April 2018, a group of students, many of whom are students of color from Neoco College—a small, private college in the Northeast—led a “walk-out” in an effort to combat recent and continuous racism and xenophobia on campus. While the issues they raised acknowledged identity as intersectional (Crenshaw, 1989) (confluence of multiple typologies; i.e., race, gender, sexuality), students focused on racism and xenophobia specifically. The “walk-out” included specific action-items called “Demands,” which the students vocalized at the event. These “demands” were directed to faculty, staff, and administration and reflected the students’ experiences of oppression (power and privilege), which play a significant role in shaping the meaning that Black, Indigenous students of color (BISOC) make of their experiences in the classroom. To them, faculty’s failure to prevent or effectively address racism and xenophobia in the classroom invisibilizes BISOC in the classroom, which can lead BISOC to conclude that they are not the intended audience of their own education. One of the “demands” called for mandatory diversity, equity, and inclusion training for faculty. As the Chair of a Faculty Senate committee committed to diversity education, I made this “demand” the Committee’s priority for the 2018-2019 academic year. A subgroup of us spent the year writing a proposal for faculty training, the body of which linked faculty’s pedagogical complicity with exclusion and oppression with positional dominance. On March 25, 2019, the Faculty Senate approved the proposal. It is now Spring Semester 2020, and while there have been some professional development opportunities provided by the College, mandatory training is not one of them.

I am not convinced that training will sufficiently address the prominence of exclusion and oppression, in general, and racism and xenophobia, in particular, in the pedagogues' consciousness. Oppressive beliefs are not as easily trained-out of us as they were methodically transfused into us. Oppression is rooted in belief systems, ideology, and/or cultural values. It is multi-tiered, ubiquitous, and habitual. Scholars of social justice theory, such as Lee Anne Bell (2018), refer to oppression as pervasive, restrictive, hierarchical, and internalized. Oppression wields power and, as a discourse, it has epistemological consequences. For example, if the method by which I come to understand myself contends binary thinking as a viable strategy for categorizing matter, people, and ideas (e.g., inferiority/superiority), I risk minimizing or over-exaggerating my value to society. Oppression is self-justifying and is revealed in human attitudes, rationalizations, and behavior.

This dissertation enters where students at Neoco College have invited faculty to participate in civil discourse about the ways in which the professoriate (as a social system) comes to understand itself, and the social structure—academic freedom—that engenders that understanding. While specific attention will be given to the role of the professoriate at a Predominately White Institution (PWI), the dissertation is observing the professoriate as a situated concept, or contextualized. The writing aims to interrogate the root issues, of which the students' chants, stories, and "demands" are indicative. It aims to expose that which undergirds how faculty have come to know their identity and how whiteness informs that knowing as much as it informs the tenets of academic freedom. In turn, this dissertation serves as a context for rejecting, dismantling, and/or radically re-

envisioning and reorienting the professoriate to make strange that which it has grown familiar (e.g., faculty as content conveyers).

The preliminary research, out of which this dissertation emerges, includes secondary data gathered by a faculty-administrator during the 2016-2017 academic year. Faculty and students participated in in-person interviews and/or small focus-groups, in which the theme of diversity and inclusion in the classroom was made central. In an effort to maintain confidentiality, the person who conducted this unpublished college self-study will be referred to by the pseudonym of “Hoffman” and cited as “Hoffman, personal communication, 2017.”

Using data evades the trap of data sitting idle (Garcia & Mayorga, 2018), or logged in a warehouse of unsolved cases. My writing makes use of these data that could be rendered irrelevant when the notion of “present,” or the now, presumes distance from the past. These data yielded striking differences between faculty and students’ perceptions of “opportunities” and “barriers” of doing diversity and inclusion work (Hoffman, personal communication, 2017). Where students saw more roadblocks to diversity and inclusion work (including holding “difficult conversations” and “offensive speech” in the classroom), faculty saw more paths to the work (including “practical examples” of lived experiences versus theoretical abstractions) that can yield inclusive pedagogy and classrooms (Hoffman, personal communication, 2017). Between Winter 2018 and Spring 2019, these data were used for designing a variety of diversity and inclusion trainings for faculty, of which, on average, only a handful of faculty attended. These data have been idle for two years, though faculty have been invited to make use of

them. They are archived in some minds, forgotten in others, and were never encountered by the rest. The lack of obvious impact pulled me back, gave me time to pause and ask pointed questions about my profession: the professoriate.

What can the differences between students' and faculty's perspectives on *diversity and inclusion* suggest about their respective epistemic proclivities? How can poignant statements by BISOC about their classroom experiences be so easily sidelined by some or all of us? What has made it possible for us (faculty) to end our teaching days without having to retrieve the self that we entered the school with, while some students are constantly searching for the self that was dropped before entering their first classroom? If the students who were interviewed learned that their contributions did not produce alterations (e.g., professors confronting their pedagogical collusion with racism), would they regret having spoken at all? What are the discourses with which we, as faculty, interact with the students' interviews? What are the epistemological legacies that produce those discourses?

While reviewing the data and reflecting upon the "demands" from the "walk-out," I felt comforted by my own, albeit misguided, absolution, as my behaviors in the classroom were not among the ones criticized. I also felt bothered by interpreting what I heard as a personal exemption. It was not until I peered more closely at the profession that the students were naming, that I began to question my complicity with the issues that the students had named, and consider how seeking concession (i.e., being one of the *good Whites*), could be a criterion of collusion with *White Fragility* (DiAngelo, 2018), or fear of imperfection. What would allow me and other faculty to think of ourselves as



exceptions? And, is that attitude or viewpoint tantamount to the paradigm in which the field of teaching is constructed?

## Chapter One: Introduction

This dissertation tracks the resounding similarities between students' 2018 “demands” regarding diversity and inclusion in the classroom at Neoco College and recurring anecdotes by students. Both the “demands” and casual conversations address longstanding issues of marginalization, such as assimilation, tokenism, and lowered academic expectations, which can be observed in mono-cultural communities. Colleges, however, can conveniently obscure assimilation by calling it college acclimation. I see similarities between these students' concerns and research that analyzes the socialization, or assimilation, of marginalized graduate students who experience additional burdens that result from conforming to culturally and racially dominant standards. Felder, Stevenson, and Gasman (2014) stressed that a “racial socialization framework” (p. 25) is critical to understanding the challenges that African-American doctoral students face in pursuit of a doctoral degree. While paraphrasing Taylor and Antony's (2000) research on *stereotype threat reduction* and African-American doctoral students, Felder, Stevenson, and Gasman state,

...African American doctoral students feel pressure to respond to stereotype threats of not being able to meet standards of academic achievement and feel the need to prove themselves. Furthermore, the need to prove themselves often puts them at risk of responding to false standards that do not encourage their intellectual development. (p. 25)

Similarly, (Gardner & Barnes, 2007) proposed that “organizational socialization” (p. 271) is the methodology by which graduate students are acculturated or codified into a

profession. Drawing upon Van Maanen and Schein's (1979) description of graduate students' entrance into the practitioner's schematic, Gardiner and Barnes (2007) observe the role that organizational socialization plays in graduate students gaining academic capital. By obeying the edicts, dispositions, and skills of the profession, of which graduate students will be expected to perform as practitioners, they are adapting to expectations that are labeled culturally and racially neutral. If, however, those expectations have been framed by the dominant culture of the profession, the graduate students are adopting, or substituting, standards, to which their own cultural and racial canons were made subordinate. This process of acclimation, which Marxists might argue is bolstered by neoliberalism, can, at best, stifle one's intuitive cultural and racial growth and, at worst, cause these graduate students to internalize supremacist values, beliefs, and canons. Fanon (1982) would likely warn graduate students against freely accepting such internalization, for it can result in the *colonization of one's mind*.

### **Situating the Researcher: Reckoning with Epistemic Injustice**

Colonialism is not satisfied merely with snaring the people in its net or of draining the colonized brain of any form or substance. With a kind of perverted logic, it turns its attention to the past of the colonized people and distorts it, disfigures it, and destroys it. (Fanon & Philcox, 2004, p.149)

Colonialism is akin to European/Western imperialism and nationalism (Fanon & Philcox, 2004; Said, 1979; Searle-White, 2001) and exists on scales; for example, geopolitical (Grosfoguel, 2002; W. Mignolo, 2012) and taxonomy of identity (Bonds & Inwood, 2016; Quijano, 2000; Wynter, 2003). It includes seizing a space and peoples by

seeing land and humans as property/possession-able and normalizing the discourse of dualism, such as property/proprietor (Glenn, 2015). It also produces “relations of domination and submission which turn the...indigenous man into an instrument of production” (Césaire, 2000, p. 42) and construes them as ordinary and natural. One form ownership takes is forced assimilation by, for example, an acculturation process or mental sterilization that beckons Eurocentric modernity (Baker, 2012). In his unpublished essay titled “Situating Modern Western Education within the Modern/colonial World System”, Baker (2009) describes the way Eurocentric modernity is “... contained within the self-consciousness of the west as the most advanced civilization on the planet” (p. 2) with the most comprehensive, thusly universal, knowledge. In this way, Eurocentric modernity presumes itself immutable and can neither recognize its egregiousness nor repent for its marginalizing inflictions.

Colonialism reasons that settlement is normal, which allows manipulation to appear innocuous; however, those invested in the normalcy of their power can, without concern for recourse, construe their decisions as justified and virtuous. The epistemological veracity of colonialism can be observed in the allegory of education, for which Baker (2009) might argue needs to start with modernity as a pedantic, or dogmatic, concept in education “...in part because *the knowledge and practices that comprise education are themselves constitutive of the civilizational project of Eurocentric modernity*” (p. 5).

As an avid student of liberatory scholarship, I am deeply connected to critical analysis, by which knowledge is deconstructed. Throughout my undergraduate and

graduate studies, I built a more contemplative learning process, for which I credit critical race/diasporic theories, post-structural theory, feminist theories, post-colonial theory, and decolonization scholarship. As frameworks of thought, they showed to me my learned-complicity and collusion with Western European's persuasive, albeit distorted, take on history (Loewen, 1996; Marks, 2015). Distinct stages in my scholastic development sparked a philosophical and moral commitment to emancipatory learning (Freire, 2000; H. Giroux & McLaren, 1986; hooks, 1994) and frameworks in which liberation is conceived, such as post-colonialism.

Post-colonial theory destabilizes power by refusing to let it alone and making it account for itself. Post-colonialism examines the roots and pervasive, often elusive, presence of colonialism by inviting the effects of colonialism to drive analysis. In this way, post-colonialism takes a position, or “theoretical stance” (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018) against injustice. Post-colonial theory likely disorients coloniality, as it does not let coloniality live unsuspectingly. This makes post-colonial theory interventional, in that it troubles one of the ways that epistemic supremacy is operationalized (e.g., it slides by critical analysis without having to examine its investment in moving unconcernedly).

As a student of cultural anthropology and social justice education, I am deeply troubled by modern forms of coloniality that imbue *epistemic injustice* (Fricker, 2009) and continue to invest in Eurocentric hierarchies of knowledge that privilege White supremacist “relations of signification (cultural, representational, political, and judicial) that are inextricably entangled within everyday capitalist relations of exploitation” (Monzó & McLaren, 2017, p. xvi). The regulation of people's realities by

indiscriminately concluding that White realities are more accurate and significant, and can exist decontextualized from their lineage, leads me to wonder about the role of colonial discourse and White epistemology in endangering particular knowledge and knowers.

## **Methodology**

This dissertation enters at the convergence of colonial discourse and historiography of whiteness to examine the professoriate's unique way of knowing, or episteme. Through a post-colonial framework of thought, this dissertation will use a reflexive orientation to minimize an attitudinal presumption that writing about *the problematic* is shielded from the problematic. Critiquing colonialism does not prevent me from using a colonial disposition of superiority to call attention to an issue when the act of *attention calling* could be rooted in *better truth telling*. This dissertation will use an explorative model of writing, whereby the amalgamation of literature, stories based upon real encounters, introspection, and analysis will illuminate arguments. If a solution to the argument becomes observable by the reader, may that be interpreted as a limitation of the writing, not a fault of its methodology – Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA).

CDA studies the way language, symbols, and discourse interact with social problems and politicizes analysis, as it offers an “explicitly critical *approach, position or stance* of studying talk and text” (Delgado Bernal, Burciaga, & Flores Carmona, 2012). CDA posits that social issues are best understood by examining the interactions between society and discourse. The contact between society and discourse becomes a lens for reading colonialism as both a process of nation-making and an episteme of supremacy.

CDA leverages discourse engagement to hyper-examine rather than uncritically reproduce colonial compulsory logic, or compulsive *cognitive imperialism* (Battiste, 2013). For purposes of this research, CDA will be used to unfold the discourse of colonialism to reveal the episteme from which it originated and observe its effects, especially on the modality of the professoriate. For example: If European colonization is the offspring of 19<sup>th</sup> century European Enlightenment, which prioritizes scientific knowledge, or empirical knowledge over *testimonio* knowledge (Delgado Bernal, Burciaga, & Flores Carmona, 2012), sensing-knowledge (Rendón, 2014), and cultural-familial knowledge (Yosso, 2005), then what is the archetypal educator that emerged as a consequence of that prioritization? And, what can a professor's performance communicate about the colonial episteme that made such hierarchy of knowing possible?

As a writing technique, CDA might reveal an epistemological discourse within my writing process. This dissertation aims to demonstrate the value that discourse analysis offers, when detecting relationships is pivotal to noticing the effect of concepts, such as epistemology and coloniality, converging. Just as decolonization is the act of freeing colonized persons from a colonial logic that insists their intrinsic inferiority, and causes in-articulation of pre-colonial subjectivity (Akena, 2012; Bhabra, 2016; Bhabra, Gebrial, & Nişancioğlu, 2018; Corntassel, 2012; W. D. Mignolo, 2009; Smith, 2012), it is my belief that CDA is an act of decentralization—of removing the researcher as the central speaker and witnessing emerging ideas, critique, and queries that are produced at the convergence of colonial discourse and the professoriate.

CDA is useful for undressing the language of colonial discourse that scaffolds whiteness. The theory of post-colonialism offers a similar disrobing. Its scholars offer a unique unveiling of that which is invisible—dominative power. In *Feminisms Without Borders*, Chandra Mohanty (2003) critically scrutinized dominant, Western scholarship that establishes itself as the authorial speaker, designating the *Other* (the dominant's contrast) as voiceless. Mohanty's argument interrogates the notion that subaltern knowledge can be explained by dominant discourses, by which the subaltern has been constituted. In so doing, Mohanty shows how categories, such as "women," became multiple and situated versus established only through Western constructs of gender and power. By juxtaposing non-Western feminisms with Western feminisms, reality is understood as being of many versus being of one. Scholars and communities, alike, move from prescribing uniformity, which serves to homogenize a people and culture, to understanding reality and meanings ascribed as products of ways of thinking, rather than true in of themselves. Mohanty's critique here is critical to research that uses dialectical thinking in deciding what needs knowing, or what needs questioning, such as how might discourses in dialogue contribute to the decolonialization of truth?

CDA is heavily influenced by post-structuralist arguments that examine how humans are explained by systems in place that are designed to create order (Foucault, 1994). By conversing with literature about colonialism, whiteness, and epistemology, a less territorialized and more contextualized examination of coloniality might offer a more thorough analysis of how colonialism is embodied in whiteness and is as *performative* (Butler, 1988, 2006) as it is ideological. Precursory literature has demonstrated the need



for analyses that decenter narratives of colonialism as an episodic phenomenon—monumentalized in time and space—to witness how colonial-epistemology (e.g., monetarizing knowledge) is embodied in and permeates U.S. higher education (Andreotti, 2011; de Oliveira Andreotti, Stein, Abenakew, & Hunt, 2015; de Sousa Santos, 2016; Kerr, 2014) and more specifically the professoriate. CDA invites my writing to observe how discourses, when in a discursive relationship, create that argument. Instead of stating what “is” (the professoriate *is* a colonial construct), CDA intervenes upon research that claims something as non-contextualized and non-paradigmatic. By doing so, it recognizes the role that power, position, and framework play in discourse and the “...*role of discourse in the (re)production and challenge of dominance*” (van Dijk, 1993, p. 249). As a methodology that decenters Western thought, which presupposes the world as static and universalize-able, my writing seeks to recognize that the criteria of “knowing” is as unique as the people theorizing the criteria.

### **The Writing Style**

This dissertation is written as a dialogue between storytellers, be they renowned scholars, activist-writers or students, or myself. For example, vignettes will be dispersed throughout the paper to identify conversations in which an encounter occurred and led to a shift, a moment of clarity, or a new relevance. Vignettes, which start and end with a horizontal line, are also used to mitigate students becoming absent or ignored by the colonial logic of autonomy, by which my own education has been shaped. The vignettes are semiotic in that they reveal how I have come to understand concepts, ideas, and queries that shape the dissertation’s argument. They are written reflexively (where the

writer, her encounters, and meaning-making are integrated), channeling auto-ethnographic methodology. They are memories that writing, reading and thinking call over. The writing might evoke confusion or irritation for readers who seek continuity or uninterrupted thought. And, it could also provide ground for readers to enter another conversation (e.g., how cultural values in which sequencing, continuity, and linearity are essentialized and influence that which becomes knowable). There are moments when the writing appears more like an internal monologue, pausing along the way with allegorical vignettes that are doing the thinking with me. In a way, these stories decolonize me from colonial-ways-of-rhetoricizing, in which the subject/writer and object/content of the dissertation are discrete and static.

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#### Vignette #1: Un/invitation

I do not recall receiving an invitation, yet my role grants me certain assumptions: that my name on students' course schedules secures a permit to *settle* onto them, as though they are abandoned or unkempt land. In 2017, students in one of the courses that I teach told me that I "earned" my position and that I "deserve their respect." I asked them what *earning* means to them and whether that narrows the conditions of deserving? The premise seemed flawed. Does living in poverty give people the credibility of speaking with authority on the topic of classism? Do students who reject institutionalized education not deserve my respect because they have not earned a position that gives them authority to speak? What are the attributes of "deserving" when the premise of "earning" is not a universally held value nor is it only contextualized within a neoliberal motif?

Why is “deserving” a thing, and why is it reserved for an education model that mirrors obedience training? What does “deserving” mean in the context of the “uninvited” (Viray, personal communication, 2018)? And, do the terms (*deserving* and *uninvited*) hold different meaning, assuming that they retain relevance, when my thinking and the students’ presence and voice have never left one another’s side? If the voice that speaks any given idea and writes any given sentence is not of a single person but of many voices embraced, effort used to locate the split or separation between students and me is replaced with effort to watch for emerging ideas and questions in the collective.

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The voices of the *margin* (Hill Collins, 1986; hooks, 2000) are writing history despite dominant culture forcing silence. The framework of thought that I am using, namely post-colonialism, matters to students’ stories holding relevance and shaping my thinking. In this light, my job as a researcher, whose privilege grants her the opportunity to pursue a doctoral degree—the leading criteria of a profession (professor) that this dissertation confronts—is to pay attention to how the students’ voices that I claimed have inspired this dissertation, become ignored or peripheral. Can my ears hear the exact moment when students’ voices become filtered through my eyes and mind? Might the signs of an “invitation” to engage with students’ voices also be a dis-invitation to listen? If being invited to listen is predicated on the listener agreeing to being altered—questioning the very design of their profession—then being able to listen is less about receiving the information than it is about being willing to be changed by what is being said.

This writing might appear distracted or even chaotic. The readers should know that entering this dissertation is hazardous if the premise of viability requires the writers' expertise. This dissertation attempts to confront the way that my thinking has been customized to create colonial *mind-fields*, analogous to minefields. One way this is accomplished is by naming the writer, or me, as ancillary to the voices that are disconcerted by the continued colonial attitude that keeps the profession of which they speak protected from deep critical analysis.

This dissertation intends to honor how the call for research can be fermented well before the researcher has determined the topic, as it has for me. It also intends to notice the ways in which life experiences call upon theoretical frameworks to analyze those life experiences within a particular context. The writer's biases, then, uncover the writer's ambivalence to or awe of the topic and the life experiences, of which the topic is made. Writing becomes a way to process that bias—ignore or become enveloped by preexisting text that compels me, in this case, to write about epistemology and use a methodology that identifies its meaning-making power. CDA invites researchers to de-centralize themselves as the truth-tellers and pay attention to voices of discourse, be it scholars, researchers, or students. In doing so, the truth-tellers and the methodology become co-authors of the research, as opposed to being reduced to data informants.

My role as the writer is to listen for the argument that materializes as discourses interact with the students' authorial voices. Instead of presenting the writing and interpretations as void of conflict or free of error, this dissertation assumes itself fallible, even as it attempts to represent students' voice truthfully. It closes the gap between the

isolated researcher and the students who have already orated this story and are onto another edition. And, it opens space to doubt an actual separation between the students and researcher and a centralized voice.

This writing takes van Dijk's (1993; 1995) description of CDA a step further from recognition to listening to discourses in conversation and analyzing a topic. Listening allows me to watch for the epistemological argument being made, and notice my contributions of interpretation to the conversation. For example, by situating an archeology of whiteness (a derivative of the post-structuralist philosopher Michel Foucault's (1982) *Archeology of Knowledge & The Discourse on Language*, beside feminist, post-colonial thinkers, such as Karmala Visweswaren (1994), we might notice whiteness as its own discrete episteme and not confined to a specific time nor space. As has been illustrated, CDA can do more than showcase discourses conversing; under certain circumstances it complexifies the assumed banality and benevolence of certain concepts, such as the professoriate.

### **Effects of the Writing Style**

The writing style of this dissertation calls forward oversights. Inadvertently, the writing can under-account for colonial values that pretext the writer who is customizing voice-overs in the absence of transcription—students' exact words—and the meaning that the words intend to carry. What does this "absence" do? Does it create a separation between the students and me? Or, might the criteria that I use for identifying autonomy confirm an inherited, habitual and/or inscribed colonial way of knowing? One way to address this, besides leading with analysis, is by writing in a way that does not make

excuses for incomplete, partial, biased interpretations while agreeing with the possibility of being myopic.

Wanda Pillow's (2003) critique of reflexivity as methodology exposes the possible arrogance in writing that poses itself free from the problematic, yet the solution for other shortsighted methodologies. Pillow saw this as an opportunity for researchers to recognize the effect of "assumptive knowledge embedded in reflexive practices" (p. 177) on what gets theorized and named as critical content, and what meaning is made of analysis. And, it could lead to minimizing my complicity with narrow criteria of validity towards which I turn to legitimize (Lather, 1993) my propositions. As Lather wisely noted, chasing a validation that is rooted in "normative framings of validity in the human sciences" (p. 674) can prevent contact with knowledge that exists beyond that paradigm (e.g., "spaces of constructed visibility" p. 675). Writing that is discursive versus writing that prepares for confirmation checkpoints, or seeking security from others' agreement, is prepared to move alongside students' voices, but it does not prevent me from rushing past what they say. The more introspective moments in my writing might appear out of line, but perhaps they signal a dialogue in real time between students and me—a faculty member who can couch her dispensations as justifiable because there are under-examined latitudes like "that's just the role of professor." How convenient.

### **Topic Under Examination: The Professoriate**

What allows faculty-freedom to exist estranged from students' socio-cultural spaces, in which identity and power are emboldened? And, what role does higher education's academic freedom play in the fraction between faculty and student? When a

professor who presents and identifies as a White cis-woman argues that her speech should not be censored, might that imply (amongst a few enormities) a pre-inscribed separation, or line of demarcation, between students and faculty? What are the epistemological premises under which students' comparable academic freedoms are built? Are students' rights to form their own opinions, to act in discordance with faculty's arguments, and to protest institutional policies their academic freedom? In a dominant culture, in which *white logic* (Bonilla-Silva & Zuberi, 2008) (i.e., individualism, proprietarianism, and infallibility) is pervasive and elusive, we owe students an approach to academic freedom that responds to the impact of such logic on them.

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#### Vignette #2 – Decentering White Noise

Faculty Colleague: "... it is White folx who need to address institutional racism because we're the ones who created it and benefit from it — and/but how to do that in ways that don't continue to center White voices and epistemes?"

Me: I alone should not answer this question. In the absence of building a relationship, I am left name-dropping folk/x of color who have informed my thinking. It is true that when I speak, I hear their voices. I credit women of color in particular for their epistemic corners, which allow me to break from the line of thinking that keeps me in-line. But, might it be possible that the interest in giving credit is motivated by something far more indecent and dishonest, such as presenting oneself as good and thus the exception—the *right* and safe White.

I find myself searching for the “right way,” be it theoretical, contemplative, or experimental, even though the concept of “right” is narrow, and myopic, and it mutes. Nevertheless, the “right way” will exonerate me. But, I am not looking to be pardoned. I have transgressive tendencies that tug on my childlike curiosities. I like the question “why?” And, I dislike my process of arriving at answers that do not account for the symbiotic relationships that can be heard in my voice and words. My ability to form answers is dependent on others. Like pine-sap, they cannot be flicked off. I continue in this pattern of making contact and noticing what it brings into being. There is no context for the “right way”. And, nothing of/for which a center can be built.

### **Research Questions and Researcher’s Dialectic**

The research questions, primed by previous thinking of this dissertation, intend to dive into the interior of the professoriate and understand how it is. Some of us might know a bit about what it does. The questions intend to keep the scope of the dissertation specific enough for identifying particular, not total, lived-ness. And, they are as follows:

- What are the epistemological tenets that prime the professoriate and academic freedom?
- What can critical discourse analysis reveal about the relationship between coloniality, whiteness, and the professoriate?
- What type of decentralized relationship do the answers to these questions form into existence?

Writing that is intended to make a change assumes that the writer has the substance, the syllabic context (as opposed to sophisticated context), and righteous



persistence for imagining a solution. This research's aim is not to provide a "solution" to the professoriate, as the very nature of solution-based research presumes that *better* exists and can be retrieved from current material. That said, the interaction between the reader and the writing could lead to unintended resolution. Instead, this writing intends to use the very conditions and "tools" of the system that manufactured the professoriate to destabilize and "turn back on the system" (Mills, personal conversation, 2018); in other words, inviting knowledge to "disturb" (Kerr, 2014, p. 96). This research desires to expose (in order to denaturalize) the conditions by which the professoriate is made axiomatic, or self-evident, and, thereby, protected from examination and interrogation. What might we find by excavating the ways in which the professoriate embodies colonial epistemological emblems, such as autonomy and proprietorship? What are signs of the colonial episteme in action?

### **Research's Relevance: Academic Freedom's Colonial Hangover**

Countless articles published by The Chronicle of Higher Education, Inside Higher Ed, and American Association of University Professors (AAUP), have analyzed "the academic" and its freedoms (Hofstadter & Metzger, 2012; Williams, 2016), tenureship, and responsibility in the university's shared-leadership model. A considerable amount of research, parceling the faculty's role as researcher, administrator, and instructor in U.S. higher education, has epitomized the professoriate as a critical governing body (Fanghanel, 2012). Minimal research has been dedicated to viewing the professoriate from its historico-epistemological residency and implications, thereof, on academic

freedom. This research resides in spaces that bring history to the present. Academic freedom is one of those spaces.

Academic freedom serves as the handbook for faculty's participation at a college. It provides guidelines that implicate how power is used in the classroom and by administration. Academic freedom has also served and continues to serve to protect academics whose scholarships and teaching alarm college administrators, including trustees.

Historically, and presently, academic freedom has supported pedagogues for whom higher education was not originally designed (e.g., women and persons of color), yet whose teaching and content were likely inspired by experiences of marginalization in and out of academia. Educators of color, for example, have their own lived analyses of marginalization that could inform their chosen disciplines of study, (e.g., Women's Studies, LGBTQ Studies, and African American Studies), or frameworks that shape those disciplines by which teaching those disciplines are shaped (e.g., Feminist Theories, Queer Theory, and Critical Race Theory). Similarly, BISOC have their own lived analyses of marginalization that inform their ways of knowing and disciplines of learning (Delpit & Dowdy, 2003; Tatum, 1999).

Academic freedom is also reminiscent of colonial logic in a few distinct ways. Academic freedom presumes that the professoriate needs a greater power to legitimize and speak for the profession. In that presumption, it neutralizes colonial discourse that gives the professoriate relevance in the form of authority. What about the discourse of

academic freedom allows the professoriate to be presumptively disconnected from an analysis of colonial thought?

Academic freedom is historicized under a socio-political paradigm of *governmentality* (Foucault, 1978) and philosophized as a conduit of colonial thought, which organizes knowledge, as it does humans, within a pre-established hierarchy. The AAUP's *1940 Declaration of Principles of Academic Freedom and Academic Tenure* ("1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure | AAUP," n.d.), for example, was designed to leverage the profession of the professoriate. This transgressed paradigms that framed education as methodologies alone (e.g., didactic versus heuristic) to establish the purpose of education. During the late 1800s, faculty's discretion was judged against the church's judicious teachings, donors' beliefs, and state legislative powers (Williams, 2016). These institutions of power – church, state, and capital – controlled faculty. For example, "[i]n 1895, Dr. Edward Bemis, a Professor of Economics and History, was dismissed from the University of Chicago after his sympathy with the cause of striking workers was reported in the press" (Williams, 2016, p. 26). The birth of the AAUP's *Declaration* was facilitated by a prominent case that resulted in the removal of faculty at the University of Utah. The nexus of that case galvanized scholarly freedom as freedom-from unscholarly criticism and power. As was then as it is now, the pursuit of truth could not be tamed by unlearned, "amateur" (Williams, 2016, p. 28) persons. Such an opinion could only be made from the gullets of "liberal scientific method and Enlightenment ideas about the nature of knowledge" (Williams, 2016, p. 28) that repurposed education.

There are compelling arguments, under which the AAUP's *Declaration's* principles are made, for protecting the professoriate from powers that could threaten education's fidelity. One of those arguments condemns the infiltration of external politics and internal governing questioning the relevance, reliability, and motivation behind faculty's work. Supreme Court resolutions, such as *Garcetti v. Ceballos*, 2006, on the applicability of First Amendment Rights can assist colleges in clarifying what constitutes public speech from employment-based speech. One of the challenges, however, is parceling employment-speech from citizen-speech, as in the case of *Adams v. University of North Carolina – Wilmington* (2011) ("Adams v. University of North Carolina–Wilmington, 640 F.3d 550 (4th Cir. 2011) | AAUP," n.d.). As an academic community, cases that have been brought to local and national courts are used to justify the freedoms granted to academics. Some of these cases reflect local, state government oversight of academia. For example, in 1969, University of California Board of Regents, along with former Governor Ronald Reagan, attempted to remove Dr. Angela Davis from her teaching position due to her political alignment with the Communist Party (Marquez, 2014). While Dr. Davis was not fired at the time, she was removed from her position a year later for her "unprofessional conduct and uncivil rhetoric in critiquing institutional racism and sexism" (Reynolds, in press). Not overlooking important cases, such as Dr. Davis', the undergirding thinking of academic freedom that canonized its relationship to knowledge and the effect of that relationship could benefit from closer reading.

Academic freedom has served, to a great extent, a particular truism of education. During the time of the AAUP's *Declaration's* advent, John Dewey, a highly profiled

philosopher of education, believed that the scholar's ultimate job is to ascertain and disseminate truth (Williams, 2016). The socio-political context of education as a service to modernity and philosophy of education as semiotic of colonial ideology, coerces the profession of education into society's and the nation's progression, or development. In its own words, the AAUP's *Declaration* states, "In the earlier stages of a nation's intellectual development, the chief concern of educational institutions is to train the growing generation and to diffuse the already accepted knowledge" (American Association of University Professors, 2015, p. 7).

The AAUP's *Declaration* (as stated in *AAUP Policy Documents and Reports 11<sup>th</sup> ed.* (American Association of University Professors, 2015)) states that the purpose of education is "a. to promote inquiry and advance the sum of human knowledge; b. to provide general instruction to the students; and c. to develop experts for various branches of the public service" (p. 7). Dewey's explanation of the scholar's task is analogous to the three pillars named in the *Declaration*. These anchors set in motion a particular codification of the professoriate while normalizing, or ahistoricizing, Western epistemology by omitting it as a guiding influencer. If the professoriate's ultimate role can be deduced to fulfilling the goal of education, then it seems fair to inquire the extent to which the professoriate is complicit with colonial understanding of knowledge as quantifiable; students as blank-slates or capricious knowers; and proficiency as the necessary precursor to being a valued contributor to society.

As a reinforcing agent of colonial ways of knowing (e.g., perceiving knowledge as a resource to be extracted and exploited for human progress), the AAUP's *Declaration*

presumes that the professoriate's relationship to knowledge is eminent to one's legitimization or stature in society. Wilson's (2016) review of the AAUP's *Declaration* in the article titled "AAUP's 1915 *Declaration of Principles: Conservative and Radical, Visionary and Myopic*" provides ample reflection for exposing the epistemic foreground that shaped academic freedom. Wilson quoted the *Declaration* from *AAUP Policy Documents and Reports 11<sup>th</sup> ed.* (2015) and wrote,

If education is the cornerstone of the structure of society and if progress in scientific knowledge is essential to civilization, few things can be more important than to enhance the dignity of the scholar's profession, with a view to attracting into its ranks men of the highest ability, of sound learning, and of strong and independent character... The first condition of progress is complete and unlimited freedom to pursue inquiry and publish its results. Such freedom is the breath in the nostrils of all scientific activity. (as cited in Wilson, 2016, pp. 2-3; p. 6).

During the early 2000s, academic freedom in U.S. institutions of higher education became a source of public and political discourse. In 2006, the *Association of American Colleges & Universities* (AAC&U) issued a statement on "Freedom of Expression and Educational Responsibility," which was meant to guide the interpretation of AAC&U and the AAUP's 1940's "Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure." Academic freedom lives in the same discursive spaces as philosophized arguments about the nature of education, including critical analyses of capitalist ideology (e.g., students as human-currency).

Academic freedom also lives in two protected systems – U.S. law and culture. The First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution and *academic custom* or *academic common law* (Finkin, 1973) prevent public and private institutions from using disciplinary recourse on matters of teaching and learning when either/both are relevant to the subject matter and, depending on the court adjudicating a case, do not produce a “hostile” learning environment in the classroom (*Bonnell v. Lorenzo, 2001*) (Euben, 2002). Considering the level of ambiguity with regards to hostility’s bearings on a case, a few implications can be drawn: that “academic custom” is not already hostile and is the trusted measure of appropriate behavior in the classroom. Might this also suggest that academic freedom is only as meaningful and purposeful as the administrators and courts that determine what is and is not an “academic custom”? Academic freedom, then, is an unfixed document, its power and that which it yields are at the will of the interior guardians of the college and exterior guardians of society.

Customs and law are embedded in systems of knowledge, from which power is derived (Foucault, 1980), that creates institutions, such as the prison and church (Foucault, 1995). That power reinforces the knowledge that was used to build its system, which determines what is and is not socially appropriate including sanctions (e.g., confession) for violating social norms that the law upholds. Likewise, education is a system of knowledge, or discourse, that has its own genealogies, epistemologies, and socio-politico-cultural contexts. Although this dissertation’s focus is education within U.S. higher education, the theories of education are entry points for understanding the effect that particular systems of knowledge have on education’s discourse. Critical

education, for example, emerged from critical theory, which was influenced by Europe's Frankfurt School scholars, and critical pedagogy (Freire, 2000). Critical education has the power to transgress dominant educational paradigms (hooks, 1994) just as it can transgress dominant culture and make teaching an act of solidarity with, for example, racially and socio-economically marginalized persons. As a paradigm for pedagogues, critical education can be used to examine academic freedom as a system of knowledge that has its own epistemological discourse.

Critical education, as a discourse of praxis, cannot be solely credited for academic freedom being called for questioning; it deserves identification as a notable framework in shifting the conversation from education as an innocuous search for truth to a polemical argument about education's hegemonic design (Gramsci, 1970). In this work, academic freedom's relation to colonial discourse provides the footing for analyzing the professoriate's *embodiment* of colonialism's episteme.

**Problematizing the hierarchy of knowledge.** If a solution to the hierarchy of knowledge is redistribution of power, does the notion of equitable distribution assume that the problem is a leveling issue alone? Is the solution also inferring that power is absolutely benevolent and that the harm is in having less of it? Such a solution disregards any prior history between power and the human—past interactions by which the human is coached into feeling inadequate or fearing adequacy, or feeling shameful or fearing the credibility of one's body. Sonia Renee Taylor's (2018) notion of *radical self-love* in *The Body is Not an Apology* is helpful for understanding self-deprecation as the transference of an oppressive social conditioning—to doubt one's capacity of being whole and,



therefore, worthy of being loved fully. In the absence of such critique, an inference can be made that any negative encounters with power are due the human's mismanagement of power, rather than indicative of the human and power's past relationship. Perhaps the problem with power-imbalances is not one of inequity but rather one of missed intervention. What would happen if an inequitable proportion of oppressive-power were given to students? What might they be inclined to internalize? Where would intervention need to occur if students' first instinct with power is to doubt their worthiness of being in an empowering relation to it? The response to a hierarchy of knowledge might include a redistribution of power, but it ought to also include noticing what is happening at the point of lived contact and uncovering what the knowledge is made of. The critique of knowledge as manufactured and partial aligns with critical educators and decolonial scholars who analyze education within the context of neoliberalism (McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2005), or human marketization, modernity, coloniality, and proprietary culture (Baker, 2012; Quijano, 2000; Mignolo, 2012).

If the conditions of producing knowledge as undeniable, as in the case of dominant and centralized knowledge, involve a process of omitting, distorting, or marginalizing realities that create knowledge in their own right, under what premise is the process of dominant knowledge-making operating, and whose realities run the risk of being unknown? Whose knowledge is presumed knowable, reputable, and rendered "capital" before the criteria of knowledge is configured? Whose body is considered the vesicle of truth? Critical scholars McLaren (1995) and Monzó & Soo Hoo (2014) contest that when educators do not acknowledge the impact of colonialism on the discipline of

students and education, students' dissension risk being shaped by the very disciplinary power by which their freedom was seized. For example, when students ask for permission to leave a class in an act of protest ("walk-out") and faculty grant them that permission, the students' act of resistance might appear more like an internalization of their subordination. And, if they exert their power without requesting permission, and intervene upon the status quo, they risk mimicking the colonizer's relation to power. By leaving the class, faculty's teaching becomes futile. Under this premise, students' acts of resistance cause faculty to become silent (a momentary reversal of power).

The power of colonialism is its scale (from nation-making to state policing to students' empowerment) and its epistemic quality, through which faculty normalize assessment, define and idealize the "learned-student," and use psychoanalysis to problematize students' decision-making, perceptions, and cognitive dexterities. The power of colonialism lives in the way it offers a detour to education, and by extension the professoriate, from reentering the mangled gravel that it just paved. As a form of reflexivity, returning to the thought-places where education was laid provides the professoriate with a feedback loop to understand itself differently—from a cog in a machine to a wondering thinker. By reflecting on theories that likely influenced the professoriate's philosophy of education and shaped values of academic freedom, the professoriate and academic freedom can build a more reflexive orientation to themselves, engage in a curiosity about themselves, and take part in their reinvention.

## **Literature Review: Theories of Education**

In this section, the writing will offer discursive conversations between scholars, theorists, and philosophers of education and power. It intends to offer context for former, current, and emergent critiques of education. By using critical discourse analysis, the troubling of education will have a vocally decentralized quality.

**Progressive reformers.** Historically, in the United States, education's goals have evolved from work-preparation (factory model) to a holistic, life-model. Culturally, the United States places a high market value on educated persons. One school of thought of education saw schools as a machinery, molding humans into the type of workforce that would benefit the local and national economy. Other ancillary aspiratory desires would follow, such as private property. The marketization of education, however, has not existed without challenge. Scholars and practitioners are questioning the legitimacy of capitalism's typology and interrogating the notion of education as an immunization—a measure to minimize the surplus of idiocy that burdens society. As the U.S. education switched from a pure *national integrity* issue to inciting critical thinking, one's location within an unequal society likely accelerated or delayed one's critical thinking skills and shaped the content about which to be critical. As we have noticed since the populous' unrest with war (e.g., anti-Vietnam War protesting in the 1960s), critique of cultural dominance (power-over the people) has propelled students to combat cultural, institutional, and governmental forms of oppression (Ferguson, 2017). As students intellectually artillery their minds and fight against oppression outside of the college

scene, they might be more inclined, at least more equipped, to identify the oppression within the training grounds of higher learning and to identify themselves as activists.

The goals of education, as Noam Chomsky proposed (Brown-Martin, 2012), reflect the thinker's "purpose of the educational system"—one's framework for interpreting the world guides one's principled definition of education's purpose. For example, Progressive Reformers, unlike Progressive Educators such as John Dewey, believed that education ought to be a mechanism or apparatus for industrial success. As an engineering process, education served to mold students into competent skill-workers, who would contribute to societal productivity/progress. As Ravitch & Viteritti (2003) stated, "[Progressive reformers] insisted that a democratic society needed men and women who were equipped for their future vocational roles" (p. 20). Progressive Reformers perceived education as a *tool* for training students. In other words, education could build "human capital" for economic propagatory reasons. One compelling example that supports education as a training station for monetary ends is the evolution of women in education. After the 1960s, women in the U.S. replaced traditional "women fields" for subjects that would yield economic profit, such as law, medicine, and business (Becker, 1993, p. 19). Noah Webster, an educational philosopher, valued the way education can improve the nation at large (Ravitch & Viteritti, 2003). He believed that a society that is mono-cultural is *good* for social progress and *good* for the individuals residing in that society. Unlike Webster, Thomas Jefferson believed that education begets individual freedom; likewise, Robert Hutchins believed that education is meant to honor one's agency and capacity to create/recreate society (Ravitch & Viteritti, 2003). Comparably,

Chomsky believed that education ought to recognize individual will. And, to that end, educational institutions would act as a foundation for students to learn how to, as Chomsky says, “learn on their own” (Brown-Martin, 2012). This challenges the naturalization of instructional, or didactic, education by recognizing the value of heuristic learning.

The above theorists of education essentialize a particular value or approach to education, which can be useful for justifying one’s teaching and learning methodologies. That being said, grounding conversations of education in teleological finites, which explain the purpose of education and not the frameworks of thought that examine the epistemology of the explanations, risks overlooking the influencing forces that shape education and its effectuality.

**Critical education.** In *Pedagogy and the Politics of Hope: Theory, Culture and Schooling*, Giroux (1997) referenced The Frankfurt School in Germany as one of the leading radical educational sites of social development theory. Scholars and researchers, such as German-American philosophers Erich Fromm and Herbert Marcuse, examined the way dominant economic-political platforms affect societal institutions, such as education. Inspired by The Frankfurt School’s critical analysis of power, critical education draws upon critical theory to study the role of power in knowledge production. For example, critical education theorizes the role of the educator in the context of U.S. and British socio-cultural-economic-political paradigm, by which neoliberal and neocolonial ideas are produced (Baker, 2009; hooks, 1994; McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2001; Freire, 2000). Western values, principled in *human capital* and economic

proliferation (Becker, 1993; Schultz, 1963; Weber, 1976), seed education in a plot that is fertilized by power, which when directed towards domination, breeds oppression. This is most prominently evidenced in U.S. education, in which an unspoken archetype of “student,” against which all other students are measured, exists and from which outliers are made discernable and discardable. Ballysingh (2016) made the argument, through close observation of Stanton-Salazar’s (1997) work, that BIPOC (Latino students, in her case), traverse an “American educational system that is based on White middle and upper-class values” (p. 154) and must develop, therefore, a mechanism for addressing the discrepancy between the dominant cultural-values and their own. They must develop a prosthetic “network” (p. 154), with which to navigate college. What is the *network* that encircles faculty, of which critical educators are arguing that a new *network* is needed?

Critical education and critical pedagogy are frameworks in which the pedagogue can 1) identify how her role and consciousness are complicit in oppression and 2) excavate her colonial-consciousness that is rooted in her teaching. In other words, conduct a critical anthropological excavation of her profession, for which educational anthropology is a paradigm, and observe the emancipatory potential of education (Villenas, 2019). Postman and Weingartner (1969) observed that anthropologizing the educator entails close examination of the behaviors, rituals, and attitudes held by that identity, or as Kenneth Boulding (1965) observed, the “social self-consciousness” (as cited in Postman and Weingartner, 1969, p. 4). Anthropologizing, in this sense, is a type of optical inversion that allows the professoriate to see itself as it is, without its student-proof armor and within its artificially designed habitat—the classroom. By doing so, the

professoriate is better positioned to see from the out-of-body, which is now freed from its host. Postman and Weingartner argued that the job of schools is to equip students with the most “‘subversive’ intellectual instrument – the anthropological perspective” (p. 4).

Although some philosophical and anthropological theorists have offered paradigmatic structures for analyzing education under critical discourses, the professoriate and the particular socio-temporal-space from which it can operate, has escaped acute examination. Consequently, analyses of education have minimized and obscured the way the professoriate acquiesces particular types of critique, such as perceiving itself as separate from the students. It is in the separation that the nexus of the professoriate reveals its power—repeatedly surveying students from a distance and setting the groundwork for students to use the professoriate’s criteria for surveying themselves and each other. In the classroom, this manifests as students accusing other students’ opinions of being misguided or students staying in their seat regardless of feeling hungry or the urge to use the bathroom. There is an eerie parallel between the disciplinary function of anticipative supervision and Foucault’s (1995) analysis of the panopticon, which philosopher Jeremy Bentham designed in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The panopticon was created to control prisoners’ behavior in order to maintain order in the prison. The guard-post was positioned at the center of a large open room and was encircled by prisoner cells. The intention of this structure was to regulate prisoners’ behavior by giving them the impression that they were being watched. For Foucault, the apparatus of the prison as a disciplinary function served as a social model with which humans could discipline each other and themselves (e.g., human surveillance system).

The sheer fear of the guards' reprisal replaces the guards, and emotion acts as the disciplinarian. Likewise, the power of the professoriate lives in what it can make students do from a distance.

The professoriate operates within social narratives; be they progressive or digressive, and educational ideologies; be they *production, reproduction, or transformation*, and academic identities or subjectivity (Fanghanel, 2012, pp. 6-9); be they students, faculty, or administrators. Critics of dominant, Western culture argue that transactional, or utilitarian, education privileges professional prestige, a flourishing economy, and compulsory consumerism at the expense of social, economic, environmental justice, and civic responsibility. This dissertation intends to trouble Western ideologies, by which the professoriate is contextualized. More specifically, this research aims to examine the properties or dispositions incubated by colonial/White discourse and its embodied epistemological consequences. While professors might not refer to students as a conquest, the profession knows itself within the topological duality of superiority/inferiority. As Willoughby (2017) postulated,

...contemporary education often continues to obscure and perpetuate colonial legacies (Dei, 2010; Dei & Simmons, 2010). Here, teacher and taught become proxies for the colonial master and subject, recapitulating their relational power dynamics in educational curricula and practices. Education, thus, continues to be dominated by the living legacies of these on-going histories...such as alienation (Fanon, 1952), race, and racism (Gilroy, 1987; Mac & Ghail, 1988;



Pajaczkowska & Young, 1992), continuing to negatively impact educational experience and attainment. (p. 237)

Critical scholars of education, as noted previously, challenge the logos by which instructional methods privilege professionalism, discipline and skill-ery (like artillery) that mimic the world of elitism, conformity, and production. An insurgence of rethinking the academy occurred post-WWII when institutions realized the role that they played to support a heterogeneous public (Ferguson, 2017). This was a significant step in making institutions socially and politically conscious. Students too have been at the forefront of questioning power, especially during the 1960s, during which time a geo-politicalized identity (Ferguson, 2017) was an encouraged form of dissent. The role of the “college” as a conduit of 20<sup>th</sup> century activism dates back to the 1960s where students’ dissenting voices (e.g., Berkeley University 1964) directed intellectualism towards social action (1967). Subversion, according to Sampson’s analysis of student activism, has functioned within college campuses and classrooms to bring critical inquiry to bear on foundation[al] power “upon which the society is based” (p. 2). Sampson argued that while neo-liberal values are easily identifiable in education, colleges also offer students a laboratory for creating politicized knowledge that serves social justice. As Sampson stated, “The pendulum appears to be swinging toward the side of more active participation in the day-by-day business of national and international decision making” (p. 3). Student activists who have witnessed administration’s allegiance to the U.S. “working force,” interpret administration’s ambivalence, at best, as villainous. Consequentially, these students may look to faculty as their comrades in education. It is no wonder student activists express

such grave disappointment when we fail to show-up beside them and then use our benevolence to vindicate our absence.

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire (1970) described dominant education as a “banking system,” which aids the production of an “objective” *truth* as the knowledge to know. In this model, knowledge lives “outside” of students’ lived experiences, or as Freire suggested, “...a person is merely *in* the world, not *with* the world or with others; the individual is spectator, not a re-creator” (p. 75). Within this “banking model,” likened to “positivism” or the methods of achieving certainty, reliability, and *Truth* through empirical research and analyses, predetermined knowledge is disseminated in the classroom. The students’ relationship to that knowledge, the possible meanings that they are attaching to that knowledge, and their complex realities that make the classroom a negotiable space are made subsidiary through the banking model. Freire asked educators to become more intimately invested in questioning through “problem-posing.” This provides students with a tool to challenge knowledge that claims universal applicability and non-negotiability. Educators and students are more likely, then, to stay in close contact with the effects of “objective” knowledge and the rigidity of its standards. Freire’s critique of the “banking model” and the teacher-student relationship, from which teachers dispense, or “deposit,” information into students, will become useful to this dissertation’s argument of epistemic coloniality.

Shapiro and Chatterji (2011) critically observe the legacy of the academy as a space for social change, ethical relevancies, and forging meaningful relationships with people’s movements. By linking ideological and theoretical systems of post-colonial,

post-structural, and feminist discourses to education, Chatterji and Shapiro positioned the academy as a space where rethinking education can explore the boundlessness of its potential, while expanding the possibilities of action research and emancipatory research. As their writing questions dominant paradigms of the academy, a deconstructive relationship to education reveals knowledge as malleable and, thus, able to be redefined for liberation and local needs. By bridging the academy with local injustices, their scholarship demonstrates an intervention, by which the *human-capital* model of education is replaced with a justice model. And, as an intervention, it challenges structuralist arguments of education, and by extension the professoriate, as finite and therefore predictable. This brings the research back to Chomsky's (2012) focus on the meta-analysis of education, particularly its purpose within a socio-geopolitical context.

What are the possibilities of education when knowledge that generates technological and capital "success" is replaced with knowledge from local resistances that hold legitimacy irrespective of Western measures of reliability, universality, and validity? For the purpose of the dissertation, discourses about power will take precedence as the research forms an argument about the professoriate, or as Chatterji and Shapiro (2006) might argue, the role that Western-thought plays in stabilizing and sterilizing the professoriate by dividing the professoriate from local knowledge and the efficacy of BISOC and Black, Indigenous faculty of color (BIFOC).

The naming and examination of the professoriate was started by BIFOC. Their experiences being undervalued as faculty and observations of institutionalized whiteness render whiteness the professoriate's pedigree. They report having their scholarship,

teaching methods, and research criticized for their lack of objectivity, or criticized for using a subjective voice (Monzo & Soo Hoo, 2014), which White faculty are able to deflect and have their voices perceived objective and, therefore, valid and reliable. Drawing upon Adichie's (2009) delivery of "The Danger of a Single Story," the danger of White stories lies in the power given to White voices of being the only valid engineer of culture, history, and knowledge.

In *Teaching Critical Thinking: Practical Wisdom*, a text dedicated to critical analysis as intervention, bell hooks (2010) discriminately addressed the function of colonialism in U.S. education as the engenderment of racism, classism, and xenophobia in pedagogy and knowledge production. As she stated in the chapter "Decolonization,"

critical pedagogy encompasses all the areas of study that aim to redress biases that have informed ways of teaching and knowing in our society... After the militant push for racial equity led to desegregation and the changing of laws, black power activists were one of the first groups in this nation to call attention to all the myriad ways education was structured to reinforce white supremacy, teaching white children ideologies of dominance and black children ideologies of subordination. (p. 23)

hooks credits "black power activists" and feminists for offering an alternative way for people, in the former case children, to see themselves in education. According to hooks, the critique of dominant identity, coupled with consciousness movements (e.g., reparations), led to Black, Indigenous folks/x of color, women, and working-class (and

the intersectionality therein) peoples to reinvent their identity in accordance with their own realities and take-up space they were originally denied.

## **Conclusion**

The literature on education, the systems that implicate education, and theoretical frameworks of education call upon faculty and students to question 1) how the surrounding forces that produce their role and function in education operate and 2) observe what that operationalization causes. The literature also points to epistemological inquiry to facilitate critical questioning. Chapter One ends at the arch of this dissertation. It sets up the scope and scale of dissertation, from which Chapters Two through Four take their lead.

Proceeding chapters will magnify the network between epistemological discourses of colonialism and whiteness and argue for an acute and interrogative examination of the professoriate's embodiment of epistemic Whiteness. Incidents of pedagogical Whiteness will reinforce assertions of Academic Freedom's complicity in epistemic Whiteness. Simultaneously, it will provoke into existence a necessary re-arrangement of the professoriate whereby concepts like student, education, and knowledge can exist ambiguously and hold multiple meanings at once.

## **Prelude to Chapter Two: Epistemology, Performativity, and Colonial Discourse**

### **Epistemology**

Michel Foucault's (1995) metaphor of the panopticon in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* is useful for thinking about the ways in which an episteme—conditions of knowledge—can become a personal surveillance system, by which human behavior is methodically calculated. The *biopolitical* describes the processes by which life becomes an object to be managed, as it explores the apparatus, or “dispositifs,” that define and organize subjectivity. Organized within practices of power, dominative discourses, such as capitalism and its rationality of production, function within and also produce the biopolitical arrangement of life. *Governmentality* is an avenue through which the biopolitical creates disciplinary relationships between law and ‘processes of life’—the body, identity, sex, and the family. *Governmentality* marks the shift in disciplinary approaches of control and the acquisition of power. Specifically, it is a rearrangement within an institutionalization of domination, where self-regulation, or self-governance, replaces power and the methods of surveillance. Different domains, or apparatuses, such as schools, prisons, and family, become operational and functional for the purpose of controlling life, maintaining a particular social order and upholding a particular logic as reasonable, whereby a particular subjectivity is made ideal and reproducible.

In *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, Foucault (1994) argued that order, which resides in contemporary relations, looks at the shifts in the typological organizing of thought, knowledge, and power. During the Western 17<sup>th</sup> century, as scientific-order and positivistic explanations of the world's order replaced

belief in the magical or superstitious, reasonability (rationalism) gave rise to the functionality of a “right” way to be and “right” way to interpret reality. The organic structure of being links recognizability, and the signs used to evidence a thing as such, with the *conditions* under which a thing becomes known. An educator, for example, recognizes herself as an educator by performing the role and receiving benefits for appropriately embodying its characteristics and habits, including accepting the cultural value attributed to her role vis-à-vis students. A hierarchy of worth is immediately imposed upon the student and faculty relationship, which cements the foundation of axiological and epistemological supremacy. The power of such hierarchy lives in its ability to exist elusively. The power of power is in its ability to slide under the radar of educational discourse.

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### Vignette #3: Epistemic Whiteness

After weeks of listening to faculty colleagues, across races, respond to students’ of color frustration with micro-aggressions in the classroom, I sent an email to the Faculty Senate President and the Academic Provost of the College expressing my discontentment with our responses to students’ articulation of pain that they are experiencing in the classroom. The following is from that email:

*The White sense of self is tightly intertwined with Western principles of order & control, proprietorship, and perfectionism (to name a few) and values of individualism, positivism and modernity (to name a few). These principles and values appear in dominant definitions of "professionalism." Might we*

*unconsciously-unintentionally or consciously-intentionally (and everything in between) regulate students by asking students to discipline their emotions, cognition, and behaviors to align with an overarching investment in the aforementioned principles and values? Students of color have been asking us to reflect upon this, and many more questions. What will it take for all of us to listen?*

*Still today, we operate within-and-against colonial canons and Western epistemologies. All of this leads me to question (echoing Dr. Patricia Hill Collins' (2000) work in *Black Feminist Thought*) the following: how do we account for White values and principles in what and how we, as faculty teach and engage with students? What role does Academic Freedom play in "accounting" for these values and principles? I'm inclined to look to Collins for answers. In her own words:*

*Oppressed groups are frequently placed in the situation of being listened to only if we frame our ideas in the language that is familiar to and comfortable for the dominant group. This requirement often changes the meaning of our ideas and works to elevate the ideas of the dominant groups. (p. vii)*

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What type of necessary disturbance, or necessary noticing, can studying epistemology invite and cause faculty to doubt? Epistemology proposes that knowledge can maintain oppression within the construction of *truth*. For example, colonialism holds



its own epistemological sensibilities, such as truth and time, being universal rather than relative. Episteme, or knowledge, reflects the culture after which it is mirrored. An episteme communicates through artifacts, such as schools, that are valuable to the culture and the theories that interpret and analyze culture. For example, anti-racism, as an educational framework and pedagogical approach, challenges the epistemological presumption that stating something as neutral is insulated from subjectivity. This way of knowing, which reflects explanations of reality through the human sciences, assumes that there is not a stake (for the speaker) in neutrality's plausibility. Anti-Racism interrogates the undergirding edicts of supremacy/superiority that become operationalized in education (Sleeter, 2013), be it the physical space of the classroom, implicit bias in teaching, or curricular decisions. These are spaces where epistemological superiority, or *epistemic injustice* (Fricker, 2007), is materialized and contested. Likened to Sleeter's work, Collins (2000) argued that the epistemology of Black women's experiences sketch the multiple ways one is oppressed in "shaping the U.S. matrix of domination" (p. 251). Dominant, White views of the world have placed Black women's realities, and therefore concerns, on the periphery. *Black feminist thought*, when made paradigmatic, is both an interrogation of dominant-truth that separates lived-experience from cognitive knowledge and is true in its own right. In this acknowledgment, *black feminist thought* becomes a method of study, as much as a political paradigm of thought, and, as such, invites an interrogation of whiteness within the professoriate.

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#### Vignette #4 - “Code-Switching”

I was just with her. She was speaking with her friend in the Office of Diversity and Inclusion about Trump’s latest immigration policy—a fable about the way Hondurans and other Central American peoples are a burden on society and threaten the “American way of life.” I felt the drumming rhythm of her rage—each beat channeling people who will likely never get to Neoco. It was powerful, smart, and poetic. She was *loud*. ...No, she was passionate.

Fifteen-minutes-later, I see her enter the classroom, late. She slowly crosses the room and carefully places her bag down next to her, as to not disturb whatever she believes that she has already interrupted. She slouches in her seat, quickly adjusts her hijab and lowers her gaze to the table. While responding to a question to the class, she is quiet and cautious in her delivery. I am instantly struck by the contrast.

What happened between the walk from the Multicultural Center (MC) to this classroom? What is pushing her inward, causing her to take-up a fraction of the space that she engulfed in the MC? Or, is she pushing outward a protective shield to guard herself against any new trespassers? Can I interpret this any other way in the absence of her alleviating my curiosity by explaining the change to me, especially if explaining requires her to “frame [her] ideas in the language that is familiar to and comfortable for [me]” (Collins, 2000, p. vii)? What do these questions call to question? What is the pretexting narrative? And, how has my particular way of knowing caused me to notice changes in her behavior and not mine? Perhaps *code-switching* is a type of “navigational capital” (Yosso, 2005, p. 80) that she was using to survive whiteness—a technique of dodging the

domain in which her race and culture are allegedly inferior. Anzaldúa (1987) might refer to code-switching as an expression of hybridity, or the *mestiza consciousness*, or “a consciousness of duality” (p. 59), which describes her experiences as a Mexican-American. For Anzaldúa, recognizing and honoring one’s multiple identities is a welcomed alternative to feeling dislocated and dispossessed, which Latinx/o/a students can feel when forced to fit into a mono-cultural educational model.

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Bhabra (2016) claimed, in “Postcolonial Reflections on Sociology,” that to understand the present, a system of knowledge that identifies history in the present is needed. It is not enough, argued Bhabra, to note race as mediated by racist beliefs or a byproduct of social group categorization. Rather, Bhabra argued that the absence of a historical edict of colonialism renders race disconnected from the history that birthed it. Bhabra contested Habermas’ (2015) argument that the social and system are separate, which, for Bhabra, stems from epistemology. For Bhabra, identity is modified by the values of a culture, which systems both shape and reflect. If it were possible to disentangle race from the “social orders and processes of modernity... [of which it is] constitutive” (p. 961), race would be relegated inconsequential to, and inculpable of, “transforming ideas of the system” (Bhabra, 2016. p. 964).

Similar to Bhabra (2016), Kerr (2014) proposed, in the article “Western Epistemic Dominance and Colonial Structures,” that a reflexive orientation to self-in-relation-to-other bares the invisibility of imperialist-power embodied by the Western-White, settler body. Kerr’s inclination here is useful in grounding CDA in the theory of

post-colonialism and subalternity, diasporic studies, and indigenous scholarship from which it proceeded. These discourses share an appreciation for reflexive knowing, or noticing the self-in-relation in the same way that this dissertation maintains a self-reflexive orientation by looping back on itself, through the integration of first and third-person points of view and questions that cannot be answered with my mind alone. Such a process prevents the warranting of exceptionalism, or immunity. Rather, it assumes that my thoughts should be contextualized within Western-whiteness.

This dissertation draws upon the work of scholars who bear witness to coloniality harboring a body of ideas about itself. As a theoretical framework for my dissertation, post-colonialism will be a conduit to European, Western Modernity, which contorts colonialism into an episodic temporality; contained within a particular event (e.g., “settler-colonialism”) (Glenn, 2015), as opposed to continuous. Scholars of post-colonialism and decolonialism, such as Mohanty (2003), Fanon (1982), and Mignolo (2012), analyze colonialism’s *way of knowing*, which posits the superiority-and-inferiority teleological design as organic. This makes it reasonable to refer to countries of the southern hemisphere as the “Third World”. By extension, the “subaltern” is positioned as natural, as opposed to “...created through the colonial encounter” (Kerr, 2014, pg. 87). In Kerr’s article about the discursiveness of *Western epistemological dominance* (Mignolo, 2012), scholars of post-colonialism argued that modernity’s relation to colonialism is the story of European imperialism (Western Enlightenment). In that fable, modernity is an incubator for growing imperialism. How modernity continues to obscure knowledge that is situated, oral, and emotive is foundational to Mignolo’s

post-modern analyses of Western European modernity—the “arrival point of human existence and the point of reference of global history” (Kerr, 2014, pg. 88). By comparison, might the professoriate assume its knowledge is an arrival point?

Kerr (2014) and Mignolo’s (2011) propositions guide my capacity to theorize Western knowledge, or its episteme, as omnipresent, infinite, and asynchronous with Western-centric sequence of time (i.e., past, present, future), which freezes colonialism to the past. This dissertation refutes, from the start, that the colonial understanding of time is bounded to a colonial understanding of space. And, refuting such a notion must precede a curiosity about the way coloniality is embodied and performed within a specific social-system—the professoriate.

### **Performativity**

Performativity, a term coined by Judith Butler (1988; 2004; 2006), is a post-structuralist axiom that normative and determinative representations of gender are performed versus essential, or natural. Butler’s theory of gender, which is prominent in “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution,” *Undoing Gender*, and *Gender Trouble*, offered evocative and useful insight for discussing and raising critical questions concerning the construction, deconstruction, and resistant modalities of gender expression. Her writing, as intervention, critiques the rationality with which gender’s universality and consistency are made reasonable and immutable. In doing so, Butler observed the ways that the dominant’s domain of self-governing, reasonability, and acceptance are carried out by marginalized identities seeking recognition. For example, in order to fight for gender equality, one might buy into or accept a conventional definition

and appearance of gender in order to be recognized as the “intended” gender. And if, as Butler (2004) suggested, we are dependent upon social norms and their relationship to gender, which is “outside oneself, beyond oneself in a sociality that has no single author” (p. 1), what does this say about identity expression and recognition? According to Hegelian thinking, which Butler discussed, desire and recognition are intrinsically linked. And, to express one’s identity is to express a desire to be recognized. In the act of recognition people become legitimate beings, socially recognized. Being a good performer is a precursor to being recognized.

Butler’s argument of performativity describes a method through which coloniality and whiteness can be embodied. Performing the role of the professoriate might include specific behaviors, attitudes, and acumens of the professoriate’s taxonomy. Where performativity and colonial discourse merge is the intersection from which colonial epistemology becomes an embodied act. How this is experienced in the professoriate will be discussed in upcoming chapters, starting with the archeology of whiteness.

### **Colonial Discourse**

Anthropology, the study of culture and people, emerged as Europeans grew interested in uncovering the “primitive” in his backwards culture. In the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, European intellectuals confronted the nuances of primitive lifestyles (Vidich & Lyman, 2000). The discipline of anthropology was sharing colonization’s belief-system, which endorsed imperialism and domination. Following World War II and African and Asian resistance during the 1940s, anthropology turned its attention towards a new study—itself. In the 1960s, anthropology used the same gaze it held on objects of interest

to reflect back on itself; however, the idea of the “primitive” remained intact. Replacing “primitive” with “Third World,” or “underdeveloped,” anthropologists continued to perceive the “other” as the difference to be known, discovered, and understood in valuation and normative terms (Vidich & Lyman, 2000). As opportunity to study the “underdeveloped” countries became more difficult (access and diminishing population), anthropology studied the “American society”—an “other” to another.

As has been stated, post-colonialism examines how colonialism: 1) ahistoricizes particular peoples’ knowledge and experiences and 2) designs the conditions by which both literature and history are made legitimate. Post-colonialism interrogates the production of the “Orient” (Said, 1979) as the *Other* and transference of imperialism from nation-making to education-making. Post-colonialism proposes that colonialism is as epistemological as it is semiotic. Consequently, colonialism is codified in human behavior and justification of that behavior, and colonialism is made meaningful in the value that it holds for the human, such as borders placed on continuous land. As such, post-colonialism assumes that the colonial mind is an embodied state of being and therefore, in its material form, holds intention. That intention can be of benevolence or malevolence. It can intend to expose or shield. And, it can cause the human experience to be made questionable and even inconsequential.

A vibrant feature of “colonial discourse,” said Homi Bhabha (2004), “is its “dependence on the concept of ‘fixity’” and rigid definition of identity in framing “otherness” (p. 94). By offering writing that questions and destabilizes the *location of culture*, as defined in the colonial imaginary, Bhabha is able to observe practices of

“othering” that create difference (racial, cultural, and historical) in absolute terms and unchanging conditions. Such practices are emblematic of colonial rule. When such ruling fears its own illegitimacy, colonial power metastasizes (replicates), spreading itself over the “other,” destroying any evidence of its “once was.” It is reduced to colonial needs of creating reliability and validity, or replicability. Research becomes a process in which the colonial imaginary not only writes reality but maintains its malicious grip on it, essentializing the “other” and itself in the process. Marxist and feminist critique in the 1960s, as highlighted in the works of Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson (1997), argue that by observing power under its confined spatiotemporal clause, we can better understand the role that domination covets within culture and knowledge, or “how the cultural ‘rules of the game’ got made, by whom, and for whom” (p. 4).

In *Black Skin, White Masks* Franz Fanon (1982) addressed the ways the colonist’s imaginary and performativity of whiteness transgresses the body from which it was made. According to Fanon, the power of colonial discourse is the infection it spreads—its ability to change the minds of Black bodies who are deprived of their own cultural wealth— knowledge, values, and customs—by idealizing White relation to power and essentializing White values. Fanon’s analysis addresses Whiteness as much a performance as it is the cosmetic of some performers.

In *Critical Pedagogy and Predatory Culture: Oppositional Politics in a Postmodern Era*, Peter McLaren (1995) argued that Marxist-inscribed, critical pedagogy allows educators to examine the ways in which U.S. education is a descendent of over-pragmatic economic prosperity. He offered a compelling argument for radicalizing



education. McLaren argued that critical pedagogy should 1) engage with the discourses that inform pedagogical practices and 2) concern itself with the social apparatus that allow domination to persist disconnected to, yet inform, those practices. McLaren called for a decomposition of whiteness by politicizing black identity and resistance (p. 153). In other words, whiteness must be considered fictitious but with real consequences and materialization, yet not central in the social order.

Similarly, in the autobiographical novel *A Small Place*, Jamaica Kincaid (1989) drew parallels between colonization and U.S.-made Antigua; a tourist attraction. According to Kincaid, Antiguan people are a destination upon which U.S. middle- and upper-class folk vacate-their-station in life and seek entertainment and pleasure. Yet, it is only in the vacationer's belief in their ordinariness that Antigua becomes a sort of *paradise*.

According to Andreotti (2011), postcolonial studies pose the question: to what extent does one's knowledge, idioms, symbols, and paradigm of truth essentialize a static, knowable and objectified *Other*? What is preventing, as Andreotti asked, a "...noncoercive relationship or dialogue among different ways of being in the world" (p. 1)? Andreotti believed that post-colonialism contrives hegemonic entanglement with ethnocentrism to create new encounterings where *Other* is perceived as capable of speaking. Andreotti highlighted three main post-colonial scholars, all of whom see the *Other* as implicated but not always codified by "the West." *Orientalism*, according to Edward Said (1978), is the occupation (seizing, analysis and knowledge production) of the "Orient" by the imperialist West. It is the privilege of ignoring one's subjectivity by

claiming that information by the West is factual (positivistic), reasonable, and deserves remaining uncontested. On the other hand, Homi Bhabha's (1994) argument inessentializes the stagnation or "fixed" state of the colonized. Mimicking the dominant/colonizer destabilizes the idea of the incapable subordinate. Spivak (2004) might be wary of impersonations of this type. As a form of condoning, mimicry does not allow the dominant to notice the "consciousness of superiority lodged in the self" (p. 534) and ignores "the Other ... as having a right to fundamentally disagree" (Andreotti, 2011, p. 3). As an alternative to Western epistemology, which presupposes the "Other" as inaudible, Andreotti considered the value of "ethical solidarities" to transgressing the narrow and fixed definitions of the *Other*. Andreotti cited Said (1978) stating,

Ethical solidarities challenges the normative project of unanimity, consensus, and singular rationality of Western/Enlightenment humanism enabling the emergence of a kind of contestatory dialogue where knowledge is perceived as situated, partial, and provisional and where dissensus serves as a safeguard against fundamentalism, forcing participants to engage with the origins and limitations of each other's and, especially of their own systems of production of knowledge and sanctioned ignorance. (as cited in Andreotti, 2011, p. 3)

"Ethical solidarities" (Andreotti, 2011, p. 3) recognizes multiple truths as concurrent and identifies the barriers built in all thinking. This obscures versus validates Western mono-culturalism and intellectual colonization, as in the case of assimilative practices and cultural dispossession that occurred in U.S. Indian boarding schools of the late 1800s through the late 1900s (Margolis, 2004). Truth as multiple, contested, and

constantly evolving provides leverage for understanding the professoriate and student as co-constitutive and sets a foundation for imagining their roles differently—without clearly defined and taut boundaries between them. Indigenous educational scholars, like Grande (2004) and Cajete (1994), might liken co-constitutive relationship (or being relational) to the ubiquity of ancestral and ecological knowledge and a vision of education that can honor “the shared construction of meaning” (Rendón, 2014, p. 17), which Western concepts of individuality and autonomy do not recognize.

### **Conclusion**

Colonial discourse provides immediate entry points for CDA to track the epistemological argument unfolding. Instead of falling on colonial discourse to argue the professoriate as essentially colonialistic, the proceeding chapters are open sources of ideas, testimonies, historical tellings, theoretical polemics, and professional standards that when in dialogue (when intertwined) create an argument about the professoriate. The writing hopes to steer away from essentializing the professoriate as anything in particular, although it is quite possible that that is unavoidable. Instead this writing hopes to demonstrate the power of epistemology; how the professoriate comes to understand itself through performing whiteness. The symptoms of colonialism’s epistemology, of which the next chapters of this research address, will serve as examples of whiteness’ and the professoriate’s epistemology.

## Chapter Two: Archeology of Whiteness

I offer the following vignette as an introduction to Chapter Two in an effort to 1) honor students' voices with whom this research is speaking and from whom my thinking takes guidance and 2) undercut writing that assumes itself the primary authorial voice. This dissertation hopes to demonstrate a shared authorial voice, for my voice emerges through my encounters with others (humans and semiotic systems alike).

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### Vignette #5 – The White trope of the “Angry Black Woman”

She says to me, “I don’t want to come across as the Angry Black Woman. But, if I do not say something, White people will think that they can say whatever they want.” She is talking about the culture at the College. Her story is about faculty being bystanders and not positioning ourselves in solidarity with Black, Indigenous and students of color. She has decided to experiment with voice by being verbally silent in class for a week. Will the urge to speak her knowledge, her truth, override her curiosity—will White folx self-correct? Does her silence have the power to change White folxs’ narrative and find a new narrative to fall back on? Or, would remaining silent confirm her suspicion that power and privilege are not only habits of mind but deeply compulsory. And, in the imagination of White minds, where there is an epistemological aviator avoiding her blind-spots, her silence is read as stewing rage. Her rage is, of course, warranted. But, she is not angry because she is Black. She might be angry because whiteness is epistemologically devoted to power—a condition of being unexamined. Hers is a story about the archeology of whiteness; an excavation of the professoriate, in general.

As a White professor, my deceptive lenses are, by design, distorting, because they are power-protective. Therefore, my interpretations of BISOCs' experiences and reactions should not be read as accurate nor trusted, but questioned. I, as a White person, have been groomed to believe that my objective interpretation of reality should be trusted (versus examined for its investment in privilege and power). I have also been groomed (if not expected) to accuse folks'/x of color reality of being untrustworthy (even "anti-White") versus profoundly honest. It is my inability, however, of seeing reality from their perspective that is causing doubt in their narrative that leads me to ask, "What grounds, if not the reinforcement of my power, do I have to state with such confidence that any situation is unrelated to race/ "not about race" when that very statement likely discloses my race-based interpretation of reality—a presumption that neutrality and innocence are not already radicalized. If White faculty have clouded lenses, and non-White folx can embody whiteness, what are the conditions of that cloudiness?"

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In *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*, Johnny Saldaña (2016) stated, "Writing about the problematic, the ambiguous, and the complex is no guarantee that crystal clarity will evolve, but the approach serves as a heuristic that may lead to deeper awareness of the multifaceted social world..." (p. 54). This chapter operates as a heuristic, in that it explores an uncharted cartography of the professoriate. It aims to follow a path that is less known by the many, but acutely understood by the few. In *Predominately White Institutions* (PWIs), BISOC experience a level of alienation by faculty who perform whiteness and beckon a colonial ancestry. Their experiences lead

this dissertation to ask the questions: how is whiteness produced, and how is it manifested in higher education? Before attempting to answer these questions, there are concepts that need more attention, namely epistemic whiteness and colonial embodiment. They will be explored mainly through the methods, e.g., law, habit, and ignorance, by which they are produced and principles that maintain them. In the spirit of exploratory examination, this chapter continues the trend of stepping back to recognize what could get breezed by in the desire to make a clear case.

### **Engendering Epistemological Importance**

Braidotti (2013) argued for an analysis of anthropocentrism that critiques the design of nature and culture as naturalistically contentious. Rather than a dualistic model of *nature and culture*, in which humans develop a sense of authority over nature, Braidotti explored a more synergistic model of nature and culture as a “continuum” (p. 2). This replaces the constructivist analysis of society, which partitions nature and culture. Braidotti argued that the location/situation of thought reveals the supposition of theory, which is useful for embracing a non-dualistic (non-Darwinian) paradigm of *nature and culture*, as Braidotti has. This shift in perspective becomes terrain for observing the student and professor moving along a continuum or an open field. For the purposes of this chapter, Braidotti’s supposition of a continuum will sit beside colonial taxonomies to show the epistemological differences—dualism and “transversal bonding” (Braidotti, 2019, p. 31)—both of which have consequences when they are used to shape students and faculty relationships. The artificial, yet realized, separation between nature and culture, or separation between student and professor, dissuades other possible

relations, such as convergence. Braidotti's work is useful for accounting for epistemology's role in shaping what gets passed as an accurate portrayal of the professor and student relationship and which arrangements are deemed permissible. If creativity and transgression are valued epistemologically, the professor and student relationship could center external variables, such as social problems, as their point of collaboration.

Colonialism is an expletive of the *modern world*. It is neither incidental nor fortuitous. It is attributed to a past and, to some, a tribute to that past. It is ideological, evoking specific politicization. And, it is epistemological—it has its own process by which specific knowledge is created and knowledge becomes ranked, “reward[ing] outer knowing (intellectual reasoning, rationality, and objectivity) at the expense of inner knowing (deep wisdom, wonder, sense of the sacred, intuitions, and emotions)” (Rendón, 2014, p. 27). It is not the content of knowledge. It is the method by which the content is formed. In Chapter Two, the writing examines colonialism as an epistemology of Whiteness. This chapter will propose consequences of whiteness as a way of knowing, beyond the socio-cultural-political paradigm of racial identity, albeit a result of that paradigm. Specifically, the chapter will argue how epistemic coloniality, 1) produces and is a product of compulsory embodiment, including performative separation, and 2) is the story of whiteness.

### **Embodiment of Separation**

Embodiment, as a concept, is as varied as the fields of study that have sought to explain it. How one speaks about “the body” is largely dependent upon the discipline defining it or priming its constitution. Body Studies cultural theorist Lisa Blackman

(2008) explained embodiment as paradoxical, in that it holds both immaterial and material value and blurs the clear separation between the two. Immaterially speaking, embodiment is the anti-object, such as senses of the living body, the frequency and refraction of sound and light, or the body “in-process” (Blackman, 2008, p. 133) of becoming. For biologists, embodiment might live solely in the physical body-register, while sociologists might theorize embodiment as a disposition of the socio-political power at the time. And, for phenomenology philosophers, such as Ngo (2017), embodiment is semiotic of habitude and corporeal orientation. For example, learned racism is held in the body and expressed through behavior, or “bodily gestures or orientations” (Ngo, 2017, p. 35).

Following Blackman’s (2008) lead, the following non-sequitur is access to the writing’s body as a felt-text and entanglement—to use a Braidottian term—with my own. I enter this writing without a fully fleshed-out understanding of the connections I am making. The writing, as result, is providing entrance into a process that breaks the boundaries between the subject being written and writing as the subject. You, the reader, will not find “findings” or pensive data. You will witness possibilities in the making that might cause much confusion or frustration if feeling disoriented needs resolving and ambiguousness needs familiarizing. You might want to reach for a thing to pull on, catch, or grab to stop yourself from the free-fall. But, if we let ourselves fall freely, we might emerge with new acumen about inseparability, like the false sense of separating myself, as the writer, from the embodiment of which I am critiquing. As you read the following vignette, notice the distance made between writing about embodiment and being



embodied by (rather bothered by) a desire to see myself apart from the writing. In this case, the vignette serves two purposes: 1) to recognize the impulse I have to separate myself from what is happening in the moment and, 2) to offer an example of intervening upon that compulsion in the classroom.

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#### Vignette #6: Embodiment of Separation or Inseparability

I enter the classroom before the students and begin the rituals. I turn on the projector, the computer, and myself. Students flow in, sit-down in their unassigned but claimed seats. At this point, some of the lights are on. I turn-on the remaining lights and raise the brightness. Immediately, students squawk, cover their ears and scrunch their faces. They said, “Faith, the buzzing noise is hurting my ears!” I say, “What noise?” They said, “Don’t you hear the high-pitch noise? It’s pinching our eardrums.” I said, “You all are kidding, aren’t you?” They were shocked that I couldn’t hear the piercing sound. After a minute or so of watching them in distress, I fiddled with the light switches on the wall and asked them to let me know when the sound became undetected.

Later that day, while reflecting on my teaching and processing the strange and typical, I remembered the students’ reaction to the sound of light. Not knowing what I was looking for, I Googled “sounds that I cannot hear.” One of the first articles mentioned aging and sound frequency. Students were able to hear a frequency that I could no longer hear. I suspect that many faculty would have done similarly, at the very least turned down the lights. Even though we cannot hear the sound, and we are not the

ones in pain, we know what discomfort is and how it causes distractions, and not just for the students who are learning.

### **Epistemic Coloniality and the Production of Whiteness**

Critical scholars of Western culture and colonial epistemology, such as Wynter (2003), Grosfoguel (2002), and Mignolo (2009; 2012), point to the epistemological underpinnings and changing periods of thought (e.g., from religious explanations of phenomenon to scientific, positivist explanations of *truth*) to argue that supremacist thinking was an intentional infiltration. From forced displacement to extraction of natural resources to bondage labor, colonialism is rooted in hegemony and imperialist ways of knowing and the “coloniality of power” (Quijano & Ennis, 2000, p. 533). Epistemic coloniality, as a discursive framework, replaces the dialectic of colonialism as episodic, or socio-temporal, with colonialism as a unique discourse of thought that has been used to both legitimize and, under conditions of critique, delegitimize supremacy and its sensibilities, such as believing that settling on land, from which one did not originate, is one’s God given right (Manifest Destiny). This rationalizes and exonerates colonial episteme that leads to perceiving land as available material, absent of autonomy, and waiting to be removed or permanently and expansively settled (Glenn, 2015). In all of these cases, the exertion of power-to-decide is taking place. Separating the types of exploitation—and resource extraction—is useful for understanding the particularities of colonialism and varied forms of coercion. Conversely, zooming out for a panoramic view of colonialism allows for a more focused understanding of its epistemological premises, such as “...conceptions of indigenous peoples as lesser beings, unworthy of

consideration” (Glenn, 2015, p. 60). These preconceptions are obscured through the process of normalization and, at the same time, decoded by those disenfranchised by hierarchical ordering. Whiteness holds its own epistemic overtures about race-based differentiations that were only made possible by colonialist’s power to create and inflict significance, including what whiteness would come to mean and do. By pulling back to the legal history of White superiority and then observing the psychosocial and cognitive mechanisms that maintain the belief of supremacy, the connection between Western, colonial values; e.g., individuality and ownership, and whiteness becomes a question of embodied-degree.

**Episteme of supremacy and law.** In “Reflections on the History of White Supremacy in the United States,” Gardiner (2009) implored White people to examine the history, specifically the production/reproduction, of whiteness. For Gardiner, whiteness is not a benign description of phenotype nor is it an alias for a more complex genetic name (Tuck & Yang, 2012). It is a derivative of how such descriptions came to be in the first place (Fanon, 1982). Gardiner framed White superiority as a consequence of beliefs about one’s rights, be they legal or religious, of sovereignty. One form that this power takes is in issuing privilege to White persons and people and denying privilege to BIPOC. Gardiner suggested that ethnic superiority—the Spanish, French, Portuguese, and English—precipitated colonialism and gave race meaning that holds true today. The English, for example, perceived themselves White, superior, and morally evolved in contrast with other European peoples (Gardiner, 2009). Whiteness as a race emerged out of European assertions of racial and cultural hierarchy in colonial pursuits of power.

Epistemic whiteness made it possible for the English to conquer Ireland between mid-1500 – late 1600s and seize vulnerable populations, such as the poor, and replicate similar exploitative practices with Africans and First-Nations People in the Americas (Gardiner, 2009, p. 5). In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the fields of science and religion used intellectual arguments to essentialize White superiority by decreeing Whites as American, and non-Whites as non-Americans; the pragmatist arguments of “natural selection” (Social Darwinism) and God’s selection (Manifest Destiny) cemented Whites as the superior race. Like theory, law was used to differentiate races and consummate claims. Sociology and law professor, Jacqueline Battalora (2013), wrote in *Birth of a White Nation*, “‘White’ ... is a historical imposition given content and form through the proliferation of ideas imposed and claimed through law” (p. XV).

Gardiner (2009) used Philip Rubio’s (2001) discernment on affirmative action to interrogate the motivation behind White superiority. Rubio stated,

The white race is not a passive demographic act but an invented voluntary social institution whose only utility is oppression. It is one that continues to be collectively reinvented in a vain attempt to resolve the contradiction between white political power and social freedom and the denial of the same to (people of color) while simultaneously blurring class difference between capitalist and working class among those who share the coincidence of looking white. (as cited in Gardiner, 2009, p. 19)

While the law was used to partition the *good* race from the *bad* race, as in the Naturalization Law of 1790 and Homestead Act (Gardiner, 2009), the identity itself (an

encapsulation of ideology, rhetoric, and beliefs) symbolized ways of knowing rooted in the process in which it was formed. This process, of believing one's race superior, ushered race-based coalitions in an effort to build a common enemy. For example, in the late 1600s, class-based separation between the wealthy White land-owners and poor landless White and African Americans was replaced with a belief in White superiority. The promise of land to poor White Americans would be bartered for believing in African American's inferiority and rightful servitude.

Prior to the 1600s, people were categorized based upon religious and ethnic affiliations, "such as Spanish, British, or Brazilian" (Battalora, 2013, p. 2). In 1607, Europeans settled in Jamestown, Virginia with the purpose of expanding "shareholders of The Virginia Company of London" (Battalora, 2013, p. 4). In 1681, the term "'white' reflecting a group of humanity" (Battalora, 2013, p. 2) is used in legal documents, during a time in which colonial America was taking shape. Approximately 10 years earlier, the foundation was laid for interchanging the term White (race) with Anglo-Saxon (a national/cultural category), but not before Englishmen "wage laborers" (Battalora, 2013, p. 6) would serve as "chattel" (Allen, 1997, p. 178) alongside African-Americans "of a similar class" (Battalora, 2013, p. 6) in tobacco farms. During this time, class, not race, was the scale by which one's freedom status was determined. It was not uncommon for African-Americans and British laborers to work together and receive similar treatment. British Law classified White as an exclusive yet aspirational subgroup and men as the overlords of society. Marriage restrictions, such as "antimiscengenation laws" (Getman, 1984, pp. 122–123) (as cited in Battalora, 2013, p. 12) of the mid1660s, between those

designated White and African-American, reinforced British Law's objective—a system of social control that yielded economic prosperity. Life was organized by the demand for prosperous plantations. By the late 1600s, Africans were the production line, with Black women's bodies as the machinery for emitting workers, or "human capital" (Battalora, 2013, p. 10). As Battalora lamented, "Black women's reproduction advanced the property value of the plantation while English women's reproduction ensured 'pure' inheritors of this property" (p. 11).

Divisive colonial practices through law underscored the rise of Whiteness as a distinct racial and colonial category. Separating Black African Americans and White European Americans was a strategy in altering their relationship, marking a shift in how White people knew themselves—from "relationships of mutuality, cooperation, and trust between persons of African and European ancestry" (Battalora, 2013, p. 15) and unity across continental origins to habitual individualism.

Historians and scholars who research the chronologization of White identity, especially its continued concussed body in society, prevalently credit Bacon's Rebellion of the 1670s for making White a metric of social status. Just shy of this time-period, servants (*laborers*) in Virginia were completing their work in captivity (sentencing, more accurately). Finishing their terms meant masters, or British landowners, would lose the work-force and now compete with free, skilled tobacco growers. In response to this, the British found new ways to maintain power in their possession. For example, voting laws were used to deny voting rights to non-landowners. The need for more laborers due to terms ending and a decrease of sending poor Englishmen to the colonies created a labor

supply issue. Conveniently, Africans were of ample supply. The line was drawn between Europeans and African laborers, with the distinguishing feature being race. Anglos would benefit from being born the race of the European colonists, as Africans' rights were lost in this new path to social control. While "the Maryland Law of 1681 reflects the first time in legal history, in the land that would eventually become the U.S., that 'White' was used in law to reflect a human classification" (Battalora, 2013, p. 25), racial superiority started as a conscious act to circumvent socio-economic associations with inferiority. British people and their offspring were conditionally free. Following the laws of the land guaranteed their freedom and the power to withhold freedom. Battalora (2013) referred to this as "fragile superiority" (p. 25), as it was the fear of losing power that kept people in line. Battalora stated, "The rights and privileges that the law recognized and protected for British and other free people, could be lost by certain acts that posed a serious threat to the very meaning of British and freedom that the law both presumed and imposed" (p. 25). Battalora digressed,

The corruption of the individual is then perceived to harm the group by disgracing the English collectively through challenging what being English symbolizes. Here criminality is linked not to the property damage or physical harm, but to an action that represents a threat to a group status. Here 'white' is revealed as fragile, requiring significant protective measures. (p. 26)

Laws were used to impose an "ideology of whiteness" (Battalora, 2013, p. 32), which did not require European laborers to identify as masters over once partnered African laborers, by which those with White skin could create cohesion, notwithstanding

culpability. Such ideology has been used to make whiteness and epistemic superiority innocuous and natural, as opposed to an obstruction of justice. How the naturalization of superiority of this magnitude continues to exist and gain prosperity will be examined in embodied compulsories of habit and ignorance. To understand the effects of whiteness, it is not enough to tug on its root. How that root spawns; i.e., through habits, might explain what that root is able to grow; i.e., obsessive individualism.

### **Compulsories: Habitus and Epistemological Ignorance**

In the “Introduction” to the anthology *Decolonizing the Western University: Interventions in Philosophy of Education From Within and Without*, Ernesto Rosen Velásquez (2016) equated the philosophy of Western education with the philosophy of capitalist enterprise. Velásquez mapped the trajectory of colonization in U.S. education with 17<sup>th</sup> century European models of life infecting the lives of natives. The shift from Native American/Indigenous American education as ontological (e.g., “story-telling of elders, working with adults, participation in ceremonies, [etc.]”) (p. xi), to producing a populous that could serve the economic growth of the nation reflects the process of cultural erosion that is scarified for national progress. For Velásquez, understanding contemporary U.S. education and its dangers requires flipping the present back onto history and noticing the epistemological axioms that imagined and constructed schools. To omit the historical conditions is to ignore the influence of identity in how a school is built; what becomes educationally salient; and what takes precedence or becomes centralized. Velásquez observed the way curricula’s centrality is influenced by



Western/European understanding of knowledge as divisible and placed under themes called disciplines or parceled knowledge that has value to society. Velásquez wrote,

...the education crisis gets articulated in a way that invokes the usual suspects: what the aims of education should be, the curriculum, and pedagogy. These topics, while important to some extent, often are librocentric and accord centrality to professors and students while ignoring the materiality of a school: the land it is on, property tax, the bricks, the chairs...the water, sewerage systems ... and a whole host of interconnected elements...The Zapatista's supported school – the Universidad de la Tierra (The University of the Earth) – in Chiapas not only offers living proof that another world is possible but also invites scholars/activists to open their imaginations to creative ways that marginalize the economy and gives priority to those at the bottom of society. The materiality of school becomes visible when you see Mayan students and others build a university from the ground up – from the bricks and chairs one sits in to the curriculum. (p. xi)

For Velásquez, failure to notice the materiality of the school is to dismiss the way the building and maintenance of the school are tempered by societal oppression, such as racism. That being said, the act of over-looking might not be a “cognitive matter that we can talk ourselves out of but instead involves cultivating new habits of perception and doing other things” (p. xii).

**Habitus.** In *Habits of Racism: A Phenomenology of Racism and Racialized Embodiment*, Helen Ngo (2017) conversed with Maurice Merleau-Ponty's (1962) *Phenomenology of Perception* and developed a narrative about the body as a vessel of

habits, or routine and automated actions. Habits express continuity, in that what was true in the past continues to hold relevance in the present. In this way, and as Ngo theorized, the temporality of an idea or belief provides insight about its value. This is true for habits as well. The longer a habit exists the more ancillary it becomes to a human's personhood and the formation of new habits, which, according to Ngo, is made possible when "...a repertoire of existing and readily available bodily movement" (p. 3) exists. Ngo qualified this further and stated, "we take skills previously acquired and employ them as the medium through which we try to grasp at, translate, and fold in, new movements and habits" (pp. 3-4). Ngo expanded upon Merleau-Ponty's notion of habit as the body's expression of familiarity by proposing that habits can emerge from human encounters—through the "inter-bodies" (p. 9), as in White bodies interacting with Black bodies. Ngo drew upon Pierre Bourdieu's (1977) work on "habitus" in *Outline of Theory of Practice* to deepen an inquiry about habits and racism. In Ngo's reading of Bourdieu, human interactions are primed by previous encounters/socialization—the *habitus*. The reproducibility of the *habitus* is critical to Bourdieu's essentialist argument, which is a point of contention for Ngo and Crossley (2013), who believe that humans have the power to alter their habits. Ngo drew upon Merleau-Ponty's theory of habits to contest the notion of autonomic passivity in habit formation. Like Merleau-Ponty, Ngo defended the role of human agency in forming and ending habits. Conceivably, humans are developing habits that they are ingesting unconsciously through mirroring and consciously through intentional decision-making. In the introduction to the anthology *Rhetorics of Whiteness*, Kennedy, Middleton, and Ratcliffe (2017) maintain that

whiteness coerces the body in which it lives, priming the body to behave in accordance with a particular cultural story. In this way, it is a character that all races can perform and is done so deliberately or involuntarily. Either performed consciously or unconsciously, habits, like other forms of conditioning, are the action-steps, or bodily movements and languaging. Habits provide clarity on the formation of a phenomenon, which is useful when examining how epistemic coloniality is formed and understanding the channels, such as embodiment, through which it is expressed.

Sullivan's (2006) argument of the *unconscious habits of racial privilege*, which is a title of one of Sullivan's books, is both useful for situating White ignorance as a generational consumption (a cognitive genetic mutation, perhaps) versus "accidental" (p. 18) or worse an "innocuous oversight" (p. 20) of knowledge. Sullivan credited W.E.B DuBois' (1997) *Souls of Black Folks (1920)* for framing White ignorance as equally conscious as it is unconscious and habitual, which makes it difficult to eradicate, like a cultural pandemic. Habit, as a function of racism, illuminates the practice of White ignorance as routinized to the point of being unrecognizable. When such states are perceived neutral, as in whiteness as unraced or a non-race, the values and beliefs that shape White ignorance can be easily, and habitually, overlooked. In Chapter Three, I will explore the implications of such neutrality in the embodied ways of the professoriate and academic freedom.

By studying epistemology, scholars can theorize, with more acuteness, the body's role in racism (Yancy, 2008). For example, if implicit benevolence is a residual attitude of the way White people know themselves, which fortifies Blackness' malevolence, the

body's gestures and cognizing are transcriptions of epistemic superiority—a deceptive and unwieldy bias. Whiteness perceives itself asymptomatic of *difference* and the arbiter of *difference*. Whiteness systematizes and exploits the differentiation between the *Self* (as innocent) from the *Other* (as guilty), or the feared from the fearing, and justifies the homogenization of White persons/people. Consequently, this distorts distinguishing inequalities, such as poverty. The hostile relation between Black and White bodies makes both bodies proficient in racism, but it's the purpose of their emergence (or, the context in which they came into existence, making their view-points non-interchangeable) that makes the White body's "take" on racism accurate, regardless of its lens of distortion.

Yancy (2008) analogized this to a personal experience that involved an encounter he had with a White woman in an elevator, to underscore this very point. Yancy stated, "To argue that any and all knowers can simply open their eyes and 'see' the White woman's gesture as racist is to flatten out significant differential histories" (p. 7). For Yancy, much like Mills (1997), social epistemology explains how White fear of the Black body is a simple consequence of White, "presumptive supremacy [and] paternalistic proclivities" (p. 8) lodged in how a White woman will know a Black man. In Yancy's story, the woman's ability to "vitate [his] dignity" (p. 7) is premised on knowing herself incapable of indecencies that she indiscriminately attributes to his body, which "abdicat[es] responsibility for the ways in which she sustains the Black body as a stimulus to anxiety" (p. 10). In Ngo's (2017) own words:

The White woman's body is oriented such that responses of fear, suspicion, self-concern, and self-preservation have settled into her bodily repertoire, and are

made immediately available to her upon unanticipated interaction with a Black man; her bodily habits are racist. (p. 23)

Whether supremacy is scaled on the behavioral level (habit) or systems level (law), the performance (embodiment), through which both move, remains the same.

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#### Vignette #7: Appropriate is Another Way of Saying White

It has been 12 years, and I have 12 stories that all start the same way—“We are trying to prepare them for the world beyond these walls.” Another accusation is made against a Black woman about her “bad attitude” (i.e., expressing an unwillingness to compromise, “talking-back” to faculty, and not expressing pleasantries to fellow students in the classroom). These behaviors are coded as “disruptive” and, in some cases, classified as causing a *hostile environment* in the classroom. For one of these students, the judgments greatly dissuaded the drive she had entering her first year. Quickly, the work she produced mirrored the discouragement she felt. The faculty’s judgment of a student’s attitudes created a hostile learning environment for the student, and yet, the double-standard was the optic, not a clouded lens.

The White sense of self is tightly intertwined with Western principles of order and control, proprietorship, and perfectionism (to name a few) and values of individualism, positivism, and modernity (to name a few). Might we unconsciously-unintentionally or consciously-intentionally regulate students by asking them to discipline their emotions, cognition, and behaviors to align with an overarching investment in the aforementioned

principles and values? BISOC at Neoco have been asking us to reflect upon this, and many more questions. What will it take for all of us to listen?

Still today, we operate within-and-against colonial canons and Western epistemologies. All of this leads me to draw forward Collins' (2000) *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and Empowerment* to ask, how do we account for White values and principles in what and how we, as faculty, teach and engage with students? What role does academic freedom play in "accounting" for these values and principles? I'm inclined to look to Collins for answers. In her own words:

Oppressed groups are frequently placed in the situation of being listened to only if we frame our ideas in the language that is familiar to and comfortable for the dominant group. This requirement often changes the meaning of our ideas and works to elevate the ideas of the dominant groups. (Collins, 2000, p. vii)

The double-standard, to which Collins is referring, that requires racially and ethnically marginalized persons to assimilate into White culture in order to be heard, but does not require White culture to acclimate to these same persons' cultures, vindicates White culture of the harm it causes by making "being listen to" conditional. It also absolves White culture of its role in causing racially and ethnically marginalized persons to perceive themselves as inferior without looking to the double-standard as the source of the perception. Collins' theorizing of epistemology provides another explanation of the Black woman's disposition in the classroom— perhaps she was refusing to conform to White culture's "framing" of *appropriate behavior*, which might be code for cadence, volume, and inflection.

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Like Collins (2000), Trainor's (2008) research in the classroom is pivotal in expanding the notion of systemic racism to include the imposition of values. This could include interpreting behavior as a concerted effort on the part of the educator to prepare students for the unforgiving society beyond the classroom's walls. The regulatory and propagated nature of this behavior reinforces the way dominant culture is read as valueless, objective, fair, and without a pretense. In a classroom, this could encourage students to perceive their racial and/or cultural identity as a failed (inferior) version of the acceptable and aspirational version imposed by dominant culture. Trainor calls the way schools *race* students the *hidden curriculum*, or "a kind of lens – a way of bringing into view the values, beliefs, emotional rules and norms that schools impart by virtue of taken for granted institutional and pedagogical practices" (p. 148). In the formable article, "Good Writing is White Writing" Santiago Gonzalez (2017) asserted that standards of academic writing, composed from the White canon, do not reflect the dialect, phrases, and other linguistic literacies of students of color. Consequently, students of color might interpret that "their everyday forms of composing the written word is not intellectual, is not appropriate for sharing with others on the page" (Santiago Gonzalez, 2017). The judgment that is now available for students to use against themselves is a form of psychological self-harm; meanwhile, the faculty's psychosocial wellness stays unscathed.

In the article "Teaching Our Own Racism: Incorporating Personal Narratives of Whiteness Into Anti-Racist Practice," Brookfield (2014) made the case for a more reflexive teaching practice, in which one's complicity with racism is regularly identified.

The absence of identifying how one has adopted racist ideology by, for example, positioning one's knowledge about racism as superior to others, makes us as much a culprit of racism as those who actively purport Black men as innately malevolent. While simply being reflexive may not lead one to notice forms of culpability, it could create critical pausing for epistemological analyses of routine conduct and implications of perceptions of familiar structures, such as the case of academic freedom in the teaching profession.

Giroux (2019) suggested that a solution for racist inertia is to name it in the public spaces in which it is taking place, making it part of the public discourse. Giroux also recommended recognizing moments that interject upon learned racism. Those experiences make it possible to understand the plurality within ourselves—that we have the agency to make decisions that differ from that which is expected and habited. Applying Giroux's critique of the educator as monolithic can assist us in altering what we would do as pedagogues. For example, instead of taking a defeatist approach to examining the professoriate and academic freedom, which might suggest that inhabiting whiteness can sum-up the professoriate, we can implore a way of knowing the professoriate that considers its multiplicity that exists despite a particular habituality. This, then, creates openings for faculty to use the spirit of academic freedom to refuse White epistemological canons, such as autonomy, that are used to protect that very same freedom.

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## Vignette #8: A Professor's Plurality

The following is an email that I sent to students while reflecting upon our class that day.

*Hi, Comrades!*

*I wanted to follow-up with a conversation that was semi-sparked regarding a course from last year. I would not want people to feel excluded from this class because they did not share in a common experience.*

*As one of our colleagues said, the experiences from a class from last semester are varied. Some White students felt justified in interpreting students' of color frustration, pain, and rage as "White bashing." I want to address this now. This is a long email, so I ask that you read it when you're not in a hurry. And, I ask that you consider how it might inform your thinking in this class.*

*As someone who started doing her own research on anti-racism in the 90s (... in case you're wondering, White rhetoric looks the same then as it does now), I read books that covered an array of topics dedicated to undoing racism/undoing whiteness. I read extensively about identity development processes that White people and BIPOC commonly move through in racist cultures. I learned how to notice my own complicity with racism, but did not learn how to make that noticing automatic. Instead, what I surmised as a non-racist circumstance or encounter was actually my success at evading the reality of that perception's deception.*

*As some of you know, it is NOT easy for White-bodied people to hear how folks/x of color experience racism on the daily basis without taking it very personally. It is also*

*not easy nor is it fair for people of color to hold back and ask to be patient as White folks/x move through their/our learning process. As some of you have heard me say before, I have never heard someone ask people of color if it's a convenient time for them to experience racism. Therefore, I should not have the luxury to be asked if I am ready to do the hard work of confronting my internalized dominance.*

*The idea of not taking it personally while noticing my own complicity was very difficult at first. It took years of self-examination, intent reading, and listening and re-envisioning myself to move through the stages. Now, I can sit more compassionately with the pain that people of color experience and with my own sadness of unconscious contributions to their pain. This might be true for some of you as well.*

*In her book *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?*, Beverly Tatum (1997) reviewed the stages of racial identity development, such as *White Identity Development*. I have found this to be a useful model for thinking about the way White people—like myself—(and those who have adopted White ways of being) are: (1) conditioned to expect comfort (a privilege that too many people of color do not have in White dominant spaces); (2) are coerced to reject realities that do not confirm our innocence; and (3) look to folks/x of color to make us feel like the exception or one of the good ones. One byproduct of White racism is interpreting people of color's behaviors, speech, and responses as aggressive and White shaming, rather than critical and accurate. Those of us who identify as White (appearing also) learn (very early on) that being "right," "perfect," and "innocent" reflect our character more so than our*

*willingness to challenge the ease with which we move through the world, undisturbed by BIPOC's pain and frustration with White racism.*

*We, White folks/x, cannot afford (neither now nor historically) to ask BISOC to change the way they present their lived-experiences, including their critiques of whiteness and frustration about whiteness. I am not suggesting that we abandon compassionate speech. I am suggesting that we open space for compassionate reception (as in sharing the burden). If folks/x of color are burdened by racism, then White folks/x can be burdened by undoing expressions of whiteness, like learned or willful ignorance. The undoing will take a commitment to understanding whiteness as a consciousness, as in White cognition, that is shaped by habit and presents as habit.*

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**Epistemological ignorance.** “A fractal is a never-ending pattern. Fractals are infinitely complex patterns that are self-similar across difference scales. They are created by repeating a simple process over and over in an ongoing feedback loop” (Brown, 2017, p. 51). Although Brown is referring to local actions as the blueprint for global actions, fractals are a useful framework for understanding the way intentional, or willful, ignorance becomes pervasive when it is compulsive. Ignorance, as a fractal, has breadth (stretching across time and space) and depth (always self-confirming). The pattern serves as a possible explanation for how ignorance becomes ingested through habituation.

Brown's take on fractals can assist us in examining academic freedom as habited compulsions of whiteness by the professoriate.

In *Race and Epistemologies of Ignorance* edited by Shannon Sullivan and Nancy Tuana, Linda Martín Alcoff (2007) analyzed the taxonomy of epistemology and ignorance—a way to codify ignorance as a tactical emergence, or as “structural” (p. 40), versus an unwitting phenomenon. In Chapter Two, Alcoff identified three arguments that attempt to explain the roots of ignorance and its epistemological consequences. Lorraine Code (1993), for example, claimed that ignorance reflects the cultural milieu and circumstances in which the thinker produces thought, including the thinker's perceived and self-affirming identities respective to time; “habits of perceptual attention” (Alcoff, 2007, p. 42); and subsequent interpretations and proclivities. For Code (1993), recognizing how environments, such as these, influence the knower's perception (or subjectivity and situated-states materialized) holds implications for that which will be perceived reasonable, not just conceivable. This suggests, as Code wisely noted, that knowers cannot act as proxies for one another – they are not “interchangeable” (Alcoff, 2007, p. 42) regardless of having access to the same information. Subjectivity is not a synonym for location (space and time) and content. When the knower is a role, such as an *educator*, and has a particular social conditioning, context, and norms by which its behaviors are judged, Code's argument prevents grossly generalized speculations and totalizing analyses by requiring specificity: Which educator? Emerged under what conditions and history? Embodying which ideological premise? and “[L]imited and enabled” (Alcoff, 2007, p. 42) by what location? Specificity, however important to

preventing egregious overstatements, can cause us to fail to notice patterns of behavior that reach past an isolated or particular context or, in Brown's (2017) case, overlook fractals that have breadth and depth. In contrast, Sandra Harding (1991) upon whom Alcoff drew, examined epistemic ignorance within "groups of knowers who share a social location" (Alcoff, 2007, p. 43).

In her text *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge? Thinking from Women's Lives*, Harding (1991) looked at the difference between (in the binary sense of gender) women's and men's life experiences that hinders or expedites access to content about the world, which has epistemic consequences. Harding explained how group identity mutes an individual's ways of knowing, interpretations of experiences, and beliefs afforded by group knowing. Group knowing, or the point of view that emerges from the location in which the group-identity resides, will have epistemic consequences, such as that which is conceived reasonable, rational, pejorative, and inconsequential. It also has implications for paradigmatic analysis of the world. Harding used the example of Feminism to explain how location, in this case "female-gender location," makes certain critical questioning possible. If, as Harding suggests, men do not have that same *epistemic advantage*, might power/dominance leave men without a resource, such as an awareness that emerges when one's location makes constant contact with "gender-related social scripts" (Alcoff, 2007, p. 46), for determining if and how injustice exists and the interests that would lead to such speculations, let alone the solution for such condition? Similarly, the professoriate may not have the "close viewpoint," or attuning for race-related schemas, for determining if and how whiteness exists, let alone the solution for its embodiment.

Charles W. Mills (1997) is credited for recognizing the structural context in which White people, as a dominant group, possess an “interest” in evading perspectives and interpretations that cannot be confirmed by their lens of the world. Mills suspected that ignorance of this kind presumes and intends to retain a centrism, which Western thought evokes. Mills used the term “white cognizer” (p. 21) to pullback a way of thinking ascribed to whiteness, though not limited to White people due to the cultural coerciveness of “ideological hegemony” (p. 22), to uncover its intentions. *White ignorance* is an enculturation of epistemic supremacy, backed by Eurocentric explanations of the world, more than a White body’s fundamental essence. Mills was quick to name that, like other socialized influencers, *White ignorance* is mediated by other converging social-group affiliations, such as class, gender and sexuality. For this reason, Mills believed that an alternative to negating the concept of *White ignorance* because it privileges one identity over others is to approach generalities with a critical consciousness. That critical consciousness, however, can incite a redirection—from *White ignorance* as a social system to *White ignorance* as a myth or futile concept. The distinction is one of function—*White ignorance* as a thinking tendency, not as a totalizing identity. More accurately, and with Mills in mind, what can critical questioning of *White ignorance* as a “...cognitive tendency – an inclination, a doxastic disposition – which is not insuperable” (p. 23) make possible and prevent when embodied through the professoriate?

In Mills’ (1997) summation, *White ignorance* cannot be deduced to isolated omissions of information, inexperience, or a lack of exposure, but, rather, a “substantive epistemic practice” (p. 47). *White ignorance*, for Mills, is an expression of “racialized

causality” (p. 21), as are the subsequent perceptual standards that are unique to the dominant group, which “inculcated a pattern of belief-forming practices that created the effect of systemic ignorance” (p. 48). Here Mills connotes the paradoxical conundrum of epistemic ignorance, in that the advantages of the dominant group, such as “naturalizing and dehistoriciz[ing]” (p. 56) that which is considered knowledge in its favor, disadvantages the group by obfuscating or falsifying reality and disavowing critical reflection and analysis. Mills’ musing here creates ramps for faculty to explore the cost of epistemic ignorance in the discourse of the professoriate. One such cost, which will be explored more closely in Chapter Three, is interpreting one’s orientation in the classroom as normative and acceptable versus problematic; not because BIPOC students have the viewpoint that affords that critique, but because such orientation, as Mills might argue, risks confirming a virtuousness, which critical reflection and analysis are more inclined to problematize than confirm.

In “Denying Relationality: Epistemology and Ethics and Ignorance” in Sullivan and Tuana’s (2007) anthology previously referenced, Sarah Lucia Hoagland stresses the role of intentionality, with which ignorance can be enacted. Witting participation of ignorance looks for the line between conscious deliberateness versus subconscious or unconscious habituation. Hoagland interrogated the domain of ignorance with an acute sense of ignorance’s operationalization within dominant ways of knowing, such as the intentional dismissal of, or irreverence towards, ignorance as a way of knowing and, essentially, ignorance’s bounded relation to ideology. Hoagland stated, “my initial interest in exploring ignorance lies in the denial of relationality that is often part of an

ethics and an epistemology of ignorance, the denial of substantive relationship between those competent practitioners of dominant culture who are ignorant and those about whom they are ignorant” (p. 96). In Hoagland’s analysis, ignorance is teleological, or serves the purpose of maintaining dominant culture’s position of power, and reinforces social hierarchy’s organizing principles, which are made possible and maintained by the ontology of individuation, or separation. Socialized to understand the self as separate from others, an epistemology of ignorance promotes a subjectivity of disengagement. A likely outcome of such an arrangement is a felt ambivalence or behaving ambivalently; that is, acting indifferent to the way one’s subjectivity affects another’s subjectivity. This poses tension in a community composed of epistemic plurality, of which a classroom is often comprised. The disengagement becomes concerning when either or both the professor and students ignore the way that their disengagement (labeled here as individualism) omits multiple ways of knowing the self in relation to others—mutually dependent, entangled, synchronized, etc. The basis of that omission—individualism—can become justification for denying its effect, as in the case of blaming BISOC students for not code switching fast enough to adhere to the grammar rules of the “proper,” White, English language.

Subjective disengagement prevents knowers from recognizing the self as composed and generative. Hoagland (2007) incited this notion by referencing Mills’ (1997) words about White people as constituted by the *racial contract*. Examining what becomes necessarily normalized in the construction of White identity, as a contract, such as academic freedom, is this dissertation’s predominant quest. For example, the ability



not to name separation as a product of a relationship gets at the root of whiteness' disengagement. The denial of one's own construction is the fortitude needed to deny one's participation in a contrastive relationship and one's dependency on an *Other* to (1) form the separation; (2) essentialize a hierarchical arrangement; and (3) attempt to dissolve BIPOC subjectivity (Hoagland, 2007).

White epistemology is descriptive in that it traces epistemic coloniality originally coded in the wealthy body, eventually gorged in the White body and available for internalization. White epistemology serves as a set of standards performed by *White cognizers* (Mills, 1997), which is not exclusive to White-bodied persons. These standards are given meaning upon contact with the performer, in this case, the *White cognizer*, and through repetition of that contact. The discourse of habitude provides useful context, or framing, for understanding the materiality of an epistemology. For example, when students return to the same seat that they chose on the first day of class, they could be communicating a learned practice, embedded in their body's memory since first-grade. That conditioning, however, might also be indicative of a habitual orientation foregrounded by a way of knowing—familiarity. When performance is read as the language of an epistemology, so too is the relationship between the environment in which the performance is happening and performed. By narrowing in on the repetitiveness of particular performances, a path between epistemic principles and habit is drawn.

The principles that this dissertation claims are consequences of colonialism and habits of whiteness will be explored in the two consecutive sections. How these principles are performed by the professoriate will be further discussed in the proceeding

chapter. The themes are considered taxonomies of White epistemology, which manifest as principles.

### **Canon: Individuality/Independence**

In the text *Cosmopolitanism*, Kwame Anthony Appiah (2006) suggested that globalization is both a geopolitical, capitalistic enterprise and an infinite loop of connectivity. Appiah argued that globalization is anchored to humanity. The measure of its worth lives not only in modern design, like social media, but also in the feeling of responsibility for one another. Appiah called this *cosmopolitanism*. In Appiah's own words,

...there are two strands that intertwine in the notion of cosmopolitanism. One is the idea that we have obligations to others, obligations that stretch beyond those to whom we are related...The other is that we take seriously the value not just of human life but of particular human lives, which means taking an interest in the practices and beliefs that lend them significance. ...Because there are so many human possibilities worth exploring, we neither expect nor desire that every person or every society should converge on a single mode of life. (p. xv)

This conundrum, living in the torque of "universal concern and respect for legitimate difference" (p. xv), is the struggle from which cosmopolitanism creates. Is collective humanity possible? If agreement is an endless impossibility, what's the use of consensus? These questions untwist the Western Enlightened mind from its lineage and braid it with Appiah's curiosities. Standing back, one can immediately see the error of an ideological encumbrance—we cannot all be one if there is a distinction between you and

me. Appiah asked readers to embrace new openings/possibilities where the actual and imagined separations between people are cohabitating concurrently.

Appiah (2006) used the metaphor of a “shattered mirror” to explain the totality of truth to be no more or less complete than the curves and spikes that make up its pieces. Appiah illustrated the utility of cosmopolitanism in the ontology of thought, adventures, and discoveries of being and then in politicized positionality, such as human rights. Appiah connected the contributions that Sir Francis Burton of Victorian England made to the fields of anthropology and philosophy to cosmopolitanism, arguing that Burton’s embracement of people and willingness to be changed by and through them (within a multi-linear direction model) is the *shattered mirror*, where one can find “...parts of the truth (along with much error) everywhere and the whole truth nowhere” (p. 8). Appiah continued to channel Burton who believed that the error is not the coexistence of contesting truths, but, rather, it is “...to think that your shared of mirror can reflect the whole” (p. 8). This centric statement infers that one’s own story comes from the only trusted location from which truth can be articulated.

The impetus for believing that one’s reality can represent a generic population is taken up by proceeding paragraphs. Individualism as an antecedent of centralization and separation are closely analyzed in the context of colonialism and whiteness. The implications of individualism on the professoriate and academic freedom will be explored in more detail in Chapter Three.

Appiah’s (2006) assertions about individuality, or independence, provides substance for a deeper analysis of autonomy—on its anatomical level, such as its

epistemic function. White epistemology encapsulates principles of individuality, sovereignty, and possession, which previous contemplative summations have conjectured as indexes of supremacy via the law and through compulsories, the latter being more power-blind than the former. The professoriate is designed with proficiency in power-blindness, or an aptitude for circumventing its whiteness. White cognizing is not just a theoretical optic, it might also be the personification, or embodied manifestation, of colonial epistemology—of supremacist ways of knowing, such as the centralization of whiteness. A non-centralized understanding of existence would serve whiteness well, as it would the professoriate. Indigenous knowledge could be an alternative framework to consider.

In Chilisa and Tshenko's (2014) research, the process for gathering data was framed by an indigenous episteme (e.g., all living things are linked and have cyclical and interconnected relationships). That which counted as knowledge (data) in their research was reflective of indigenous epistemology—familial stories, circles as a form of orientation, non-hierarchical relations, etc. Rather than perceiving the human as the dominant species, indigenous thought recognizes the interdependence, or inseparability, and cyclical (versus mono-directional and hierarchical ordering) relationship between all living things. The non-hierarchical relation calls for the dispossession of power in the form of an authorial voice that ostensibly declares oneself the central reference point from which others descend, not just offshoot. Indigenous thought offers a different organization of power—dispersed not centralized—and life—relational. The human

body's cells might have their own way of knowing that affirms indigenous ideas of interconnectivity.

At the National Conference of Race and Ethnicity (NCORE), Hackman (2019) used an analogy in making a deterministic argument about human interdependence. Hackman argued that cells need each other to survive. In her presentation, titled "The Body Already Knows: A Framework for Dismantling Race, Racism and Whiteness and Achieving Racial Justice," Hackman argued that the "[cells'] ability to survive is predicated on other cell survival." If cells behave as cognizing supremacists do, they would die. The notion of autonomy is antithetical to the way cells operate and sustain themselves. If the human body's existence is centered on cells communicating with each other at all times, as a "community" (Hackman, 2019), perhaps an oversight worth examining is the notion of autonomy under the austerity of individuality and independence, which assumes that others' experiences cannot be felt through the absence of experiencing it for ourselves. As Hackman wisely noted, "We may not be able to sense/experience the world with other lenses, but we can attune to the feelings and inferences made as a result of not experiencing." Hackman is asking us to foreclose the disillusion of "stepping into others' shoes" and notice that our own shoes tell us something about what we do not know. This not knowing can lead us to listen closely to the experiences that we cannot have, that we will likely never understand, and invite the experience of not knowing and not understanding to be our contributions. This not knowing can lead us to listen closely to the experiences that we cannot have and invite those experiences to alter us. For example, if professors can maintain that we are

autonomous, and academic freedom says so, we might infer that autonomy does not stop at administration nor external political forces. Operating under the illusion that we are separate from the students gives us permission to ignore and minimize how our behavior, such as discounting what they know until it aligns with our knowledge, impacts them. If, however, we understand ourselves as connected to students and have a reflexive relation to our epistemologies—principled on the disqualification of students’ posteriori knowledge that is not gained through didactic measures—we could account for the displacement of students’ lived experiences in education and the instructional relationship between faculty and students that maintains that displacement. This could lead faculty and students to understanding knowledge as emergent, with variance, and unfinished—entirely accidental.

**Canon: Proprietarism/Possessiveness**

The second canon that this chapter analyzes in an effort to demonstrate White epistemology embodied by the professoriate is the idea of proprietary, or possessiveness. The colonial acumen of identity is bound to the notion of land and humans as possessions—supplies that alone hold value and are commoditized for purchasing more power. The divide between the possessor and possessed, or Whites and Indigenous persons, parallels the latitude of colonial and Indigenous sovereignty, or the incumbent of that relationship to White power. Disavowing Indigenous people as people by branding them the backdrop, or “landscape” (Moreton-Robinson, 2015, p. 29) serves as a colonial metaphor of freedom—the establishment of White sovereignty is the denial of indigenous sovereignty. Beyond its metaphorical prowess, White possessiveness is the front-drop of

the colonization period of the 16<sup>th</sup> through 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. European modernity terrorized the land of the Americas as aggressively as it did humans, encumbering both with insubordination before either had made a move. They were as quickly entrapped and dispossessed of their agency as they were displaced from their land. The galvanization of White possessiveness is rooted in property privatization and colonial individualism that law, economics, and social attitude spurred. Moreton-Robinson's acute examination of possessory culture points to the contemporaneous relationship between gentrification and conquest. The birth of "white property-owning subject emerged in history and possessiveness became embedded in everyday discourse as 'a firm belief that the best in life was the expansion of self through property and property began and ended with the possession of one's body'" (Moreton-Robinson, 2015, p. 49). In this case, the human is both the subject and object of its possession, equipped with the power to control one's behaviors, attitudes, values to control other's behaviors, attitudes, and mind. Such control raises questions and muddles the logic of agency as an entity free of dependency. A key quality of White possessiveness is obscuring the intimacy between White and Black agency, as though ascending to power occurs without contacting and settling on others' agency—the collateral damage. Perhaps, fierce individuality, coupled with possessiveness, cannot account for such dependent relationships without disqualifying the very logic of autonomy from which it emerged and ignored the way White logic makes interdependent relationships absurd and unreasonable, unless mutual-dependency can legitimize White prominence. The status, in this case, follows the classification of property-owner vis-à-vis property. White possessiveness as an episteme could be

surmised as symptomatic of the proprietor's individualism and, more acutely, the anatomy of autonomy.

White possessiveness is expressed through the consumption of another, or the proprietor possessing the property, and ignores the interdependence that allows White people to perceive ourselves as non-raced bodies. That same condition (interdependence) affords Whites the ability to claim independence. For example, I can make the statement, "Not only am I not you, but who I am exists despite who you are." This statement sidesteps the construction of identity within the possessive or proprietary culture in which white epistemological beliefs are made and by which habits are formed that reinforce the beliefs.

Whiteness as proprietor is rooted in colonial relations in the U.S. (e.g., between White and Indigenous and White and Black bodies). Cheryl Harris (1993) wrote in the article "Whiteness as Property," "the origins of whiteness as property lie in the parallel system of domination of Black and Native American peoples out of which were created racially contingent forms of property and property rights" (p. 1714). The ability to separate oneself in the act of claiming ownership, without recognizing how that assertion necessitates the *Other* as own-able, symbolizes epistemological mechanisms of individualism and possessiveness. More specifically, the professoriate's ability to think itself objective, an expert, autonomous, and not within an analysis of White epistemology demonstrates its epistemological whiteness. In Chapter Three, I will consider the way epistemic whiteness lives in the professoriate's performance by analyzing the discourse



of academic freedom. By understanding the connection between White epistemology and the professoriate, faculty might take more seriously the effect of our teaching on students.

### **Prelude to Chapter Three: The Professoriate**

Donna Euben (2004), who is an AAUP Counsel, offered these grounding words by E.K. Kantorowicz during her presentation on faculty “termination & discipline” at the 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Legal Issues of Higher Education Conference at the University of Vermont:

There are three professions which are entitled to wear the gown: the judge, the priest, and the scholar. This garment stands for its bearer's maturity of mind, his independence of judgment, and his direct responsibility to his conscience and his god. It signifies the inner sovereignty of those three interrelated professions: they should be the very last to allow themselves to act under duress and yield to pressure.... (as cited in Euben, 2004, p.1).

According to Euben, “faculty are the institutions themselves” (p. 1) and have the right, or ascendancy, to make decisions that impact institutional governance. The profession’s highly distinguished status, likened to the highest profession in law and religion, leads me to wonder about the milieu in which the professoriate builds a knowledge about itself.

### **Chapter Three: Epistemic Whiteness & Performing the Professoriate**

The writing in Chapter Three outlines three distinct and yet overlapping ways that the professoriate embodies White epistemology—objectivity, mastery, and autonomy. The writing will not argue that a colonial episteme is essential to being a professor, but rather that the professoriate simulates epistemic whiteness and the colonial paradigm, in which whiteness was constituted. Vignettes will be used, once again, to give shape to the conceptual. Academic freedom, which outlines faculty’s rights and responsibilities, will foreground the analysis of those aforementioned values that have traces of Western, colonial epistemology.

In this chapter, I aim to recognize the intersection of White epistemology, by which individualism, proprietarianism, and academic freedom are shaped, if not produced. The chapter draws from previous assertions about embodiment and habitus to discuss how an episteme is materialized. This chapter will continue the argument that is taking shape for Chapter Four—a call for the professoriate’s disorientation. This chapter intentionally exposes the colonial epistemological beliefs and *power-relations* (Foucault, 1995) that concocted the term *First-World* and signaled whiteness to replicate itself on smaller scales. In doing so, the writing will reveal the normalization of White ways of knowing as a paradigm in which the professoriate is imagined and through which the professoriate performs epistemic whiteness.

In the article “An Epistemological Critique of the African University Education System,” Ephraim Taurai Gwaravanda (2019) problematized the centralization of Western epistemology in collectivist cultures. As a form of epistemological colonization,

globalizing education keeps the southern hemisphere controlled, or possessed, by the northern. Gwaravanda wrote,

The African university education system is currently dominated by Western epistemology where the analytic model of knowledge is being used. The model relies on the definition of knowledge as justified true belief. This definition of knowledge is not only foreign to the African university but it also has implications that are inconsistent with the African ways of knowing. The Western definition of knowledge excludes social epistemology that is fundamental in the African knowledge paradigm. African knowledge systems validate knowledge through the community.... African universities have used universality, objectivity, and neutrality to define and influence content of the curriculum without the problematization of these concepts. (p. 3)

Colonization is an impediment, as implied in Gwaravanda's analysis, that emanates from imperialist explanations of nationalism and supremacist explanations of race. And, as a consequence of colonization's contagion quality (e.g., infecting mechanisms of learning, such as education), it can cause people and communities to reinforce, even admire, the epistemology by which they were taught, and disparage the epistemology of their cultures. Similar to Gwaravanda's sharp observations of Western epistemology in African education, Chapter Three observes the way White epistemology suffuses the professoriate.

Epistemic whiteness ascribes value to people and knowledge based upon (1) a colonial value-system, such as supremacy; (2) the ideologies by which such value system

is produced, such as racial hierarchy; and (3) our compliance with both. In “Decolonization Through Decentralization,” Rachel Buchanan (2018) leans into this notion of epistemic whiteness by first describing western epistemology. Buchanan stated,

The westernization of thinking stems from a particular regime of power and knowledge that affirms the linear-rational, scientific way of thinking as the truth.

This is done in a way that naturalizes colonial knowledge and leaves unquestioned the power dynamics from which it stems. Those in power define what is true and disseminate bodies of knowledge that legitimize and maintain their power (see also Wynter, 2003). (p. 112)

While Buchaman, a White U.S. educator, is referring to African and North American colonial relations, Buchaman could have been referring to professors’ and students’ White relations. Like Fanon (1982), upon whom Buchaman draws, Buchaman was concerned with the centralization of coloniality, which seeks to maintain whiteness as the ultimate version of personhood and impressing upon Black and Indigenous persons the desire to seek similar status—superiority. Buchaman noted education as one avenue through which such impressions are made.

BISOC students know that the strategy of reserving power for whiteness is a strategy of conversion—for BISOC to become White. Dissimilarly, it would not automatically occur to the professoriate that students, particularly BISOC, have their own varied ways of knowing that include survival techniques (e.g., double-consciousness (Du Bois, 1997)). Similarly, it never occurred to colonizers that Black and Indigenous persons have their own way of knowing, equal in legitimacy (Buchaman, 2018). Certainly, to

acknowledge this would require admitting that Whiteness is produced within an epistemic circuit and is not, therefore, “natural” to those who do not share the same episteme. In other words, Whiteness is guided by premeditative beliefs preceding its actions that insist that power, like people, is possession-able and undeniably reserved for itself, despite that perception being made of and manifesting as illusions.

I sense a distinct compulsory perception that orients professors, including myself, to present/assert ourselves as autonomous, neutral, experts in the classroom. Their impact on *knowledge* and *truth* is the primary concern of this chapter. For example, the telos of Western culture, by which American higher education continues to be influenced, includes deducing knowledge to that which can be measured, or scalable, and placed along a hierarchy from introductory to mastery. Perhaps these behaviors are indicative of an epistemology, rather than a specific pathology, that is engendering the profession. More specifically, perhaps analyzing the professoriate as an embodiment of whiteness can lead to a type of disassembling/dismembering that, in the process, reassembles the body with a new orientation, as in a disorientation, to itself, knowledge, and students.

The professoriate’s enactment of itself produces the student, in a similar inverse relationship that Fanon (1982) keenly observes between Black and White bodies. Similar to colonial power-relations, the academy is not neutral on what power is and how it should be used. Faculty’s academic freedom, student’s handbook of conduct, and harassment policies are just a few apparati that communicate an academic institution’s understanding of power and how it can be wielded to support or hinder students’ education. Bearing in mind the assumption that power is considered a commodity or

possession and held, only later to be released, bodies perform power by enacting their roles that have a prescribed relationship to power. Where students and faculty make contact is where competing powers push against one another, building friction and sometimes leaving burn-marks, euphemistically called learning.

Objectivity, the concept of concerted mastery, and autonomy are leading canons of Whiteness, reinforced by ideas of individuality and privatization, or proprietorship. White epistemology is paradoxical as it can be both hard to pin down and lodged in the body of those with whom it makes contact. It is elusive in the sense of existing in cultural codes of ethical decisions, common colloquial language, and methodology of professionalism. For example, a student club on a college campus could argue that their intention to create dialogue led them to publicize the following provocative statement, “White Lives Matter.” The students can claim that the intention is not to alienate but hold civil discourse. To assume that intention is built from an objective space assumes that people’s most immediate and available responses are not shaped by their socialization, such as learned or internalized supremacy. That is to say, the intention to hold space for conversation and learning will be greatly influenced by the epistemological premises, such as racial superiority, that determine intent. The tactic used to hold conversation behaves more as antagonizing artillery, “weaponizing” (Wright, in personal conversation, 2019) equitable efforts and affective responses to hate.

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### Vignette #9: Dear Colleague: Whose Reality Have We Lost Touch With?

The start of this vignette is a compilation of my thoughts. The email will read more like the vignettes that you have now grown accustomed. Both were crafted by me to a leader among the faculty after a biased-incident at Neoco College.

A smog of vengeful disappointment, transferent anger, and unrecoverable pain seeps into the dining hall, residence halls, offices, and classrooms. This only occurs when there is an “incident” (which is never insulated by the room in which it occurs) of transgression. The responsibility to create an inclusive culture that is attentive to culturally exclusive modalities falls, yet again, on the targets of ignorance, internalized supremacy and, at times, measured provocation and possible indignations. That their identity needs to be “defended” (Wright, in personal conversation, 2019) and confirmed “existing” (Blumberg, in personal conversation, 2019) implies that those making the assertions undeniably exist, despite those who need to defend their existence. The idea of freedom as autonomy makes rebuking bias a measure of inclusivity. When one’s inclination, compulsion, or under-examined habitual behavior to spout hate, bigotry, ignorance, bias, internalized supremacy is perceived as an exercise of freedom, or autonomy, one is ignoring how one’s autonomy is made possible through the rejection of another—that one’s ability to act as an individual is only possible when there is another person about which to feel indifferent or unaffected. In cases where power differentials exist, the “another” becomes the “Other” upon which the more powerful one firmly stands, pontificates, and settles.



Dear Colleague:

I believe, as some of you do, that we are in an interdependent relationship with the students: our role, as faculty, is very different than that of the students' when it comes to change. We do have a responsibility, as students have correctly named, to exploit the conditions by which faculty-culture change is made "impossible" and/or create the conditions for the change. As a collective, we do have a sphere of influence and power, albeit a different sphere and power than the students. But, when we work in tandem with students, an unstoppable force emerges. You're also right that the students must play a role, but not in the absence of faculty's role. Similarly, non-marginalized folx and marginalized folx have roles to play, but they, too, are different. Non-marginalized folx can seek knowledge that marginalized folx have asked them to gain, such as self-reflective knowledge about racial privilege and power. And, marginalized folx can control how much and what they choose to teach/lead. As White folx, we will not know what it is like to be Black, but we know what it like to be White. We know that we are unaware which of our behaviors can be ascribed to whiteness. To us, whiteness is cellophane. We might want to consider all of our behavior, including our guiding principles as faculty, furnished with whiteness.

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### **Objectivity, Mastery, and Autonomy: An Examination of Academic Freedom**

“Academic freedom is a modern term for an ancient idea” (Hofstadter & Metzger, 2012, p. 3). In their opening paragraphs, Hofstadter and Metzger provided a historical canvassing of academic freedom in U.S. higher education. During the Middle Ages—

between the 2<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries—in Europe, Oxford and Cambridge were leading institutions after which Harvard University was created. Universities during this time held “power and prestige, protected and courted, even deferred to, by emperors and popes” (p. 5). The academy at the time was a preparatory site for church clergy and local government. Former students of mastery tutorship demonstrated their loyalty to the university by guiding others’ learning. Universities were, as they are today, self-governing and the most intelligent were called upon to offer insight on state and church concerns. Just as the modern version of the university reflects the thinking of Europe during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, the birth of the academy reflected the thinking of the time. The design of the university was relative to or situated in the socio-political discourse and rules that govern discourse in society (Foucault, 1980; 1982). The modern iteration of academic freedom is a culmination of overarching societal axiology.

Hofstadter and Metzger wrote,

From modern science [men] have taken the notion of a continuing search for new truths, fostered by freedom of inquiry, verified by objective processes, and judged by those who are competent... From commerce they have taken the concept of a free competition among ideas – hence the suggestive metaphor for a free market in thought. From the politics of the liberal state they have taken the idea of free speech... (p. 61)

In the late 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, religious leaders played a significant role in founding the American colleges; however, colleges, such as Harvard, were dedicated to serving the public. Although church clergy were amongst the attendees, colleges were not

theologian seminaries. The “desire to educate a suitable orthodox body of native clergymen” (Hofstadter & Metzger, 2012, p. 116) likely motivated the establishment of American colleges. By the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, a structure of power that reflected Protestant centralization of a “lay government” (Hofstadter & Metzger, 2012, p. 120) model placed the trustees at the helm of decision-making power, which created an organizing system in which faculty yielded to a higher power, of which their position was not. This hierarchy of its organizing structure, of which the president was part, launched a power-system that would later necessitate faculty’s protection under academic freedom. At the same time, the insular nature of English colleges, from which the founders of American colleges drew inspiration, may have invoked an essentialist understanding about knowledge and autonomy—that possessing knowledge is essential to having relevance (i.e., purpose), and self-governing prevents curricula and teaching from being diluted by (e.g., threatened by) unlearned persons whose intellect can only pale in comparison to the faculty’s.

Hofstadter and Metzger’s astute genealogy of American colleges finds religious freedom to have played a major role in the rise of academic freedom. Nineteenth century Darwinian thought placed “scientific conceptions of the search for truth” (Hofstadter & Metzger, 2012, p. 262) at the bow of intellectual freedom just as religious liberty steered colonial colleges during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. And, contemporary academic freedom reflects the continuity of liberty itself. In subsequent writing, I will open up specific epistemological themes that likely influenced the discourse of academic freedom, which, according to Hofstadter and Metzger, “has been profoundly affected by the professional

character of the scholar” (p. 261) and according to this dissertation, has shaped the scholar into an esoteric erudite.

In the professoriate’s orientation with the classroom, students and knowledge are preceded by three overlapping modalities (objectivity, mastery, and autonomy), which were referenced at the start of this chapter as “ways.” The following paragraphs identify the role that academic freedom plays in colonial principles and relations guiding the way the professoriate comes to know itself and perform these White epistemic traits, such as objectivity, mastery, and autonomy. Language from the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), of which Neoco College is an endorsee, offers insight into how these “ways” operate as normative, professoriate behavior.

**Objectivity.** The preamble of AAUP’s *1940 Statement of Academic Freedom and Tenure* states the “purpose” of the testimony. The following is a portion of that prelude.

...Institutions of higher education are conducted for the common good and not to further the interest of either the individual teacher or the institution as a whole.

The common good depends upon the free search for truth and its free exposition.

Academic freedom is essential to these purposes and applies to both teaching and research. Freedom in research is fundamental to the advancement of truth. (p. 14)

The act of “searching,” like discovering, signifies a Western colonial-relation to the material world and, to restate Buchaman (2018), “...the linear-rational, scientific way of thinking as the truth” (p. 112). Under this condition, truth is recognized as an object to be sought, discovered, or exposted. Western thinking, of which Whiteness is made, links truth with power. In this case, the power to (1) perceive one’s voice as inextricably

authorial, (2) present the phrase “common good” as a universal, to which an elite group has access, and (3) to disassociate an institution’s or instructor’s “interest” with the power from which such a statement is made. The methods of attaining truth via research not only set the parameters for what will be considered plausible, but also set blockades against other relations to truth, such as harmonious coexistence. Positivistic proof measures determine the dependable narrators of truth, which by design reject narrations that cannot be proven scientifically; however, these narrations might not be meant for science’s interpretation. Human subjectivity, of which testimonies are reflective, is as true as the humans who live to tell their stories, in spite of science’s methodology claiming them capricious. In the case of Western ways of knowing, truth is a denunciation of subjectivity. Yet, claims of objectivity, like preferences of neutrality, reflect a particular framework of thought and emerge from a subjective, or situated, space (e.g., a biased lens by which the framework is decidedly made significant).

Let us suppose that empirical studies on desegregated schools after the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) Supreme Court decision proved that racially-integrated classrooms are beneficial for both White and Black students. The number of integrated classrooms, achievement testing, academic achievement, and job placement post-graduation were factors in determining integration’s “success.” Information not used to determine the “success” of school integration included African-American pupils’ narratives about how racism shaped cross-racial interactions in the classroom, in the cafeteria, and on the playground and teachers’ accounts of feeling prepared to teach bi-racial classrooms and culturally-attentive content. African American teachers’ accounts

of feeling the effects of job loss were also not included. The nuances of human experiences cannot always be observed by empirical testing, which one research study used for justification in exploring personal stories of desegregation. In their executive summary, the authors' stated, "... research consists of statistical analyses of test scores or graduation rates. It tells us little about students' actual experience in desegregated schools or what it meant to them later in life" (Wells, Holme, Revilla, & Atanda, 2004, p. 5).

Lionizing empirically-based research to sermon truth oversimplifies or explicitly ignores the epistemological influence that reveres empirically-based facts and dissuades subjective accounts of reality, while also ignoring the subjectivity of the knower, whose method of attaining truth necessitates the dichotomization of subjectivity and objectivity. For example, when faculty refer to students' writing as "lacking substantial evidence," they have accepted the belief that students' take on reality (or personal experience) that is used to exemplify an idea is not enough to back up their argument. And, furthermore, their personal experiences cannot be proven and tested for validity, which means their experiences lack generalizability. The very subjective (let's call it habitual) act of accepting academia's definitions of validity, as the access point to truth, is ignored and coined as objective and neutral. I have fallen into this trap, myself! As one professor, whom I aspire to be likened to, put it, "what if the call or fall is to honor wisdom of others' ideas (along with the burdens of their having shared them)?" (Clark/Keefe, in dissertation dialogue, 2020)

**Mastery.** The notion of mastery evokes images of colonial relationships between Whites peoples, African Americans and Indigenous Americans in particular. When used

in academic settings, mastery is the level of knowledge one is expected to have in order to teach content. This is reinforced in ACCUP's *Freedom and Responsibility* (1990) report, which stated:

It is the mastery teachers have of their subjects and their own scholarship that entitles them to their classrooms and to freedom in the presentation of their subjects. Thus, it is improper for an instructor persistently to intrude material that has no relation to the subject, or to fail to present the subject matter of the course as announced to the students and as approved by the faculty in their collective responsibility for the curriculum. (p. 174)

That level of knowledge is a stand-in for educator's proficiency. Colloquially speaking, to master content, or a subject, is to achieve, or possess, the highest level of knowledge on a topic. The academy even has a phrase that emboldens this—*intellectual property*. When coupled with education, mastery can be a means of controlling what knowledge is and which version is believable, prestigious, and worth faculty's reverence. What can a different (less possessive, non-commoditized) relation to knowledge invite?

The unequivocal belief that fields of inquiry, subject matter, or topics have a quality that allows them to be fully known ignores the influence of human subjectivity tangled in making meaning. In *After Method: Mess in Social Science Research*, John Law (2004) elaborated on this very issue. For Law, the veneer of the human's centrality in social science research misrepresents the role that human embodiment, or "the hungers, tastes, discomforts, or pains of our bodies" (p. 2), can play in gathering evidence of and interpreting reality. It also conveniently mangles the duplicity surrounding agency being

a quality guaranteed to humans and not non-humans. Human centralism preserves the idea that *things* cannot account for themselves and are not contesting human reductionist explanations of them. If, as Law stated, “events and processes...exceed our capacity to know them” (p. 6), then any/all human explanations of the world possibly reflect how the human desires or has acclimated to being seen. To the same degree as Braidotti’s (2013) propositions, Law’s queries lay fresh foundation for research methods to notice the networks between humans and non-humans, by which explanations of the world are made and limitations of explanatory conclusions are left untouched or interrogated. Like Law, I see the danger of research taking on a centrist understanding of itself that reflects an anthropocentric epistemology, which, of course, this dissertation is not exempt from reproducing. It is the inconspicuousness of certain subjectivities, which can claim authority and neutralize its centralization, that the idea of “mastery” is being contested.

The process of holding objects stationary (assuming them grip-able) and assigning them a particular label and meaning (attaching the quality of continuity onto them) overlooks human epistemic motivations in abating the object’s agency. It also normalizes and naturalizes an external authority’s role in making the topic relevant. The silence surrounding the operations, in which this process takes place, makes it possible for the authority of the topic to escape becoming content of curricula and academic examination unless it’s pertinent to the field of study, such as philosophy. The master’s, or professor’s, knowledge on a topic replaces the topic’s knowledge of itself. In this case, the content *cannot speak* for itself, it requires an interpreter who is perceived as a reliable spokesperson. The concepts of mastery and authority in the academy reverberate a



colonial episteme of domination by assuming that encounters with the world should convert to “information” that humans consume, more like devour—master. Consuming information is not enough though. We must dissect it, slowly swallow parts of it and stretch our stomachs to eat all of it—analogue to educational competency criteria.

Neoco College is prepared to defend its position on teaching requiring mastery on a subject. And, yet, its position on teaching requiring an introductory level understanding of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) is spared. This implies that the holder of knowledge (the faculty) is a credible source, despite being DEI incompetent and conveying ambivalence towards his/their/her positionality. We can comply with colonial constitutions of knowledge without the lack of knowing how they impact students, discrediting us. Our casualness with complying likely gives us credibility. If anything, such compliance is the affordances of faculty, which might suggest that mastery affords us indifference to our effect on students, BISO in particular. The indifference to colonial-relations invading the classroom is rarely content for the classroom to develop close examination.

The master and slave trope is a dichotomy mirrored in the professoriate and student relationship (Willoughby, 2017). The notion of mastery buttresses colonial assertions of power that file humans into one of two categories—dominant or subordinate. The *will to power* (Nietzsche, Kaufmann, & Hollingdale, 1968) is to control those perceived as less powerful, which is legitimized through a process of dehumanization. One of the ways this occurs is through an infantilization process that the professoriate operates within, by which the subordinate group’s knowledge is thought

“under-developed” or “under construction.” The subtext reads, “The brains of the students, like the brains of the slaves, are not evolved enough to be trusted, and, therefore, cognitively unreliable and unqualified to make decisions and offer substance to analyses of critique.”

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#### Vignette #10: Neoco is Short for Neocolonial

Since 2016, students’ demands for DEI trainings geared towards faculty have gained momentum. Faculty’s responses to mandatory training and evaluative measures of DEI competency indicate, amongst many things, a relationship to perfectionism that academics call mastery, or highest level of knowledge.

At the November Faculty Meeting, a resolution to increase administrator’s responsibility in developing Faculty DEI competency is presented to the faculty. The following are paraphrases and expansions of one conversation.

Faculty 1: *For some of us, this will cause great fear.... We are expected to be experts.*

Faculty 2: *The notion of expertise, as we have used it, does not provide room for humility. At the basis of its principle is exploiting knowledge for the sake of status and justification of one’s adequacy.... We cannot be neutral on answers from which we seek to benefit.*

Faculty 3: *As a Latinx woman, I experience fear at PWIs regularly, especially in the classroom. For each of you who has the luxury to not experience fear in the*

*classroom, especially with regards to legitimacy, there is a person pressured to prove herself worthy of teaching in White spaces as a Brown person.*

When faculty's objection to infusing DEI in teaching reveals the inner fear of being an insufficient expert, we observe the colonial principles of supremacy, or authority, at work. The "fear" of failing at being an expert and failing at mastering a subject are read as uncharacteristic of professors. Meanwhile, the fear of being over-seen but not as an expert is felt by at least one faculty of color. In both cases, faculty have failed at noticing our complicity with colonial logic and at least one principle of supremacy.

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**Autonomy.** In the absence of close examination of its premises, academic freedom uncritically centers colonial values of autonomy over interdependent relations and evokes values of neoliberal consumerism. Academic freedom presumes that the relationship between professor and knowledge or professor and truth is mutually consenting; however, professors' "jobs" make both knowledge and truth objects, on which professors' acclaims are built. Might this be a coerced relationship? Additionally, the professoriate can perceive intellectual propriety as essential to the professor's authorial voice without examining the epistemic precedence. When knowledge is perceived consumable, exploitable, and dispensable material, the professor is likely to behave like a proprietor of knowledge versus a conspirator with knowledge. In this context, knowledge and truth become detached from their own agency and merely objects of professors' predation. It is in resistance that this detachment becomes only possible,

not inevitable. As Michel Foucault (1978) famously stated in *The History of Sexuality Vol. 1*, “Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power” (p. 95). In the case of the professoriate, individual professors have the agency to refuse the colonizer/colonized relationship to knowledge, truth, and students, but cannot escape the system that is the professoriate. For the purposes of analyzing the professoriate’s relationship to White epistemology, professors’ agency to diverge, even subvert, the professoriate’s episteme, will be regarded as a willful act of non-compliance and staying in touch with emotions that have been faulted for getting in the way of the job.

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#### Vignette #11: Dear Comrades: Your Body Knows How to Stay In Touch

The following is a doctored email that I sent to students in one of my courses. I wrote this email after a tense class discussion. Criminal justice students were explaining the training regime of law enforcement officers. These students were defending officers’ responses in which emotions are severed in order to “get the job done.” The students were explaining that emotional toll of routinely witnessing severe deprivation, people treated inhumanely, and vehement brutality. They were defending, as well, the need to remove emotion or cut-off their empathic sensory in order to handle the situation without emotional obstructions interfering with their decision-making. The social work students, in particular, were concerned about the presumption being communicated. To them, interference strategies to numb the nerve of emotion foreshadows implicit bias to run

unchecked. The idea of separation, which autonomy spawns, is worth closer examination.

Dear Comrades:

I realize that Friday's conversation could have felt hard, which our class does not shy away from nor should it. As we noted during class, there is a way to hold difficult conversations, in which our opinions recognize the privileged and disadvantaged positionality from which our opinions are generated. Towards the end of the conversation, I saw this take shape but not without the pain for Black students acting as a requisite of White students' learning. I'm eager to find ways for us to engage without pain being a condition of learning.

As we heard together, some experiences with racism are manifestations of White bodies building immunity or cutting their emotions off from human suffering. We also heard that some jobs encourage and train people to dissociate emotions from satisfying a job requirement. In the act of self-protection, a different form of suffering is seeded and experienced by another. Echoing sentiments some of you made during class, isolation or separation is an impossibility where racism is concerned. In other words, the very conditions used to remove emotion from a situation (to keep emotions intact and "do our jobs") are the very same conditions masking racist beliefs/implicit/learned bigotry (harming others' emotions and "threatening lives")...

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In a paralleled way, the excuses given by law enforcement, as suggested by criminal justice students, mirror the rhetoric used in the classroom by faculty. The

professoriate prides itself on being objective, experts in their chosen field of study, and autonomous. By closely analyzing the American Association of University Professors as a vision statement of the professoriate, the notion of independency becomes a way of knowing oneself as a faculty member. Analyzing the ideology of independence with Buchaman (2018) and Fanon's (1982) insights on colonial, dependent relations, mirrored in the professor and student relationship, ruptures the certainty of which the professoriate's independence and autonomy are thought. As students have wisely observed, professors' ability to perceive themselves as separate or detached from students sets faculty up for overlooking hidden beliefs about students' inferiority, on which our profession has grown dependent.

The illusion of separation, or the false sense of independence, is illustrated in the freedoms outlined in the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) 1940 *Statement of Academic Freedom and Tenure*. The following are sections taken from that statement, the latter two of which are academic freedom clauses.

Academic freedom in its teaching aspect is fundamental for the protection of the rights of the teacher in teaching and of the student to freedom in learning. It carries with it duties correlative with rights.

Teachers are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject, but they should be careful not to introduce into their teaching controversial matter which has no relation to their subject.

College and university teachers are citizens, members of a learned profession, and officers of an educational institution. When they speak or write as citizens, they

should be free from institutional censorship or discipline, but their special position in the community imposes special obligations. As scholars and educational officers, they should remember that the public may judge their profession and their institution by their utterances. (p. 14)

Students' "freedom in learning" is precluded on specific perceptions created by authorities of the faculty's profession. These acumens include perceiving subjects of study as objects on which faculty build mastery knowledge and then exert their authority over by altering it (conducting research) and perceiving themselves exempted from institutional disciplinary processes. Of course, the latter might be different for faculty in whose image the professoriate was not created. As my colleague reminds us, her fear, which is not about mastering content and being perceived a fraud, is about being a woman of color at a PWI in which her existence as a professor who has anything worth contributing to White students' learning is regularly in question.

In the absence of acuties previously named, students' learning risks becoming stifled by restrictions placed upon faculty's ability to move freely and impart knowledge upon the students, despite students having their own engagement with knowledge and process for producing it. In this way, student learning is conditioned upon faculty complying with their freedoms, or being complicit with colonial principles and modalities. The allowances, along with the cautionary caveats, provide no alternative relation to knowledge. Students' ability to learn is predicated on faculty seeing content/subject as theirs, the know-with-all for determining what is and is not controversial, and perceiving ourselves exempted from disciplinary actions.

This is further reinforced in the AAUP's *Joint Statement on Rights and Freedoms of Students* (1967) statement, which presumes, once again, that students' freedom of thought and critical inquiry are best achieved under the episteme of experts whose profession believes, much like colonial thinkers, that truth is unfound material (without agency of its own) that is waiting to be discovered. It states,

Academic institutions exist for the transmission of knowledge, the pursuit of truth, the development of students, and the general well-being of society. Free inquiry and free expression are indispensable to the attainment of these goals. As members of the academic community, students should be encouraged to develop the capacity for critical judgment and to engage in a sustained and independent search for truth. (p. 411)

Academic freedom is a signal to administrators of faculty's role in institutional governance and signals to students of faculty's ways of knowing themselves. Faculty's ability to claim themselves objective, experts, and autonomous could be considered rituals of epistemic coloniality. Faculty autonomy—a precedent for separation—mixed with the “right” credentials gives us the authority to decide the content of a course, and to do so without student input and administrative objections overruling the academic community's curricular decisions. As conduits of truth, like shamans, faculty can, should they want to, remain aloof to what their autonomy can do in the classroom, regardless of that independence being a farce.



## Conclusion

The genesis of this dissertation sits in direct contrast to faculty's notion of autonomy, as BISOC learning is inseparable from professors thinking themselves separate and self-governing. When the colonial master designs the *other* to be its subordinate and itself the aspirational standard, the "other" becomes epistemically necessary to the colonial master knowing itself. In this case, the colonial master is not self-governing, it is governed by epistemic essentialism—inseparability. Similarly, faculty cannot exist without students confirming our existence through accepted forms of indoctrination—the teaching and learning process. In the context of academic freedom and supplemental doctrines, knowledge is a possession to pursue truth, which presumes true wishes to be pursued, specifically by the Professoriate and students who, too, are colonizing knowledge through an embodied process of imitation. The principles of academic freedom and ancillary doctrines produce the conditions for epistemic whiteness to guide the professoriate's understanding of knowledge as acquirable and itself acquittable. Knowledge, much like students and Black and Indigenous persons, is settled upon in the process of the professoriate building expert understanding of knowledge (embodying a White episteme) and discarding knowledge, students, and Black and Indigenous persons as reliable knowers of themselves.

At the start, and throughout the writing, this dissertation has argued that the professoriate embodies, through performativity, a colonial, and therefore White, body. Some of the ways in which the professoriate embodies the White episteme is through settling, or taking residency, via compulsive ignorance or habit. It is the banality, or

commonality, of the professoriate's persona with which this chapter is most concerned. The writing attempts to make visible the epistemic level in which objectivity, mastery, and autonomy are carried out and the epistemic beliefs that engender them. As faculty we can easily overlook the beliefs that charge our behavior (and its effect on students) when we assign it regularity and not attune to, for example, the way mastery is a value of supremacy. In this way, faculty can settle, or colonize, the classroom, students, and knowledge by simply behaving apropos of the dominant culture and ignore, should we want to, the way White epistemic supremacy shapes that behavior, refuses knowledge, and denies students of having agency outside of the professoriate's.

In "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Spivak (1988) analyzed the way European subjectivity produces the "other" through patterns of superior/inferior relations. Geopolitically and anthropologically, the global north has referred to the global south as devoid of a distinct identity of its own accord, or other than the one purported by Western colonial scholars, researchers, and politicians. In this way, the subaltern is considered voiceless, denied agency, and deprived of a selfhood or humanness. As Spivak contended, the onlookers (or Western scholars and anthropologists) assume that they are central and that through them the subaltern can be understood and represented accurately. Perceiving one's lens as unbiased is, however, a symptom or sign of how one has come to understand themselves as neutral and objective. Spivak's argument renders Western-centrism a violent paradigm, for it deprives subaltern persons of their own authorial voice and obscures the suffering endured in the process of that deprivation. Discursively,

Spivak's analysis of arrangement, or *orientation* (Ahmed, 2006), makes the Western location visible. No longer can it hide from being known.

## Prelude to Chapter Four: Remote Teaching



*Figure 1. Thea Heck, MFA (SHOOK, 2020). Unpublished thesis. Used with the artist's permission.*

(Heck, 2020)

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Vignette #12: March 28, 2020 – Reflection on Remote Teaching: Feels Like Walking Up the Attic's Staircase That Leads Me Down to the Basement

We do not yet have the pedagogical wherewithal, the language, the pace, the rhythm, the codes, the demeanor nor humility to teach online. We are at odds with what

we have accepted about our kind—experts—and the humility we are asked to embrace at this time. We are not expected to know how to teach online. But, our novice skills in remote teaching might imply an undignified judgment about our expertise on the subject. It might incite our inner fears of imperfection, upon which we might rely to make pedagogical decisions.

Over the past week of teaching remotely, I have noticed myself growing increasingly fatigued by some students' inability to or indifference about analyzing text thoroughly and extracting meaning. But, have not I been criticizing standardization of knowing and knowledge? Troubled by my own frustration with them and irritation of performing that which I have argued is problematic, I find myself at an important juncture—an examination of orientation in real-time.

When my response to students' engagement in their learning is to perceive anything that falls short of what I have asked of them, and how I would complete an assignment as a deficiency on their part, I imply that my standards are not only accurate but, without a shadow of a doubt, must be trusted. Just because my rationale behind criticizing their writing is shared by the majority of my colleagues does not make it any more truthful. Rather, my reasoning points to the discourse in which my profession was imagined and illuminates my inner fears of imperfection, which becomes a source of my displacement (e.g., over-doing corrections versus moderately suggesting options) as I read their writing. What if what I know and how I know it are wrong and misleading? Neither can be true if I believe that what I know and how I have come to know it are reasonable and indisputable. But, as I have learned through writing my dissertation,

writing and thinking alongside critical scholars of epistemology, education, and race, it is too convenient to presume that my knowledge and how I know it do not carry implicit bias and are not guided by a particular outcome—the preservation of epistemic whiteness.

If, as one of my wise colleagues suggested, students and faculty can share a common commitment—to move towards each other—we might find something in the middle of that which we are both a part (Horne, in personal conversation, 2020). What are the epistemological conditions by which students and professors might synchronistically arrive at a common commitment? Might they involve a less familiar relation to my role, knowledge, and students?

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## Chapter Four: Disorientation

In the article “Antiracist Solidarity in Critical Education: Contemporary Problems and Possibilities,” De Lissovoy & Brown (2013) examined the arrangement of relationships that employ racism. One such configuration is about the ways in which the ego and attitudes of superiority become central to how one organizes themselves/herself/himself interiorly. For De Lissovoy and Brown, “reconceptualizing solidarity in a way that refuses the overt and covert centering of whiteness” (p. 551) rejects colonial understanding of the human as superior, which allows it to perceive itself as the only authorial voice, with the right diction for narrating reality that knows already the victor and victim of the story. If everything is made of energy, as quantum physicists (e.g., Niels Bohr) have theorized, and energy transfers information, then the human is not the only source on reality, by which meaning is made. By expanding upon De Lissovoy and Brown’s “rethinking humanism” (p. 551) and connecting it to the discourse of socio-materialism, this chapter will propose arrangements that do not yet know their effect. If the human is one of many energies, with no more or less value or power than other materializations, might there be orientations that do not immortalize Western understandings of the human? And, what happens when orientations behave more like refractions without preexisting destinations?

### **Humanism**

In the text *The Posthuman*, Braidotti (2013) made the case against the familiar, or the banal. Braidotti looked to post-colonial theory as a *location* for theorizing humanism, post-humanism, and humanity. Post-humanism borrows thinking from “anti-colonial”

and *anti-universalist* epistemological critique. With the rise of globalization and geopolitical power, post-humanism sustains its commitment to decolonization by exploring “multiple belongings” (Braidotti, 2013, p. 49), subjectivities, and transitivity, through which new forms of accountability are created. Braidotti argued for a new form of human that is connected to the “non-human” not through societal powers that mark a shared scarcity or vulnerability, like capitalism, but through an engagement of being-with, or “... an affirmative bond that locates the subject in the flow of relations with multiple others” (Braidotti, 2013, p. 50).

Braidotti (2013) dissuaded the teleological basis of humanity through an examination of *the human* in “Leonardo da Vinci’s Vitruvian Man” (p. 13). Braidotti’s critique of this archetype dismantles the normativity of moral and biological superiority and, simultaneously, problematizes the epistemological conditions and history that instigated Europeanized “progress” and “reason.” Western optimization of the human form is a derivative of the “Enlightenment Humanist legacy” (Braidotti, 2013, p. 36), but so too are the liberatory movements and identity politics that are the byproducts of, yet push against, homogenization. Representation of the “subject” coincided with attributes associated with “Man”—White, able-bodied, heterosexual, etc. The counter to this—Black, disabled, and homosexual—continues the legacy of Humanism; *the human* remains the entity from which resistance of its pathologization is argued. Framed in this way, “difference” along a descending hierarchy places the human subject along a pendulum—acceptable and disposable. This form of homogenization, led philosophers,



such as Hegel and Husserl, to dissect Europe's hegemonic force, rather than perceive "critical reason" as innately gifted transcendental power.

How might we use Braidotti's (2013) analysis to its fullest and follow the process of reconstituting and reeling? By focusing on "process" versus the materialized result, we might see things that we were unable to notice or that we overlooked as a passenger—things not predicated on that which already exists and conditioned on the culture having a model for it. According to Braidotti, matter moves with culture—it is not an oppositional force. It is in constant formation, reformation. What matter creates depends upon who/what it is in relation to.

Posthuman theory assuages anthropocentrism's monistic and dialectical explanation of reality, in which "species supremacy" (Braidotti, 2013, p. 65) is naturalized, and employs the embroilment of multiple beings. In Braidotti's own words, "The key question for me is: what understandings of contemporary subjectivity and subject-formation are enabled by a post-anthropocentric approach" (p. 58)? For Braidotti, post-anthropocentrism presumes that all non-human matter radiates subjective qualities, such as intelligence, and communicates "informational codes" (p. 60) that interact with social, biological, and ecological schemes. Braidotti named this non-human, life-force *zoe*, which stands for "generative vitality" (p. 60). Braidotti explained this further in the following account:

Zoe-centered egalitarianism is, for me, the core of the post-anthropocentric turn: it is a materialist, secular, grounded and unsentimental response to the opportunistic

trans-species commodification of Life that is the logic of advanced capitalism. (p. 60)

In an explorative analysis of *life beyond theory*, Braidotti (2013) looked to discourses that decenter the human but also act as a connector. For example, environmental and bio-genetic “trans-disciplinary” theories in modern Humanity Studies mark an end of human-supremacy. Braidotti argued that the lack of *epistemological self-reflexivity* could prevent the type of paradigmatic experimental-ality that assists other inquiries of knowledge. According to Braidotti, self-reflexive practices could lead the Humanities into spaces beyond the *Human* and explore inquires that lie beyond the human declaration of reality. One discourse of study that illuminates the traditional humanism, and perhaps exemplifies epistemological self-reflexivity, is Environmental Studies—granting the earth and multi-species know-ability, histories and “... the same role and agency as the human subjects that inhabit [the earth]” (p. 160). What does the human do when it recognizes it shares the same vulnerability as the earth or animals (a gravitational solidarity)? Braidotti suggested that this “simultaneity of being in the world together ... with human and non-human others” (p. 169) creates a consciousness that resembles the variedness and complexity of existence. The collaboration and process of locating intersections becomes the focal point, from which the “ethics and epistemic structures and strategies of the posthuman subject” (p. 169) emerge. Braidotti believed that the Humanities must exceed its preemptive premise—a concession of moral high-ground for legitimizing homogenization, as in the argument of “universal transcendental

reason” (p. 150), and design a framework that can honor plurality of being and knowing without precedent or conditionality.

As an exercise in de-familiarity and a benchmark of decentering human-reality, post-humanistic humanities grounds Chapter Four in a paradigm in which the professoriate’s orientation to that which is familiar is no longer accepted as ordinary or natural. How will the professor know where to position themselves when the classroom and the student have volition and are not just artificial consequences of the professoriate’s habitus?

How might being disoriented, from things not existing where one expects, invite new relations and emerging understanding? When things feel unfamiliar to us, we can develop understanding that does not depend on preexisting biases and habits and confirmation of our status vis-à-vis that which we are in relation with. By expanding upon Braidotti’s (2013) thinking, we can re-cognize agency, as Braidotti has, as a relational experience between students, faculty, the concept of knowledge, the classroom, the curricula, etc. In this arrangement, there is no center for that which would normally hold power to stand, around which everything else would orbit. What gets produced out of that which we neither know nor successfully cajole into existence?

### **White Humanism as Exceptionalism**

In DiAngelo’s (2018) opening argument in *White Fragility* she described *exceptionalism*, or unwarranted exemption. This is produced from a particular racialized way of knowing oneself (e.g., an immunity from being the “problem” and having any responsibility for being part of the solution). According to DiAngelo, exceptionalism is

an extension of individualism (e.g., *I cannot be privileged. I am unemployed and I am White*). As DiAngelo states, "...individualism allowed white people to exempt themselves from the factors of socialization" (p. 3). Individualism makes morality, rather than racism, the justification of White inimitability. Exceptionalism leaves unchallenged the belief that White folx are the reliable narrators on race. To believe that "racism ended in 1865 with the end of slavery" (p. 3) ignores the way racism minimizes the reality of racism in history by trusting narratives that confirm the believed civility of a culture. And, exceptionalism overlooks the colonial legacy of both individualism and morality, by which whiteness becomes the modern version of colonialism. Racial exceptionalism, much like notions of mastery and objectivity, stems from a particular way of knowing the self and possibly a particular orientation towards others that implores that knowing.

DiAngelo (2018) and Braidotti's (2013) analyses of exceptionalism and humanism bare epistemological acuties. Like the anthropogenic, whiteness is as much about a way of knowing as it is a way of arranging and maintaining that position. DiAngelo and Braidotti's insights mark Chapter Four's departure from analyzing the epistemology of whiteness embodied in the professoriate. Their contribution to my thinking is the question they left me asking myself—if whiteness and humanism have particular coordinates that mark where one is supposed to position oneself, might there be arrangements that have less known, and possibly less colonial, outcomes?

Chapter Four will not propose a solution to the professoriate's deranged orientation. Inspired by previous chapters and their call for epistemological shifts, this chapter will join efforts that embrace chaos without promising what disorder will actually

produce. If being oriented puts power in our reach, then being and staying disoriented might form new ways of knowing ourselves and relating to others.

### **Orientation**

Orientation is about direction and degree (or distance), or “how we reside in space” (Ahmed, 2006, p. 1). Orientation precipitates movement—it is the conditions or cues that the body takes before “turn[ing] toward[s] certain objects, those that help us find our way” (p. 1). For example, in the story *The Wizard of Oz* (Fleming, 1939), Dorothy finds herself and Toto relocated, far away from Kansas. To find her way back, she aligns her wishes and unrelenting anxiety of not returning home with the held promises that the yellow brick road holds. What is it about home that leads Dorothy to follow a path that she does not know?

Ahmed (2006) theorized the parallels that can be drawn between the body (in the broad sense of objects and ideas having an encasing) inhabiting space and sexual orientation being of a type of inhabiting. By making orientation a framework for thinking about sexuality, it becomes clear how identity is not only situated but occupies, as in the “spatiality of sexual desire” (p. 1). Expanding Ahmed’s theorizing of sexuality and space to other identities, there is an opening for considering the implications on the professoriate. For Ahmed it is the inhabiting of space, which an orientation evokes, that deliberate attention is needed, because it is in the space where our motivation is materialized. A professor’s orientation to a student might place them/him/her behind a desk and close to the board, all of which inhabit a space in the room that communicate the “front” of the classroom, or where students’ attention should be placed. For Ahmed

the motivation is about familiarity, or the comfort that comes from knowing. As Ahmed stated, “Orientations shape not only how we inhabit space, but how we apprehend this world of shared inhabitation, as well as ‘who’ and ‘what’ we direct our energy and attention toward” (p. 3). Ahmed purported that orientation occurs by first experiencing the discomfort of feeling disoriented, or not knowing how to interpret and how to act in the new or unfamiliar orientation to the ground, walls, and ceiling, or from the space one is inhabiting in that moment. Ahmed, like the philosopher Heidegger, believed that familiarity is the precursor to orienting oneself. Orientation is also then about achieving familiarity and “aligning body and space” in a particular way that allows us to “know which way we are facing” (Ahmed, 2006, p. 7), which is the cue to knowing which way to move.

Ahmed (2006) reached toward Avtar Brah’s (1996) text *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities* in exploring the power of familiarity as a motivating factor and how being a visitor, nomad, migrant, etc., moves us away from focusing on where we land and instead looks at the “conditions of arrival” (Ahmed, 2006, p.10) and feeling oriented. Ahmed called into space Brah’s notion of migrant orientation, or “unsettle arrival” (Ahmed, 2006, p. 10) to offer another way of thinking about unfamiliarity—a place to run towards versus away. Brah’s thinking is critical to Ahmed’s ability to convey the role that place plays in being oriented. Brah noted the contributions that diasporic discourse made to trouble the notions of a singular arrival and being lost as a state from which to escape. While drawing upon Brah’s insight, Ahmed states, “Diasporic spaces do not simply begin to take shape with the arrival of migrant bodies; it is more that we only

notice the arrival of those who appear ‘out of place’ (p. 9). Ahmed expanded Brah’s thinking to pull closer to the process of being oriented or seeking familiarity, which Ahmed considered a place from which thought is made, including rethinking disorientation as new proximities from which to gain familiarity. In Ahmed’s own words:

The familiar is an effort of inhabitation; we are not simply in the familiar, but rather the familiar is shaped by actions that reach out toward objects that are already within reach. (p. 7)

The concepts of familiarity and orientation will anchor Chapter Four in a discourse of disorientation and new familiarity, as the professoriate becomes rethought/expands. Thus far, the discursive style of writing has opened the tractions of colonial epistemology in whiteness and the professoriate. By exploring more closely the emergings of disorientation and new familiarity as forms of engendering, a more rhizomatic assemblage of the professoriate could lead to ways of knowing that shift away from knowledge being within the professoriate’s reach and instead knowledge emerging by being in disorienting relation to knowledge.

The professoriate, as discussed in Chapters One through Three, embodies a similar definition of agency that presupposes colonial human-centrism. Not only does the human have the authority to define and determine what is known, distinguish itself separate from the “other” and invalidate other arrangements (e.g., living beside versus consuming), the human can reject explanations of reality in which the human has not already philosophized and made meaning. What is knowledge and what energies comprise its assemblage when it is not already thought of as an object of possession,

caught in captivity (of pre-arrangements) by the professoriate? The “ontology of *assemblage*” (Fenwick, 2012, p. 5) or the materiality of networking (constant confluences) might provide critical rumination for answering that question. If, as Fenwick (2012), suggested that ‘things’ and humans produce meaning through their contact, then the notion of agency as an exertion of one’s autonomy is more symptomatic of colonial epistemology than *the* model to be replicated. If, however, agency is made through relational existing, then agency is the confluence of, for example, the professoriate, students, and social issues towards which education directs its desires, knowledge-as-yet-to-be-defined, etc.

### **Complexity Theory**

Complexity theory, according to Fenwick (2012), suggested that the will of the human to explain what *is*, is already pre-framed by the desire of the human to know and be the authorial speaker of knowledge. The ability to exist is predicated on human exposure (e.g., prior encounters), and the power to explain the encountering. Complexity theory, of which post-humanism is an offspring, disassembles linearity by, for example, decentering the end as the pre-determined focal point and instead observes the interactions (or integration) between humans, the material world, concepts, institutions, etc. Fenwick describes complexity as an adjustment towards what will become or the process through which something emerges. Fenwick stated,

...in (complex adaptive) systems, phenomena, events and actors are mutually dependent, mutually constitutive, and actually emerge together in dynamic structures. That is, the nature of the system as well its elements and their practices



– both human and non-human – emerge through the continuous rich and recursive improvisational interactions among these elements. (p. 6)

Similarly, though through a different channel, Protevi (2009) argued in *Political Affect: Connecting the Social and the Somatic* that the corporeal-reality is just as important to the understanding and formation of reality as cognitive surges. Throughout Protevi’s argument about the physicality of politics, he analyzed epistemology from untapped corners of the body to credit socio-somatic sensations as producers of experience. As Protevi stated, “the concept of bodies politic is meant to capture the emergent – that is, the embodied/embedded/extended – character of subjectivity” (p. xii).

Emergence offers an alternative to explanations of reality that are Darwinian—“freedom versus agency” (Protevi, 2009, p. 9), as example. According to theorists of *complexity* (i.e., socio-materialists and post-humanists (Fenwick, 2011 & Braidotti, 2013), emergence is the materialization of that which composes the subject (incomplete in form) according to the body’s psycho/physio experiences of the social world; the swallowing of atmospheric pressure, like pain and pleasure. Protevi’s ideas are Deleuzian in that emergence is imbricated of intensities—“pattern changes” brought on by surpassed “thresholds” (p. 11), amicable to deterritorialization, or “change in behavior patterns” (p. 11). Protevi theorized that *political cognition* is the process of noting the behaviors, both repetition and divergences, overlapped by political categories, like race, class, and gender, of experience—embodied politico-socio-historio-sensing. Likewise, bodies politic or *political physiology*, is the body building a schema for “political categories” (Protevi 2009, p. 35). For Protevi, subjectivity is key to both *political*

*cognition* and *political physiology*; we are affecting change by being affected by the socio-historical matter in which we are situated. In other words:

Bodies politics thus must not be seen as mechanical in the sense of a determinist, behaviorist, or disciplinary stimulus-response system, but must be seen in terms of developmentally plastic and co-constituted patterns, thresholds, and triggers that include the subjective level. (Protevi, 2009, p. 36)

Political cognition and physiology, driven by theories of socio-materialism, like emergence, create openings for affective pedagogy, or in Protevi's (2009) case, "empathic solidarities" (p. 185) or as Teresa Brennan (2004) discussed in *The Transmission of Affect*, "entrainment" (p. 9) to affect Western conceptions of knowledge, education, and "the professor." Might this be space for educators to observe how they are changed, or repositioned, by students' bodies politics? Might that be a place to cultivate willful disorientation? If we welcome the feeling of disorder that comes with not having our bearings, we might have a better chance at noticing new paths (or, new ways of relating to students) along the way to balance.

## **Conclusion**

hooks (1992) contested in *Black Looks: Race and Representation* that dominance is the sole speaker of reality. Although dominance is an ideological discourse and difficult to pin-down, it emerges out of a particular arrangement between the oppressor and the oppressed. In this way, dominance can be as quickly replicated as it can be rejected. hooks observed this in the relation between master and slave. Black eyes gazing back at "the master," an act undeniably punishable, was a declaration of subjectivity and

a destabilization of White master's reality. To put it in Ahmed's (2006) terms, orienting towards the "inside" is, for the Black body, memory-remade and is, for the White body, memory confusion. The "black imagination" (hooks, 1992, p. 165) complicates white exceptionalism by refuting its premises—that whiteness is one thing, is always pointed in the same direction and is not already in the process of being remade. The invitation that hooks is offering, similar to Protevi's (2009), is to notice oneself being guided, moving through unfamiliar terrain. There is opportunity here to see oneself becoming different, without placing past meaning on current experiences.

hooks (1992), Ahmed (2006), Braidotti (2013), Fenwick (2012) and Protevi (2009) each study the epistemological subtext of discourse—racism, anthropocentrism, and corporeality. Each have different methods for explaining phenomenon but each approach specifies the role of positioning. For example, for hooks, racism is maintained through one of whiteness' epistemological preconditions—centralization. Whiteness determines the middle and then occupies that space in a way that leaves no room for wandering. The mistake, however, is assuming that other residents (e.g., Black persons), have not formed their own panorama and that White positioning will maintain its loyalty under Black conditions. Fenwick, on the other hand, looks at the relations between things (e.g., objects, society, and concepts) in their specific locations and the result of their sequence. For Fenwick, the mixing and setting of power, people, and prejudice makes racism rise.

This chapter started with a vignette about my first week teaching remotely during the COVID-19 (2020) pandemic. It did not occur to me then, and likely still not now, that

my previous 12 years of teaching in a classroom would not serve me nor the students. And, I certainly was not prepared for my reaction to watching students drift and me feeling anchorless. My inability to compute the chaos while continuing to use in-person methods of teaching failed me. I can argue that ensuring continuity was my reason for barraging them with communication and insisting on hearing from them. When I look underneath that logical excuse, I find a way of knowing that has a White way of orienting. I am forcing them and me to perform the teaching and learning ritual that I have argued is harmful. And, because they are not following the few standards that I have in place, I assume that they are not speaking.

This dissertation started with an explanation of how I arrived at its topic—the professoriate and coloniality. I discussed how the experiences of Black, Indigenous Students of Color at Neoco College positioned me to inquire, analyze, and reflect on my role as professor in U.S. higher education. Their daily encounters and negotiations with whiteness, not just White persons, led me to examine the role of epistemology in how colonialism operates in Western education, more generally, and how whiteness is embodied by the professoriate, more specifically. I would now say that these students’ stories, or their bodies’ politics, oriented me towards them, from which I could not unwind. That same orientation would later reveal my continued muddling with colonialism and the embodiment of whiteness.

The methodology of this dissertation, Critical Discourse Analysis, played a leading role in creating a contemplative process for building and addressing the research’s queries, samples of which are held in the previous paragraph. Post-colonial

discourse, which framed the dissertation, was applied to the role of academic freedom in the university and the professoriate. Collectively, the methodology and primary framework of the dissertation facilitated a reflexive and dialogical writing process. Personal stories and observations called vignettes either reinforced or introduced ideas. Principles of whiteness—mastery, autonomy, and objectivity specifically—were found to be prominent features of academic freedom and the professoriate’s habits, or performance, alike. This observation shifted the conversation from analyzing the relationship of professors and students with the paradigm of colonialism to directing our attention to the actual arrangement.

At the core of this dissertation is the students’ and professors’ entanglement. And, at the center of that cohabitation is the direction of our bodies. Which direction are professors facing when BISOC are sharing insight on experiences at the college? They continue to tell stories that their bodies not only can recall, but are continuing to live. The professoriate’s prolonged exposure to and habiting of whiteness have made turning towards the unfamiliar (in this case, students as the reliable narrator) a risk with doubt. Can the professor recognize themselves as a professor when students’ sense of truth and agency is emotional awareness brought about by their experience with society? But, if we (faculty) allow ourselves to be disoriented—stick with the unfamiliar—there might be something in the unknown for us. As Ahmed (2006) ensured readers,

Moments of disorientation are vital. They are bodily experiences that throw the world up, or throw the body from its ground. Disorientation as a bodily feeling can be unsettling, and it can shatter one’s sense of confidence in the ground or

one's belief that the ground on which we reside can support the actions that make a life feel livable. Such a feeling of shattering, or of being shattered, might persist and become a crisis. Or the feeling itself might pass as the ground returns or as we return to the ground. The body might be reoriented if the hand that reaches out finds something to steady an action. Or the hand might reach out and find nothing, and might grasp instead the indeterminacy of air. (p. 157)

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#### Vignette #13: A Call for a Contemplative Approach to Academic Freedom

I am too comfortable with the physical classroom and the predictabilities it hosts. I know how the students will act, when they will engage, where they will direct their responses, and for whom their voices yield. I can rely on the codes and regulatory customs of the classroom that let us know what is and is not “appropriate” and what is and is not reasonable to expect of each other. And, when any of these conducts start to disband, I have practiced solutions for directing them back to their post. While I can argue that these behaviors are necessary for a functional classroom, how phrases like “necessary” and “functional” relate to each other in the context of education and the student-faculty relationship might tell us something about the epistemology with which I preform the professoriate. Is it out of fear of losing control of the classroom and teaching that I become irritated by students abandoning their post? Solutions to fix the disorder keep failing me. Is it out of fear of failing at my job that I seek security in and revert back to what I believe has worked in a physical classroom? I know how to manage the physical space—a space where I decide where the wedge will be placed between me and

the students. Might it be that the fear of powerlessness, which contrasts colonial notions of mastery, objectivity, and autonomy, makes unfamiliar spaces, like remote education, feel threatening? Do I send more emails, check their online posts, scoff at their basic writing skills, and feel disappointed in their choice not to attend an optional online-forum because I am worried about them during this time of confusion and incomprehension? Am I reacting to the insurmountable fear of my role being powerless? I am stuck in a dark, open space feeling around for the walls that let me know where I am and whom I can anticipate is there with me. I use online tools, like calendars, to create submission deadlines and to make me feel in control. I need to keep us together, teach like we are inseparable and equal partners, all the while overlooking how my orientation to power allows me to make choices that will affect them, without them.

I am complicit with the modes of epistemic whiteness raised in this dissertation. My incessant frustration with students' failure to uphold their end of the bargain, which they are likely unaware of consenting to, shows the cracks of which my role was made. Unbeknownst to the students, registering for courses implies agreement to follow the role codes. Each email asking/demanding students to respond, submit work, or communicate the hardships that are plaguing their ability to be a student, stops my feeling of vanishing. My continued circling around their email might offer them structure. It certainly gives me a sense of power that this new space of open classroom does not. But, what if instead I detached my desire for power to the colonial sense of being powerful? Could I stay in this position of disorientation long enough to see myself confidently standing without a ground? I must admit, I close my eyes when I am free falling.

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What if academic freedom invited us to not know, without our confidence in that space achieved by being experts in not knowing? What if our autonomy as faculty was built by shared experiences that shape us, whereby a piece of each of us can be found in any one of us? Might we call this inter-sufficiency (a variation self-sufficiency)?

Questions like these that undo/redo principles of colonialism are not solutions in disguise. Rather, they are meant to move us to the edge and take the next step. In a free fall, we can never stay long enough in any given spot to gain our bearings and recognize distinction. Perhaps we will feel lost. Perhaps we will feel scared about this fall having no end. Perhaps we will grow frustrated that the hood of our regalia cannot substitute as a parachute. But, perhaps we will be joined by students who have been here before.



## Chapter Five: Dear Reader

In the first few pages of this dissertation, I debriefed you on what the writing would not do. In the “Writing Convention,” I explained that the writing would not prevent you from feeling disheartened or disturbed by expressions that are difficult follow, not always clear, and that lacks precision. The very notion of *accuracy* is contended by thinkers who have inspired the writing through their analysis of positivist language within the discourse of colonialism. In Chapter One, I discussed my writing style as a dialogue between voices, of varied social positions and lived experiences. I acknowledged how the methodology (CDA) and vignettes would decenter me as the writer; however, decentering does not necessarily mean a dispossession of power.

I, as the writer of this dissertation, have decision-making power. And, thusly, my biases inform the framework of thought that reflects my chosen philosophical paradigm; what gets included as inspiratory variables (e.g., students’ anecdotes); and which lives become narratorial voices. For each scholar, student, or faculty colleague included, there is a corresponding scholar, student, or faculty colleague excluded. That said, by insinuating that writing is a door to that which enters/exists, we are implying that all realities can be known (and are known already) before writing initiates the process of refusing and accepting. How do we account for realities in the making or those not meant to be *known* in the sense of human competency?

As you read Chapter Four, were questions about praxis, or theory and action, brought forward? For some readers, Chapter Four raised questions about the materiality of disorientation. For me, Chapter Four loosened queries about the form that

disorientation could take in the classroom. If preexisting contexts of that which has become familiar does not elicit experiences of disorientation, as disorientation is provoked by and causes discordance, might the unknown stimulate possibilities that feed our curiosities, rather than foreclose imagination with imprudent answers?

If I enter the conversation about anti-racism in the classroom with the understanding that I will never fully understand all the ways that White supremacy manifests, then I might be open to challenging action-steps that universalize and homogenize BIPOC's experiences of racism. I might also be open to questioning versus deflecting my own complicity with White supremacist strategies (e.g., speaking from a place of better knowing) that serve to typicalize or naturalize superiority. This presupposes that one can know all that there is to be known about BIPOC and racism, including experiences in the making. I might also be open to re-relating to the students and park in the unknown for a while. What if we, faculty, stayed in the most jarring spaces where expertise on knowledge, autonomy promised by academic freedom and the propriety of a classroom were put into question? Might that lead to shifting conversations away from just protection to infinite evolution? And, would that lead us to receive feedback from students more graciously? If I were to argue that as a White professor I can read the "n word" as written and claim that I am allowed to choose if/how I use the word, then I might also conclude that White epistemology is benign and ahistorical. But, if I entered that conversation unsure if prior knowledge can serve the present situation, I might be open to asking questions, for which I have not the answers. I might ask myself, "What does teaching the 'n-word' look like when the pain that Black students feel when

each letter of the word is enunciated signals the term's history? What is my role when the 'n-word' is not content to learn, but an experience (e.g., Black students' experiencing dehumanization and White students experiencing supremacy)? How might I engage with James Baldwin's writing if African-American history is not content to be mastered, but a sensitivity to my reactions, the genealogy behind those reactions, and the formation of new actions? If I enter teaching with some but not a lot of familiarity with the content, I can turn to power with uncertainty and turn to the unknown with humility. And, I can pause with the students, giving us enough time to turn and face a new direction together, to which there is no prepared orientation. I ask that you receive this as one of many possibilities, rather than "the" answer, and add to its expansiveness and witness meaning being made in shifting arrangements.

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