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Narratives That Perpetuate, Narratives That Disrupt, and Narratives That Heal: One Teacher's Exploration of Decoloniality

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NARRATIVES THAT PERPETUATE, NARRATIVES THAT DISRUPT, AND NARRATIVES
THAT HEAL: ONE TEACHER'S EXPLORATION OF DECOLONIALITY

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This dissertation, by Alison Packwood Henry,
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ABSTRACT

NARRATIVES THAT PERPETUATE, NARRATIVES THAT DISRUPT, AND NARRATIVES
THAT HEAL: ONE TEACHER'S EXPLORATION OF DECOLONIALITY

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The initial question was innocent enough, at least on the surface: How do scholars and practitioners define child centered, developmentally appropriate, culturally responsive education in places distant from my home in the US? I was originally inspired to ask this question by my graduate students—aspiring and practicing Waldorf teachers—who were wrestling with the Eurocentric nature of the curriculum. In researching this question, I never imagined that I would find myself asking questions about the *decolonization* and *indigenization* of education, much less about *coloniality*. In fact, even as I completed the literature review, I was still so unfamiliar with the word coloniality that I had to look up the definition to grasp the complex web of hegemonic relationships encompassed in the term. So began an unexpected journey, in which I embraced a combination of evocative and critical autoethnography to examine stories and the power they have to re/produce and, potentially, disrupt colonial ways of thinking. What I have learned from this process is that there is no universal answer generalizable to all teachers in all contexts, even all Waldorf contexts. Instead I see promise in small scale initiatives in which teachers collaborate with one another and within their communities, to craft liberatory stories and lessons relevant to the students in their care and to the geographies and cultures they inhabit. Even as I conclude that there is no universal

answer, I have come to recognize some crucial ingredients—humility, the courage to be altered, a commitment to relationality and the rigorous intellectual and moral courage this entails—all ingredients that, in my view, help disrupt, perhaps even heal, the violence of coloniality. This dissertation is available in open access at AURA: Antioch University Repository and Archive (https://aura.antioch.edu/) and OhioLINK ETD Center (https://etd.ohiolink.edu).

Acknowledgements

I am deeply indebted to the children who have shaped my life. To my students at Monadnock Waldorf School, you cannot know how formative those years were for me. Do you remember the story of Offerus the giant? There were times when I felt the weight of the world on my shoulders, the deep responsibility for your wellbeing. We all felt the swirl of flooding waters at times, threatening to throw us off balance, but there was also the sense of shared destiny, paths intertwined for a sacred purpose. And what joy to witness your awakening capacities, evident in your engagement with one another, evident in your individual successes, evident in class plays, community service projects, and voices raised in song. When we reached the far bank of the river, I knew the genius of [that] story. You are certainly part of mine.

I am also fortunate to have a supportive circle of family, friends, and colleagues who helped me feel seen even before I realized that I might have something more to offer. Torin, Karine, and Carla, thank you for the sense of shared inspiration and mutual respect. Carol, Susan, Paul, Ellen, Laura, Julie, Stephanie, and Emily, you model how a healthy colleagueship can work. Angela, Heather, Meg, and Bev thank you for your insight and commitment. Karen, Julia, Jan, Kate, and Kirsten, thank you for your abiding friendship. Thank you Dad and Sandra for your unwaivering support. To my extended family, thank you for your patience and love. Will and Megan, in addition to bringing immeasurable joy to your father and me, you continue to inspire me with your warmth, compassion, and insight. To Philip, thank you for always being there. Thank you for reminding me of my own highest ideals when I begin to flounder. I am filled with gratitude.

Special thanks to members of my dissertation committee: Lize, Fayth, Stan, and Chérie. Lize, thank you for serving not only as the Chair of my dissertation committee but also as my

academic advisor for over 5 years. Your patience and guidance have been invaluable. Fayth, thank you for diving into a new topic area with such openness. I appreciate your insights. Stan, as you know, encountering your work at just the right time in my process changed the course of this dissertation. Thank you for your probing questions, always. Chérie, I can't tell you how glad I am that you invited me to read something dense and challenging. Our study sessions and collaboration since November of 2022 have been so nourishing. My hope is that this is just the beginning.

To the many inidividuals who have shared their insights and asked just the right questions over these many years, you have helped to shape this pathway. Special thanks in this regard to Rich Holschuh, members of the Whitener family, Martyn Rawson, Neil Boland, Clare Andre, Signe Motter, Irene Richardson, Adrienne Patrick, and to the many, many graduate students who have helped to shape my very identity as a teacher and a storyteller.

At the time of writing, my mother has entered Hospice care. I am her eldest, and I feel deeply what my accomplishment means to her. I did not always appreciate her pointed encouragement, "So, what's your next step?" "Have you thought about where you will go from here?" I wanted my efforts—whatever they were at the time—to be enough. When I entered the PHDLC program, my mother was the last of my immediate family members to know. I dreaded her delight that there would be *another doctor in the family*. Even now, I cringe. Even so, I find myself whispering at my mother's bedside, "Guess what, Mommy? I think I'm almost there." Her smile is radiant, so happy for me, the daughter for whom she would travel to the moon and back.

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Preface

Begin as you mean to go on, and go on as you began….

— Charles H. Spurgeon, *All of Grace*
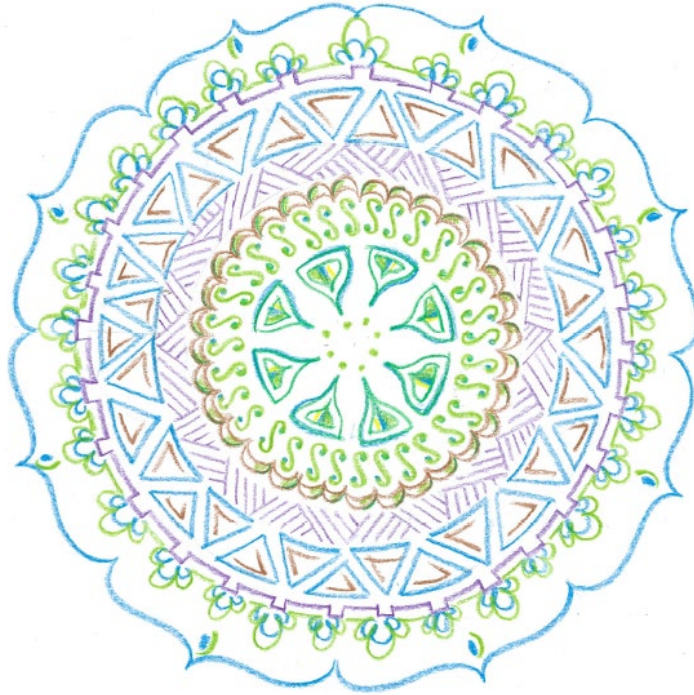
When my eldest child was a preschooler, we shared a half hour commute each morning and afternoon. Somehow in my efforts to soothe a child who had to remain strapped in a car seat, I became a storyteller without any intention or preparation. I have no doubt that the technology for *books-on-tape* or *audiobooks* existed back then, but it never occurred to me to do anything other than start creating stories. This experience with impromptu and improvisational storytelling was prescient in many ways. Not only have I come to understand that I am a storyteller at heart, but I have come to know, feel, breathe, live the tremendous power of storytelling for good and, unfortunately, for ill.

When my youngest child was an infant, I found myself foundering. A combination of postpartum depression and the overwhelming stress of deciding to leave a rewarding job so that I would not have to put my child in childcare swirled into a storm of crushing emotion and uncertainty. I was not just leaving a job that I found stimulating. I was leaving a job that provided excellent health care benefits for my family of four and a paycheck that was essential to making our monthly mortgage payment. Faced with the pain of selling a beloved house and uprooting my family, I found a measure of solace in a weekly parent-child class at a local community center. Each week, I bundled my daughter up and made the short walk to Sophia's Hearth to sit and talk with other mothers as our little ones lay on sheepskins in front of us. At the time, I did not know anything about the philosophy behind Sophia's Hearth, but I remember being struck by the beauty of the lightly textured, peach-hued walls and the natural wood surfaces throughout. The space felt sacred, blessed, and I expressed the wish more than once that we could go more often. Being in that space felt healing at a time when I experienced the decisions I was making as open wounds— bleeding, gaping wounds.

The parent-child sessions each week were calm and unhurried, but there was a gentle sense of structure nonetheless. The parents had time to talk freely, but occasionally the leader, Willa,[1] would pose a question. One week Willa asked us to consider why a child cries? Though I do not think I showed it in the moment, I was startled by her question—one might say startled awake. I remember taking the question seriously and pondering possible reasons why a child cries, but I also remember feeling myself newly aware of what was transpiring in the room, thinking about Willa's

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[1] A pseudonym has been used to maintain confidentiality.

role and what she was accomplishing with such a question. My senses were heightened as I processed another level of engagement in that space. While I am sure that I participated in the conversation, what I may have said seems inconsequential now. I listened as other mothers chimed in with their thoughts.

As she always did, Willa waited for the conversation to come to a natural end, and then she moved to begin the clean-up process that would bring that day's session to an end. And, as Willa moved she also nodded and spoke, as though adding a simple aside, "Yes, and sometimes a child has trouble descending into their bodies." I was stunned—truly stunned. I looked around wondering if I were the only one who heard what Willa had just said. No one else looked perturbed or confused. Was it only me, I wondered? By now, I had scooped up my little one, and I was moving with others into the foyer where we would don our shoes, hats, and other outdoor layers for the walk home. Without much forethought, I found myself moving a little slower than usual, taking opportunities to give others space, until, as if by conscious design, my daughter and I were the only ones left there in the hall with Willa and her colleague.

I have no recollection of the actual words I spoke next, but I must have communicated somehow that I was perplexed and wanted to know more about what she had said. Before I left that day, I had borrowed two books from their library: *You Are Your Child's First Teacher* by Rahima Baldwin Dancy and *Beyond the Rainbow Bridge* by Barbara Patterson. I read both in a matter of days, and I had to know more. Baldwin Dancy (1989) mentioned the work of Rudolf Steiner, so my next step was a trip to the local library to see if they had any of his books. Those familiar with his work will know how fortuitous it was that the *only* book by Rudolf Steiner in my local public library was *Kingdom of Childhood*, which proved to be the perfect introduction to Rudolf Steiner's

vision of education. By the time my daughter and I returned to our parent-child class the next week, I had finished my first book by Steiner and had ordered another. At that point, I had never been in a Waldorf school, nor did I even know that the underlying philosophy of Waldorf education was called anthroposophy, but there was something absolutely compelling in those pages, pages that tugged at something deep within me.

In the end, this dissertation will be about stories, about narratives, and their power in our lives. More specifically, this dissertation will be about my ongoing struggle to understand how the narratives, implicit and explicit, that are evidenced in my teaching practice serve to reproduce patterns of inequity and prejudice but also how narratives have the power to disrupt those patterns. This dissertation is about stories, but it is also my story, and any storyteller knows that the potential of the story is lost when the so-called moral of the story is proclaimed before the story is even told. As such, this dissertation will not follow the typical hallmarks of academic writing, with good signposting and a view to the end before the beginning is even complete.

As with other effective forms of inductive teaching and learning, storytelling allows the audience to enter into a realm in which there is a possibility of something akin to a first-hand learning experience. Told well, the story transports the audience into a place of oneness with the events of the narrative. The audience member who allows themselves to be fully present in the story experiences the events as though they were there—an interesting complement to lived experience. The audience does not need to be told how the content must be interpreted. They do not need to be handed the moral of the story as a tidy aphorism or bumper sticker-worthy call to action. Instead, the story lives within them in such a way that meanings emerge—not meanings imposed by a teacher, but meanings—plural—co-created by the listener themselves.

While there is value in the transparency and forthrightness of conventional academic writing, this project follows a different path. Over the course of this dissertation, I trust that the reason for my approach will become evident, but for now I will only say that much to the chagrin of my high school debate coach I turn my back on the oft-used maxim for effective argumentation: *tell'em you're gonna tell'em, tell'em, and tell'em you told'em*. Instead, I invite the audience to experience this dissertation as a story, with all that that implies.

Some readers will surely miss the clear exposition of my goals from the beginning of the paper, and it may be helpful to know that by the end of the second chapter I will have articulated a clear focus of inquiry. Until then, I offer the following list of research questions to whet the appetite:

1. *How do teachers, including myself, take up both the deep inner work and outwardly visible work of identifying the narratives, implicit and explicit, in our classrooms and curricula that perpetuate patterns of coloniality?*

2. *How do we come to understand the ways that we can disrupt the narratives that perpetuate coloniality and then do so in creative and generative ways?*

3. *How do we reveal, curate, and enact the narratives that have the power to heal and transform our classrooms, communities, and culture in the wake of centuries of coloniality, while leaving the children we teach in freedom to come to their own understandings and meet a future yet to unfold?*

As the subsequent chapters unfold, I trust that it will be clear that the use of narrative allows me to share not only the understanding that I have come to over time, but the landscape and process I traversed to reach that understanding. Chapter I begins with a question that arose from my

teaching practice in my first years of teaching in higher education and follows the path of an early

research project that helped me see the revolutionary nature of my questions. Here and elsewhere

in the paper, the perspectives I share change over the course of the dissertation, just as they did in

actual experience. Chapter II represents the literature review that was inspired by that early

research project when I learned to understand why terms like *decolonization* and *indigenization*

were relevant to my practice. In Chapter III, I explain both how I came to choose autoethnography

as my method and what I have learned from the literature on autoethnography. In Chapter IV, I

explore the ways in which theory can be thought of as story, with the dominant theory representing

merely the latest, best narrative chosen to make sense of direct observation and lived experience. In

Chapter V, I consider the process of choosing stories for a [Waldorf] grade school classroom,

including the challenge of working with source material and tailoring stories to the children in

one's care. In Chapter VI, I step back and consider what I am taking into my practice—a practice

in which others often look to me as a leader and guide for change.

Finally, this work is deeply influenced by my evolving practice as a Waldorf teacher, and

some of the assumptions that I challenge are assumptions that arise from my interpretation of

Waldorf education and the underlying philosophy of anthroposophy. Some aspects of Waldorf

education will surely be evident to my reader. At the same time, the goal of this dissertation is not

to explain Waldorf pedagogy or anthroposophy, or even to apply anthroposophical understandings

to the issues I identify—that would be an entirely different (albeit worthy) dissertation journey. The

reader who is interested in learning more about Waldorf education and anthroposophy is

encouraged to consult one of the many excellent resources available (see Finser, 1994, 2015;

Rawson, 2021; Richter & Rawson, 2014).

CHAPTER I: LOCATING THE REVOLUTIONARY NATURE OF CHILD-CENTERED, DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE EDUCATION
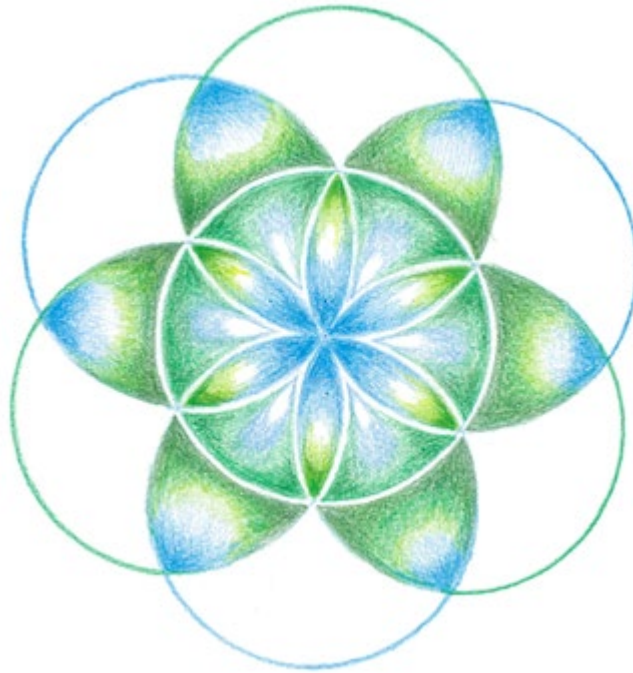
I did not discover Waldorf education and the underlying philosophy of anthroposophy until well into my education career. After earning a master's degree in education at Indiana University (IU) in the early 90s, I did not challenge the fundamental assumptions of public education for more than a decade. I had plenty of reason to feel confident about the capacity for public education to meet the needs of children when it is properly funded. Growing up in Austin, Texas in the 70s and 80s I had the privilege of attending excellent public schools. Kozol's (1988) indictment of public education featured prominently in discussions of inequity and systemic racism in my graduate courses at IU, but knowing that inadequate funding limits the capacity of teachers to meet their students' needs did not alter my basic faith in the potential of *adequately funded* public education. My faith was also influenced by the fact that I am the daughter of two gifted and committed public school teachers—my father was a high school math teacher for 46 years, and my mother started her

teaching career as a high school art teacher and later earned her credential to work in special education where she was highly effective as a one-on-one aide for high school students living with Asperger's and autism.

I attended public schools at a time when, in prosperous school districts, it was not uncommon to have ukulele lessons, learn folk dancing, or make pinhole cameras and develop pictures in a dark room. While I was certainly subjected to the stress of periodic standardized testing—not an affirming experience for me—teachers in my district clearly had the freedom to enrich the classroom with activities and projects that fell outside of any notion of teaching-to-the-test. From my limited vantage point, it seemed easy to conclude that the key to providing an excellent education for all was simply a question of making sure that all schools are adequately funded. As long as schools have the resources they need, I assumed, public schools are well situated to meet the needs of children in their care.

At the same time, I recognize now that despite the creativity I encountered in my own schooling and the creativity expected of aspiring teachers in my master's program, I thought of teaching and learning as a linear, straightforward, and largely transactional process. The teacher developed engaging lesson plans based on specific learning goals for the year, and students' progress toward those goals could be assessed in clear and direct ways. The logic of this approach seemed self-evident. Indeed, I still remember the way I used to think about why particular content is brought in particular grades. For example, I considered it important to bring algebra as early as eighth grade whenever possible. Taking Algebra I in eighth grade made it possible to take Geometry in ninth grade, Algebra II in tenth grade, Trigonometry and Analysis in eleventh grade, and Calculus in twelfth. Most importantly, getting started with Algebra I in eighth grade meant that

students would have a semester of Algebra II behind them when they took their College Board exams. In other words, the logic of when to bring what content was all about college preparation and how far we wanted children to get in their studies by the end of high school. It went without saying that it was important to get started early with a strong academic foundation so that students did not get behind.

Rethinking the Goal of Education

When I discovered Waldorf education in the fall of 2004, however, I experienced a fundamental shift in my understanding of the purpose of education. I return to the familiar realm of mathematics sequencing to explain what was for me a paradigm-shifting discovery.[2] For, as I began to explore Waldorf education for the first time, I was introduced to a radically different understanding of why ratio and proportion are introduced in sixth grade, fractions are introduced in fourth grade, and place value is introduced in second. Instead of thinking of these content areas as simply existing on a scaffold of interrelated skill development in mathematics, Waldorf education centers the child's inner experience at different stages of social-emotional and psychological development and asks what content best reflects and nourishes the child's own inner experience (Finser, 1994; Harwood, 2001; Richter & Rawson, 2014; Steiner, 2000). The introduction of fractions, for example, is brought at a developmental stage where the child, roughly 10-years old, is increasingly interested in the ways in which they are similar or different from others in the class—

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[2] In the context of a dissertation on decoloniality, the term *discovery* is highly problematic. Indeed, as I will discuss later, Teresi (2002) among others argued that claims of discovery have been central to the enterprise of Eurocentrism and colonization. As a teacher, I also know what it means to watch a child light up in delight when they suddenly understand, for example, letters, two-point perspective, or algebra. It is hard not to use the word discovery to mark these personal learning milestones. I will be judicious in using the term discovery—referring to personal discoveries—in this dissertation and always with a view to proverbial lightbulb moments in one's personal learning journey.

they experience themselves as one of four students who like basketball more than soccer, one of 10 boys in a class, or one of the 24 students in class who are right handed. In other words, the child at this age experiences themselves in fractions, as a part of a whole. The introduction of fractions, in this approach to education, is understood to be deeply nourishing to the child of this age because, at an interpersonal level—what I am accustomed to calling a soul–spiritual level—the study of fractions helps the child process and integrate their own inner experience. This deep inner experience, moreover, represents a true measure of *developmental readiness*, even when some more foundational skills in mathematics are still being developed at the level of practical problem solving.

One particular quote from Rudolf Steiner[3] further highlights the way in which Waldorf education represented a fundamental paradigm shift in my thinking about education. Speaking to a group of educators in Oxford, England on August 19, 1922, Steiner contended that the teacher's role is to clear obstacles from the student's path, literally and figuratively, creating a healthy setting in which the child's inborn gifts can come to fruition:

> Our rightful place as educators is to be removers of hindrances. Each child in every age brings something new into the world from divine regions, and it is our task to remove bodily and psychical [*sic*] obstacles out of his way, to remove hindrances so that his spirit may enter in full freedom into life. (see https://rsarchive.org/Lectures/GA305)

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[3] Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925) developed a method of inquiry called spiritual science in which he applied the rigors of Western thinking to spiritual questions that had long been the purview of the East. His own path of spiritual-scientific inquiry led to the development of a philosophy of the nature of the human being, which he named anthroposophy. Today, anthroposophy is the source of inspiration for the Waldorf educational movement, the Camphill movement, Social Threefolding, Biodynamic farming, Eurythmy, the Christian Community church, and many other initiatives worldwide.

When I encountered this quote for the first time, I was struck by how respectful this felt of the innate gifts and capacities that each child brings with them into the world. Not just gifts, but gifts from the spiritual world. We teachers, I think Steiner was saying, are akin to midwives. We may, indeed, play a critical role when there are obstacles or hindrances to a child's development, but we are no more responsible for the capacities that these children bring into the world than a midwife is for the character of a child they help to usher into this world. To me this was a message of profound humility on the part of the teacher, and a statement of deepest respect for the child and what they bring into the world. This quote from Steiner also reflected a worldview that I have come to embrace—a worldview in which the existence of a spiritual dimension and the spiritual nature of each one of us is a given. It is also a worldview in which being an effective teacher means that I cannot isolate my beliefs and understandings of the spiritual world to some part of the week set aside for meditation, prayer, or some form of religious observance. Indeed, I must embody this worldview in my everyday practice and engagement with students in order to be the teacher my students need me to be.

While the observations shared here cannot possibly capture a sense of what Waldorf education looks like in practice, they do capture a sense of the profound paradigm shift I experienced in my thinking about education when I discovered Waldorf education. As I took my first class through the grades[4] I often found myself sharing my emerging and evolving practice

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[4] For Grades 1-8, it is common for a Waldorf teacher to move up the grades with their students, so that the children benefit from the continuity and deeper relationship of being with one teacher over many years. While some Waldorf schools have introduced variations of "looping" with one teacher taking the students through fifth grade, for example, and another teacher taking the students for six through eighth grade, the ideal of a single class teacher for grades one through eight is still celebrated by many in the movement. This model is considered desirable for grades 1-8 where the ideal teacher is a generalist. This changes in a Waldorf high school when the students are best served by specialists in their field of study.

with my own parents when I called to check in with them on the weekends. I especially enjoyed

sharing with my father my discoveries about how mathematics can be taught in a rich and

imaginative way. For all the time and effort this pedagogical approach required of me as a teacher,

being responsible for designing curriculum and preparing content that was just right for my

students day-after-day and year-after-year nourished me as well. I would even say that the

combination of autonomy, responsibility, and deep relationship with my students brought out my

best self more often than not.

Now as a Teacher of Teachers

Almost two decades later, my current students are aspiring and practicing Waldorf teachers

enrolled in the Waldorf Teacher Education program in Antioch University's School of Education.

Instead of working with children directly now, I focus on creating learning environments in which

graduate students seeking their credential in Waldorf elementary[5] education can develop their

capacity to bring a rich array of subject matter in an integrated and artistic way. I am still focused

on being as effective as possible in my teaching, but the needs of my students are those of adults

who are, themselves, experiencing paradigm shifts in their understanding of the purpose of

education, and who are striving to understand how to choose the content and methods that will

remove obstacles and nourish the young human beings in their care.

Each summer since joining the faculty of Antioch University New England in 2018, I have

looked forward to welcoming a new cohort of aspiring Waldorf elementary and middle school

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[5] In this context, elementary education is considered to be grades 1–8, serving children roughly between the ages of 7–14. In Waldorf education, the divisions between early childhood and elementary school, on one hand, and elementary and high school education, on the other, are determined by key developmental thresholds rather than on the capacity of existing school buildings, transportation needs, or other administrative considerations.

teachers. The incoming graduate students, filled with enthusiasm, are eager to develop their capacities as teachers so that they can make a difference in the lives of children. In their first semester of coursework, in addition to courses in self-development and educational philosophy, they take two companion courses that are woven together carefully over a roughly 15-day intensive—an overview course that I teach on the Waldorf curriculum for grades 1–8 interwoven with a course on human development taught by a colleague. The scheduling of these two courses speaks to a foundational tenet of Waldorf education: a teacher can only understand what methods and content are appropriate to their classroom if they understand the developmental needs and readiness of their students. This is what Waldorf educators mean by *child-centered, age-appropriate* and *developmentally appropriate education*.[6]

Just over 100 years old,[7] Waldorf education is based on a vision of child development and developmental psychology that is deeply embedded in the esoteric spirituality articulated by its founder Rudolf Steiner (Finser, 1994; Harwood, 2001; Steiner, 1996). Even though one can find Waldorf schools around the globe founded or adopted by people of diverse cultures (Stehlik, 2019), the foundational writings of Rudolf Steiner are still used as a fundamental resource for current Waldorf teachers and Waldorf teacher education programs. In other words, the vision of child development articulated by Rudolf Steiner just over 100 years ago in southwestern Germany and Switzerland is still being employed by Waldorf teachers in many parts of the world. That

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[6] See Elkind (2015) for a broader discussion of the science of child psychology as the basis of child-centered, developmentally appropriate education, a connection that he traces over four centuries of Western thought on education, highlighting the contributions of Comenius, Locke, Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Froebel, Steiner, Montessori, Freud, Piaget, Erikson, and Vygotsky.

[7] The first Waldorf School was opened in Stuttgart, Germany in 1919 for the children of workers at the Waldorf Astoria Cigarette factory under the direction of the Emil & Berta Molt, owners of the cigarette factory and followers of Rudolf Steiner (Göbel, 2020; Murphy, 2018).

observation alone raises concerns from the aspiring Waldorf teachers in my class who, inspired by a deep commitment to social justice, question the utility and ethics of applying a self-evidently Eurocentric worldview as though it were universal. Indeed, after my first year of teaching at Antioch, I found myself revising the stated goal of the first curriculum course as it is presented in my syllabus to allay concerns—even before students had met me and heard my introductory presentations—that looking at the historical foundations of Waldorf education and reading the foundational works of Rudolf Steiner did not mean that I was asking them to accept Steiner's indications uncritically. Incoming students needed to know, up front, that we would be looking back at those early indications to see what is still valuable and inspirational, what can be used with some modifications, and what we need to explicitly reject, whether because it is simply idiosyncratic and out-of-date or culturally insensitive and even racist.[8]

While my students are willing to spend some time studying the model of Waldorf education developed by Rudolf Steiner in Stuttgart Germany in 1919, many of them are impatient to talk about how the pedagogy can and should be modified and reinterpreted to meet the needs of children in diverse settings. Underlying their impatience is a deep conviction that one prescription for education cannot possibly be right for all children everywhere. As the facilitator of these provocative discussions, I find that I have questions of my own. However attracted one may be to the Western ideals of learner-centered, developmentally appropriate practice, it is worth asking whether an educational model pioneered and nurtured in one part of the world can be

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[8] For two sides of an ongoing debate regarding the racist underpinnings of Waldorf education, see the work of Staudenmaier (2014) and the blog on anthroposophy and its critics written by Hindes (n.d.) https://danielhindes.com/blog/category/rudolf_steiner/anthroposophy-and-critics/

recommended to practitioners in another part of the world without deep consideration—deep because the attendant questions are complex: Can we conceive of an educational model that would serve the needs of children across multiple, diverse cultures? Should education look different in homogenous communities and diverse communities? If developmentally appropriate education is, by definition, based on a knowledge of the evolving developmental needs and capacities of children as they mature, would a universally appropriate educational model be contingent on universal patterns of child development? Regardless of one's opinion about the universality of child development, what does it mean to seek a child-centered, developmentally appropriate education that is culturally responsive?

A Project Inspired by the Questions my Students Posed

This final question about the nature of child-centered, developmentally appropriate education that is culturally responsive led me to do a limited survey of research looking for literature on developmentally appropriate elementary education in other parts of the world. In particular, I was interested to know whether scholars and practitioners in other countries and cultures were answering questions differently than I had been. I did not start out with the intention of looking at any particular part of the world, but I happened upon an article by Africa[9] scholar Kofi Marfo (2011) that seemed to be addressing the very questions that my students and I were asking. As a cultural outsider, I sought an approach that would be respectful of the context in which Marfo was working. After some reflection, I chose to use the reference section of that first article

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[9] At the time of my inquiry, Kofi Marfo appeared to be based in the United States while deeply engaged with other scholars based in Sub-Saharan Africa. From the literature, it is not clear to me whether Marfo would self-identify as having an emic or etic perspective on the Sub-Saharan context. Nor do I know whether Marfo would identify as African. As such, I use the term *Africa scholar* to denote their evident area of focus, without presuming to know their nationality or cultural affiliation.

by Marfo as a point of departure to identify a community of African and Africa-oriented scholars who were in communication with each other through scholarly citations, newsletter and journal exchanges, and conference proceedings (Azuma, 2000; Gielen, 2000; Gove, 2017; Harkness & Super, 1996; Kagitcibasi, 2000a, 2000b; Marfo, 2011; Marfo et al., 2011; Ng'asike, 2014; Nsamenang, 2000; Saarni, 2000; Serpell, 2020; Serpell & Marfo, 2014; Sta. Maria, 2000; Stevenson, 2000; Super et al., 2011). What this group of scholars all had in common was a deep interest in supporting a developmentally appropriate education for the children of Sub-Saharan Africa based on indigenous values and indigenous ways of knowing. Here I felt I had found a set of voices to bring fresh perspective to my inquiry and help me challenge the assumptions and disabling bias that might be limiting my understanding.

Abandoning the Search for a Grand Narrative

Diving into the scholarly exchange between Marfo and others focused on education in Sub-Saharan Africa was immediately eye-opening, as I encountered a perspective that challenged fundamental assumptions that I had come to accept as a Waldorf teacher. One of the most central of these assumptions was that seeking a picture of the universal human experience, independent of the cultural identities that distinguish us one from another, was a gesture of inclusion and acceptance of all. This assumption was one of the first to be challenged in this new context.

For Sta. Maria (2000) the very search for universality was indicative of motives that are anathema to culturally responsive research. The search for a "grand narrative" (p. 4) revealed an agenda that has long been the purview of the Western research community that ventures into non-Western spaces looking for cross-cultural comparability and variability to substantiate their theories of universal human development. From the perspective of non-Western researchers,

communities, and participants, however, this agenda was fundamentally different from the agenda and motives of those in the non-Western context who are looking primarily to serve their community by addressing issues of local relevance. While Sta. Maria contended that researchers should ideally "integrate and address both issues of cultural comparability and cultural relevance," the agenda and motives of Western researchers are such that "when the issue of cultural relevance is discussed … the problem is transformed into one of cultural comparability. As a consequence, the questions of relevance are made peripheral" (Sta. Maria, 2000, pp. 4–5). From Sta. Maria's perspective, in the failure to center the cultural relevance of their research, Western and Western-oriented scholars risked the validity of their findings. The difficulty, of course, was that the cultural lens through which Western scholars viewed the world privileged ways of knowing that were "culturally alien" to the participants whose cooperation they sought. The competing goals of researcher and participant was fundamentally problematic, with implications for basic research ethics.

As I reflected on the lessons I might take from Sta. Maria, I realized that I, too, had been asking about a grand narrative. Like the Western scholars whom Sta. Maria criticized, I had fallen into the trap of looking for cross-cultural comparability that might lead to an understanding of universal child development. Following Sta. Maria's (2000) argument, I had effectively made questions of cultural relevance peripheral and secondary to the desire to validate my own lived experience in one small part of the world. In doing so, of course, I was inadvertently reinforcing existing power structures between Western and non-Western scholars, a topic I will explore further in coming sections. For now, I only observe that I found occasion to scrutinize my own meager

efforts at inquiry and remind myself of two all-important questions, "*Research for whom?*

Research at whose expense?"

Acknowledging an Indigenous Perspective on Child Development

As soon as I was able to let go of my own preoccupation with confirming preconceived

notions of universal child development, I found myself compelled by the insights of an indigenous

perspective on child development. As longtime Africa scholars based in Africa and the United

States, Serpell and Marfo (2014) affirmed that indigenous psychology recognizes the

"quintessentially African issues" arising from research into child psychology in Africa, namely,

that:

> The nurturing of children's development is a cultural project, and as such those who seek to
>
> understand children's development must understand indigenous conceptions of
>
> development—including dispositions, abilities, and behaviors at the individual and social
>
> levels—as well as the societal presuppositions and aspirations within the local context that
>
> drive what is considered at any point as valued developmental outcomes. (p. 9)

Research into indigenous conceptions of intelligence in rural Zambia, for example, has

revealed highly nuanced understandings of intelligence that reach far beyond narrow measures of

academic achievement. In the rural Chewa community, Serpell and Marfo (2014) documented

locally relevant measures of successful development that would not be apparent from typical

standardized tests: "cognitive alacrity and social responsibility—both of which are valued in the

local context" (pp. 9–10). Importantly, these aspects of intelligence reflected a level of social

emotional capacity that, however valued in Western contexts in recent decades, is rarely assessed

when Western scholars measure the success of education in Zambia. And yet, as Serpell and Marfo

documented, cognitive alacrity and social responsibility turned out to be far more "necessary for children to function adaptively in school as well as community" (p. 10). This was just one of many indicators that standard Western educational practices for the children in this Sub-Saharan nation were based on assumptions of value that had little meaning in the lives of Zambian children.

Indeed, African scholars made groundbreaking progress in the identification of indigenously valued indicators of healthy development in children that departed from the conventional indicators being measured by Western-oriented tests. Significantly, these indicators of healthy development were reflective of the skills and capacities that children needed to thrive in their communities. These skills and capacities were, therefore, adaptive responses to the culture in which the children were being raised. Whiting (1996), provided a compelling account of the qualities that "Kikuyu mothers in Kenya prefer to see in their children: confidence, inquisitiveness, cleverness, bravery, good-heartedness, respectfulness, obedience, and generosity" (as cited in Marfo et al., 2011, p. 107). The development of these qualities signaled to Kikuyu mothers that their children were developing in healthy ways. These qualities also represented adaptive behaviors that would determine later success in Kikuyu social life. Yet, despite the critical importance of these qualities as signs of healthy development for Kikuyu children, these qualities were not being measured by Western and Western-oriented policy researchers when they reported on the development of Kikuyu children to UN agencies, the World Bank, and other international agencies. Indeed these "developmental assets and milestones would not register on the radar of many Euro-American developmental assessment tools" (p. 107).

The example from the Kikuyu culture of Kenya represented one of many examples highlighted by indigenous psychology illustrating the qualities that healthy children develop in

response to their immediate cultural surroundings. Marfo et al. (2011) enumerated the many capacities and qualities so essential for success in African communities that are completely ignored by Western scholars: "hospitality, empathy, sharing, social responsibility, sense of belonging, patience, attentiveness, and many others." While many of these capacities have been recognized by the West in recent decades, as emotional intelligence has found recognition, African students are all too often measured by simple measures of rising or falling literacy and numeracy rates. At the same time, a "thorough analysis of [African] folklore, proverbs, riddles, group games, and other activities would reveal that [the social-emotional capacities noted above] are all socially valued attributes within African communities" (pp. 107–108). These capacities were valued, moreover, because they have proven to be indicators of life-long success for the indigenous people of Africa. Put in the context of adaptive responses to cultural expectations and influences, these signs of healthy child development in Africa say little about a grand narrative of child development, and yet speak volumes about the need to consider child development in specific cultural contexts.

Issues Surrounding Definitions of Culture. Educational theorists and psychologists may have come to consensus on the importance of culture in human development, but there remain persistent issues for those trying to define culture in any given locale or situation. As Azuma (2000) observed, even if it were understood that the human mind develops in interaction and engagement with surrounding forces—cultural forces among many—the difficulty is that "every known culture is hybrid" (p. 9), so one can say the human mind takes shape under the influence of a multiplicity of cultures. Not only is each mind responding to multiple cultures, but each mind interprets and responds to that multiplicity in its own unique way.

Cultures are not Stagnant. Kagitcibasi (2000b) and Azuma (2000) went on to observe that cultures are, themselves, always in a state of flux and evolution, always in "processes of cultural change." Azuma (2000) cited Kagitcibasi to join in the argument that:

> This is particularly important since every culture is changing in response to contact with other cultures, ecological shifts, and changes of the people. Often cultural studies describe a culture like a fossil, being solid and stable. The word 'indigenous' connotes traditional, circumscribed, fixed, and internally homogeneous. Actually, however, any culture involves some fluidity. (p. 9)

To speak about the influence of culture on child development, and thus education, therefore, is to leave a very broad brush stroke. However true such a statement may be, it is a simplification of an incredibly complex web of influences and forces. For Kagitcibasi, (2000b) the argument had to be taken one step further. While it may be useful in some settings to refer to *African culture, Sub-Saharan culture, Kenyan culture* or even *Turkana nomadic pastoralist culture*, any of these cultural divisions are artificial and mask a multitude of subcultures defined by "social structural factors such as social class and urban-rural standing. Such analysis points to the *heterogeneity* of any society and is a corrective to much cross-cultural research identifying cultures with nations" (p. 413).

Personal Culture and Agency. Citing the work of Kitayama, Azuma (2000) highlighted one additional issue with speaking about culture as though it were easily associated with nationality or regional association: the concept of "personal culture" (p. 9). In much the same way that individual psychological development is a product of a dynamic interaction between the individual and their environment, one can speak about a personal culture that takes shape as each individual

interacts with the multitude of cultures with which they interact. Influence moves in both directions, from individual to cultures and from cultures to the individual. It is in this respect that Kitayama (1997) observed that "this 'personal culture' gets fed back to the wider culture" (as cited in Azuma, 2000). We each shape the cultures around us, just as those cultures shape us in turn. No two individuals, moreover, will form the same personal culture from a given set of cultural influences:

> Certain constellations of sub-cultures may be shared by members of a social group as the common denominator and identifiable as the culture of that group. But even this shared system of sub-cultures may not be identical in the 'personal culture' of each individual member, because it interacts with residual components of the personal culture. (Azuma, 2000, p. 9)

The current interest in identities speaks to these same observations: each of us experiences membership in a complex array of cultures—defined by a seemingly infinite possible number of identity markers—but this is far from a passive process:

> The person is an active agent in determining what from the universe comes into interaction with them. Not merely being shaped by the culture, the person selectively and purposefully structures artifacts to create a unique system of artifacts around them. The relationship between a person and their culture should be characterized as cross- fertilization, and that is the essence of psychological development. (Azuma, 2000, pp. 9–10)

For Azuma, observations about personal culture naturally take us back to the larger issue that cultures, in general, are always undergoing change. Indeed, understanding the dynamic process in which personal cultures are formed helps clarify the mechanism for larger change forces in

cultures, writ large. In the very process of forming their own personal culture, individuals actively shape and craft, intentionally or otherwise, the cultures around them.

Culturally Responsive Education in Sub-Saharan Africa

The notion of a locally situated understanding of child development, in contrast to a universal model of child development, is, of course, directly related to the question that inspired this limited review of literature. It made little sense to speak of education that is both culturally responsive and developmentally appropriate outside the context of a given cultural framework. In the context of Sub-Saharan Africa, scholars are approaching the question through the lens of an indigenous psychology that conceives of child development through the traditional knowledge of Sub-Saharan cultures, raising profound questions for the validity of universal, cross-cultural conceptions of child development and for the validity of employing Western-centric models of education in the region.

Even though scholars such as Gielen and Kagitcibasi expressed optimism about the potential for reclaiming an international understanding of child development in the future, they were no less committed to the underlying values of the indigenous psychology movement and the need for developmentally appropriate education to be based on locally-situated and locally-validated understandings of child development. As I took into consideration the criticism these scholars levied at Western-centric educational approaches, it was natural to ask what education would look like if it were reflective of a culturally responsive model of child development. The scholars engaged in the academic conversation I featured in this limited literature review did not point to an existing successful model, but I could infer from their critique what features that model would have.

Locally-Situated Notions of Intelligence. From the scholarly conversations among these African and Africa-oriented scholars, it was clear that a culturally responsive educational model would be based on locally-situated notions of intelligence. Super et al. (2011) distinguished the Africa-oriented notion of "socially responsible intelligence" from the narrower notion of intellectual intelligence associated with Western educational approaches. In the same way that meaningful research "means aligning operationalized concepts with schemas used by those being studied—that is, with indigenous concepts," (p. 122) so, too, meaningful education means aligning instruction and assessment with a notion of intelligence that arises from indigenous concepts. In the context of Sub-Saharan Africa, intelligence is meaningful when it acknowledges and reflects both social ends and a willingness to take action:

> The cultural model of socially responsible intelligence includes a quick and perceptive quality of the intellect, a sympathetic understanding of the social world, and a readiness to act. ''Social cognition translates into responsible intelligence, not in abstraction,'' according to Nsamenang (2006), ''but primarily as it enhances the attainment of social ends.'' It incorporates a ''concern with responsible ways of contributing to the social world.'' (Super et al., 2011, p. 122)

This socially engaged notion of intelligence may find traction among those Western scholars who are interested in the role of affective social competence, emotional intelligence, and emotion regulation, but this notion of intelligence has not typically been recognized by academic experts in the West (Super et al., 2011, p. 122). As such, Western-centric pedagogical prescriptions imposed on the communities of Sub-Saharan Africa have been disconnected from, if not

antithetical to, locally-situated notions of intelligence. A culturally responsive pedagogy in Sub-Saharan Africa would center around a model of socially responsible intelligence.

Locally-Derived Methods of Assessment. Closely related to the question of how intelligence is conceptualized is the question of how students' development and progress are assessed. The issue of the cultural mismatch between Western-oriented assessment tools and the Sub-Saharan context has already been noted above. Here, as I examined the literature for features of what culturally responsive education would look like, I observed that African and Africa-oriented scholars writing on the issue noted the irony that even within the West there are issues around the "persistent use of assessment tools outside populations for which they were validated" (Serpell & Marfo, 2014, p. 17). The critical issues already documented within the Western context were further exacerbated by the cultural distance between the West and Sub-Saharan Africa. Assessment in culturally responsive schools would include assessment tools, whether in the form of tests or not, that are developed and validated in Sub-Saharan Africa and with the input of indigenous communities.

Rejecting Assimilation as a Goal for Children. Borrowing from Sta. Maria's (2000) discussion of cultural research, I embraced the notion that education should also be viewed as a cultural activity. As such, the "goal is achieved when the continuity of other significant activities of the community is safeguarded, and when relationships within the community are not destroyed but enhanced" (p. 5). Education fails when, in the process of their education, children are alienated from their parents, community, and culture. Serpell and Marfo (2014) came to the same conclusion when considering the rights of children and families to receive education in their native language, or at least in a manner that does not alienate children from their native language and heritage (p.

13). As the authors further observed, this means rejecting the Western "assimilationist premise" that mastering the dominant language and culture always serves the best interests of the children in our care. In a culturally responsive educational approach, there would be no attempt to assimilate the children of Sub-Saharan Africa to Western ideals of success and progress.

Centering Local Knowledge, Values, and Heritage. Reflecting on research in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zimbabwe, Serpell and Marfo (2014) challenged the grounds on which "the sociocultural funds of knowledge within local communities are often discounted, if not disregarded outright" (p. 17). Indeed, parental beliefs and parenting practices, nested as they are in the community and larger cultural context, are "the earliest context for children's acquisition of the competencies and dispositions that will define their readiness to enter and do well in school" (p. 16). Sanders (2004) observed that differences in child-rearing practices across cultures can be understood as adaptations to the various physical and social environments. As such, cultural practices "may represent the optimal survival patterns within that particular environment" (p. 54). Parent's belief systems and parenting practices, therefore, represent rich resources from which to derive culturally responsive educational practices that contribute to the healthy development and future success of children.

In their discussion of early childhood education, Ng'asike (2014) argued that meaningful education should not privilege rote learning in literacy and numeracy to the detriment of rich cultural learning materials in the form of "folktales, songs, dances, myths, beliefs, knowledge of nature, environment, the universe, soil, water, plants [of Africa]." Instead of being marginalized, if not completely ignored, such cultural funds of knowledge deserve a central place in education, especially for the youngest students. Ng'asike rejected the existing "oppressive education system"

in favor of a culturally responsive curriculum that honors "indigenous traditional knowledge" (p. 48). Reflecting on a set of Turkana beliefs and rituals related to childbirth and fire, Ng'asike (2014) observed that "this indigenous narrative has potential to teach children deep understandings of their cultural history, traditions, values, trees, fire making, soil, friction, and the value of conservation of natural ecosystems" (p. 49). In contrast, the Western-oriented drills in literacy and numeracy were described as dry and thin. Culturally responsive education, on the other hand, takes advantage of rich sources of cultural knowledge to enliven the learning process and convey deeply embedded knowledge from many diverse disciplines.

The Promise of Collateral Learning Theory. Where appropriate to the cultural environment, moreover, Ng'asike (2014) appealed to collateral learning theory (Aikenhead, 2001; Aikenhead & Jegede, 1999; Jegede, 1997, as cited in Ng'asike, 2014) to make a case for an instructional model that purposefully pairs Western scientific knowledge with traditional indigenous knowledge, placing the teacher in the role of a "culture broker," of sorts. Citing examples from the Yupiaq school in Alaska and from a Canadian school serving the children of African refugees, Ng'asike (2014) suggested that "Turkana local knowledge can be matched with Western knowledge and taught side by side, where each type of knowledge helps to strengthen the child's understanding of the world using multiple interpretations in different cultures" (p. 52). Importantly, it was recommended that children be presented with embedded knowledge—Western and Indigenous—in such a way that they are left in freedom to "develop their own rationale regarding how they will use these different types of valid ideas for learning" (p. 52). Further, this approach respects that the children may need knowledge from both realms of knowledge for success in life depending on whether they remain in their culture of birth, or venture further afield.

As I came to understand, culturally responsive education respects the possible pathways that children may follow and prepares them with the knowledge they will need without privileging Western ideas and knowledge as necessarily superior.

As a culture broker, moreover, the teacher can acknowledge existing power relationships between ways of knowing, helping students understand the unseen forces that impact their learning and the larger culture. This transparency helps to reveal the fact that the features of modern Western-oriented schooling are simply "a formalization of the indigenous beliefs and practices of Europeans and North Americans" (Super et al., 2011, p. 123). As such, Western oriented educational approaches have no grounds to claim superiority, but rather represent an adaptation to a different physical and social environment. Depending on the setting, culturally responsive education in Sub-Saharan Africa might include some features of Western education, but only as another cultural model for consideration.

Issues of Power and Privilege in Research and Education

The challenge to Western education prescriptions, Western research orthodoxy, and Western measures of development is fundamentally a challenge to existing power dynamics. The research community, moreover, struggles with its own version of larger, pervasive issues of privilege and power, and these challenges reveal an array of issues ranging from the narrow issue of research validity to the much broader issue of social justice. At one end, the simple act of defining terms—an act that many scholars would not only take for granted but consider their responsibility—is an exercise in power. Sanders (2004) provided a powerful example of Western scholars defining what constitutes child abuse. At the very least, Sanders called upon those wielding "Westernized concepts" to be aware that "the process of attaching values to different

cultural practices, whether in relation to child-rearing or in relation to other customs and practices, contains a *power* component." Sanders cautioned the reader not to simply take refuge in cultural relativism, which is just as problematic as ethnocentrism when taken to extreme, but appealed to the importance of building a deeper understanding of the meanings, influences and real-world implications at play (Sanders, 2004, p. 54).

Citing the work of Banpasirichote (1986), Sta. Maria (2000) noted that people of the so-called Third World are waiting for the research world to recognize and respect their indigenous knowledge. Dominant assumptions of what constitutes valid research, originating as they have in the West, have privileged Western ways of knowing. For Sta. Maria and Banpasirichote, the desire for emancipation on the part of "the common people" is closely linked to the desire to have their indigenous approaches to knowledge creation and knowledge transfer elevated to "scientific status" (Sta. Maria, 2000, p. 5). Even as an increase in the number of resident African scholars studying Africa has led to the emergence of a fresh picture as these scholars approach the study of African children through the lived experience of Africans, there remain intransigent "power dynamics … as reflected in differential access to research funding opportunities, publication avenues, and major conferences, and in other means of professional gate-keeping—[which] virtually ensure the marginalization of intellectual agendas contemplated outside the Western academy." Indeed, the power dynamics that shape the academy, in general, create a formidable obstacle to fundamental change (Marfo et al., 2011, p. 105).

To address the basic issues of power and privilege in the field of psychology, scholars with roots or deep interests outside the West have adopted various approaches over many decades. Serpell and Marfo (2014) traced the emerging field of indigenous psychology as arising from

multiple disciplines, noting that cross cultural psychology and anthropology "emerged from common roots in the 19th century, only gradually diverged, and have since begun to converge again in the fields of cultural psychology and psychological anthropology, as well as spawning the field of indigenous psychology" (p. 2). Nsamenang (2000) credited the advent of cultural psychology and cross-cultural psychology with bringing new attention to the critical role of culture in human development but regarded "both as limited and limiting in effectively addressing the emics of non-dominant cultures… [because] the referral values, epistemologies, and logic of discourse are essentially Euro-American" (p. 2). In other words, even in their attempt to honor indigenous cultures, psychologists engaging in cross-cultural studies were essentially measuring non-Western cultures against norms established in the West. The result was anything but respectful.

Nsamenang (2000) and Sta. Maria (2000) instead hailed the development of the indigenous psychology movement as a fundamental change in approach. Scientists and scholars inspired by this movement have been known to publish findings exclusively in local languages, but even where findings are shared in more conventional scholarly publications, the explicit goal of indigenous psychology is to articulate "an indigenous social science that is socially and culturally relevant, responsive, and meaningful." Indigenous psychologists thereby strive for the "systemization of indigenous knowledge" (Sta. Maria, 2000, p. 5).

Sta. Maria (2000) described the compelling example of Sikolohiyang Pilipino, an indigenous psychology movement based in the Filipino community. Mirroring the level of participant engagement often associated with participatory action research, research leaders in Sikolohiyang Pilipino engaged community leaders in every stage of the research process, and

indigenous approaches to knowledge generation and knowledge sharing were incorporated into the structure of the project. Importantly, community participants were not trained to mimic Western research assistants. Instead,

> This type of research strategy is reminiscent of participative research in sociology. The difference, however, lies in the use of indigenous methods in Sikolohiyang Pilipino research. The community members who participate in data gathering are not trained in the use of Western methods but use instead the ways by which information is commonly obtained in the community. (Sta. Maria, 2000, p. 5)

Community participants not only helped set the agenda and research goals, their culturally embedded ways of knowing guided the research process. Measures of validity were not based in traditions of Western scholarship but in relevance and service to the participant community. Fundamentally, Sikolohiyang Pilipino and other indigenous psychology movements represented a response to the hegemony of the Western academy and its success upended power dynamics that have plagued psychology since its inception.

For the Africa scholars whose work I encountered in this early project, the promise of indigenous psychology arising out of Sub-Saharan Africa was the possibility of a child-centered education that is based on indigenous conceptions of child development, rather than on cross-cultural validation of Piaget and other Western theorists. As Serpell and Marfo (2014) noted, cross cultural psychologists have confirmed that Piaget's sequence of developmental stages are confirmed in an African context with the addition of "some detailed additional parameters" (p. 5). But that is quite different from saying that a pedagogy based on the stages of Piaget, for example, is developmentally appropriate for the children of Sub-Saharan Africa.

Serpell (1994) identified the culturally relevant issues at play, describing the process by which children of Sub-Saharan Africa are socialized to take up pivotal roles and responsibilities at different stages of development; importantly, the "desired endstate is not cognitive competence, but responsible social development" (as cited in Nsamenang, 2000, p. 2). This emphasis on social development over individualistic and cognitive development underlies the mismatch between many Western educational prescriptions and the cultures in which they are prescribed. It is interesting to note, then, that even when Western scholars are successful in validating their theories in "exotic" contexts, that does not mean that the operationalization of those theories in the form of educational prescriptions makes sense in those same contexts.

As noted above in an initial description of indigenous psychology, choices around language reflect their own power dynamics, whether it be the language of instruction, language of assessment, language of research, language of participation, or language of scholarship. Scholars of the Sikologia Pilipino movement deliberately rejected the use of English because they deemed the language, itself, to be an obstacle to "conceptualizing psychological phenomena in ways that resonate with the indigenous culture" (Serpell & Marfo, 2014, p. 12). For scholars in Sub-Saharan Africa, the languages that create obstacles for indigenous psychologists are referred to as "metropolitan languages" and are the remnants of their colonial past. While Sikologia Pilipino scholars were able to adopt Tagalog (also known as Pilipino) as a ready alternative to the language of Western colonizers, Africa scholars in Sub-Saharan Africa faced a more complicated situation in which the dominant colonial language is often the only shared language among Africans from multiple subcultures. Indigenous scholars in Sub-Saharan Africa, then, face the added challenge of

working in a language steeped in Western hegemony while simultaneously exposing the hegemonic assumptions embedded in the language.

Serpell and Marfo (2014) contended that even though the implications of language choice had yet to be fully explored by Africa scholars, the choice of Pilipino scholars to use Tagalog created its own problems of access and privilege. The choice also "deprived the mainstream of Western psychology of the opportunity to learn from [the insights of their indigenous research]" (p. 13). Clearly, Africa scholars such as Serpell and Marfo aspired to generate knowledge that is accessed not only by indigenous communities, but by the larger research community. These arguments tie back to the earlier discussion of one psychology or many, but the implications here speak to issues of power and privilege. For educators in Sub-Saharan Africa, of course, the implications were significant on many different levels. The hegemony of metropolitan language affected educational research and its findings; it affected access and representation in the classroom itself; it affected the resources that are available to teachers seeking to meet the needs of the children in their care.

Appreciating Indigenous Psychology from Afar

As I concluded that early project, I considered what I could bring back from my foray outside the usual bounds of my personal and professional worlds. I found myself humbled. Perhaps it was a measure of how persuasive I found Marfo and his fellow scholars that I was loath to move too quickly to draw any conclusions that were not fully grounded in context.

As a Waldorf educator, of course, I am accustomed to working in a non-dominant, even ridiculed subculture within the United States. Sometimes simply dismissed as an alternative school movement for the *counter-culture, artsy, granola crowd*, Waldorf educators are often viewed with

suspicion because of the esoteric spiritualism that inspires and informs our practice. We are guided by the understanding that all human beings are spiritual beings, and that each of us has chosen to incarnate at a particular time and place to take up an intention formed before birth in the spiritual world. As a classroom teacher, I used meditation and child observation as a fundamental tool to help remove obstacles in the way of each child. All this, of course, as I created lessons for long division, prepositional phrases, and creative writing. While I did not keep my convictions a secret, by any means, I learned to let others ask questions if and when they were interested. My experience was that not everyone in my community was comfortable with the idea of a pedagogy that embraces reincarnation and karma, nor with teachers who believe in elemental beings.

In my reading for this early project, I came across Nsamenang's (2000) exquisite account of an indigenous psychology that "predates scientific psychology." Describing an "indigenous west African view on human development," Nsamenang (2000) wrote:

> social ontogeny draws on African life-journeys (Serpell, 1993) and conceptions of personhood in terms of its "becoming" (Erny, 1968) to posit three phases of the life course: spiritual selfhood, social selfhood, and ancestral selfhood (Nsamenang, 1992). While newborns are entering a mundane world, those dying are at the threshold of a spiritual world. This viewpoint extends the human life course to an afterlife.

Developmental psychology has focused primarily on social selfhood, the experiential self, which itself is divided into seven stages (Nsamenang, 1992). Each stage faces a distinct developmental task conceptualized in terms of important transitions between patterns of social participation that define the culture and perceptions of the family and children. (pp. 1–2)

I paused and savored this rich account of the stages of human development. How familiar it seemed in many ways, and yet unique, authentic to a particular place. I imagined indigenous scholars in west Africa making space for the indigenous wisdom captured here, perhaps honoring the implicit ways of knowing embedded in this model of social ontology when designing a culturally embedded research project.

As I struggled with the meanings *I* could ethically *take* from a project centered on indigenous beliefs in Sub-Saharan Africa, I suddenly knew what Marfo and his colleagues had to teach me in that moment. Filled with a trepidation and insecurity that I will need to explore later in this dissertation, I mustered the courage to write the following conclusion for that early project:

> There are so many in the West who struggle under the hegemony of conventional belief—acceptable beliefs about the spiritual world, acceptable beliefs about ways of knowing, acceptable beliefs about a teacher's role. In the same way that indigenous psychologists in Africa and elsewhere have rejected the judgment of dominant Western norms, so too must those living in the West who are belittled and burdened by the judgment of convention. I must be willing to write an academic paper for my doctorate faculty in which I speak openly of my convictions, carving out a space for a different way of knowing, a different way of being—one aided by angels and moved by destiny.

As I will discuss in Chapter III, I had been a doctoral student for three years before I had the courage to share such deeply held beliefs with my faculty.

What I also came to understand from that early project was that in other parts of the world, the routine questions that I ask about child-centered, developmentally appropriate and culturally responsive education are revolutionary questions. Literally. These questions have the power to

incite revolution, upheaval, regime-change, political and social protest. Before I explored the work

of Marfo and colleagues, I had not used either the term *decolonization* or *indigenization* in the

context of my professional practice, but Marfo (2011) and others I read for this project made easy

reference to both concepts as though they were naturally associated with the questions I ask.

And so it was in September 2020, shortly after turning in a paper summarizing what I had

discovered through Marfo and others that I began work on a literature review to find out how the

concepts of decolonization and indigenization were being understood in the context of education.

That project, which extended until the spring of 2022, largely informs what follows as Chapter II

and includes a discussion of how key terms are defined and used in the literature. A subsequent

exploration of methodology is shared in Chapter III where I share more about my path of inquiry.

In each case, I use a narrative format to ground and contextualize understandings as they emerged

in time and through process. My own understanding of words like decolonization, indigenization,

coloniality, and decoloniality have continued to evolve over the course of this project, and the

reader is encouraged to notice how their own understandings change, as well.

As will be explored in greater depth in Chapter III, this dissertation centers the experience

and voice of a privileged, middle-aged, cis-gendered white woman. In making that simple

statement, a broad range of limitations become immediately clear. There may be some for whom

my autoethnographic exploration is indicative of self-indulgence and proverbial navel-gazing. For

some, I hope, there are opportunities to experience the transformative power of narrative, a place

where I claim no right to say what truths should be gleaned. And in proclaiming the sheer power of

narrative, I encourage my reader to feel also the weight of responsibility. Our very lives enact and

embody narratives that can hurt or heal, destroy or empower.

CHAPTER II: APPROACHING THE LITERATURE WITH HUMILITY AND OPENNESS

The cute little house on Pine Avenue was under contract and we would soon be moving into a 2-family fixer-upper on the far side of town. Proceeds from the sale of our first house would create a little bit of cushion, but I was scrounging for ways to make ends meet after I left my job to stay home with my infant daughter. In that same time period I discovered Waldorf education, and like many young mothers I realized that if I entered graduate school, again, I would be eligible for student loans to cover some living expenses. I fully understood the implications of taking on yet another debt, but I could not turn away from an opportunity to be an at-home mother for the first time, even if only for a year or two.

There was also an element of what some would call destiny, what others might call serendipity. After discovering Waldorf education, I felt impatient to learn more about how Waldorf education differed from my more conventional educational training. From my desktop computer there on Pine Avenue, just months before our move, I did a search for *Waldorf teacher training* and discovered that I lived less than a quarter mile from one of five recognized Waldorf teacher training institutes in North America, and the only program embedded in a fully accredited university where I could apply for financial aid. The die was cast.

Returning to Graduate School for a Certificate in Waldorf Education

So, in the fall of 2006, having returned to graduate school to earn a certificate in Waldorf education, I found myself taking a philosophy of education class with 17 other students. The major assignment for this class was a *philosopher paper* with each student choosing a different philosopher and preparing both a classroom presentation and an academic paper on the educational ideas of our chosen philosopher. The instructor had created a long list of possible philosophers from which to choose, and I had become excited by some of the more contemporary thinkers on the list. On the day that we were set to choose our philosopher, I clearly did not realize the consequences of sitting in my usual place in the classroom. Oblivious to what was about to unfold, I unpacked my book bag and settled in under the bank of windows ready to take notes for the next few hours. The next thing I knew, the instructor had turned to a classmate on his immediate left, on the far side of the classroom from where I sat, and asked which philosopher she had chosen. In that moment, I may or may not have registered that the instructor was checking off names on his copy of the philosopher list, but when a classmate closer to me suddenly expressed a sigh of disappointment at another student's choice the drama of the exercise suddenly came into focus. As

the instructor went around the classroom in order, my choices were narrowing more and more. There went Maria Montessori. There went Mary Wollstonecraft. As classmate after classmate was called upon, gone from the list were bell hooks, Freire, and Vygotsky. As my turn approached, a little panic arose as I looked at the remaining names—Thomas Aquinas, Aristotle, and Plato. And then it was my turn. No, no, I wanted to protest, I've read all the Aquinas, Plato, and Aristotle I want or need to read. I was flustered and tried to stall. I made some feeble attempt to suggest more time to consider. The instructor listened and paused before offering, "We do need someone to represent Plato." I felt the gentle nudge in his tone of voice, but I also groaned inwardly: "Ugh, I thought, the *Republic* again?" I tried to explain that I had already read my fill of Plato's dialogues as an undergraduate student, but my protest was ineffectual. Soon I found myself circling Plato's name on my copy of the list, wondering whether there was anything new for me to find in Plato's biography or his dialogues.

As a teacher, I marvel when I reflect back on my own resistance to take up Plato again. Even though I was a bit tongue-tied that day in class, I was perfectly capable of articulating a clear, multi-point argument for why choosing one of the classical scholars remaining on the list would not be the best choice given my undergraduate work at St. John's College.[10] I was sure that I needed to read someone other than a *dead white man*, and certainly not a classical scholar with whom I was already familiar. And yet, as I would discover by the end of the semester, it was the perfect choice for me after all. As an undergraduate, I had encountered the Platonic dialogues as largely ahistorical works of classical literature, and I marveled upon my return years later to

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[10] St. John's College, with campuses in Annapolis, MD, and Santa Fe, NM, is alternately known for its *great books program* or *dead white men studies*, depending on your point of view.

discover details from Plato's life that helped me understand, for example, his disillusionment with democracy. It seemed critical that Plato's older brothers had been among those who gathered around Socrates to engage in the exchange of ideas, and then realize the tender age at which Plato must have dealt with the execution of Socrates by the city of Athens. Before I undertook this project, I did not know that Plato actually had the opportunity to mold a philosopher king as he imagined in the *Republic*—not only did Plato fail, but he barely escaped with his life. Even more specifically, over the course of that semester-long project, I re-discovered Plato's *Meno*, a narrative that helped me better understand some of the preconditions of learning.

An Encounter with Plato's Meno

In Plato's dialogue *Meno* (see Hamilton & Cairns, 1961), Socrates faces off with a young but successful orator. Meno, we are told, is well known throughout Athens for his public speaking skills. As Plato has crafted the tale, Meno approaches Socrates full of confidence, even arrogance. Then come the famous—perhaps for some, *infamous*—Socratic questions. Before long, Meno is complaining that Socrates has stung his tongue like a jellyfish, leaving him, Meno, the celebrated orator, speechless. Later in the dialogue, Meno invites Socrates back to where he is staying so that they can continue the decidedly one-sided conversation. There Socrates asks Meno's permission to question a young slave about geometry. All marvel as the young man, who has never received any formal education, demonstrates his basic understanding of geometry by answering a series of questions posed by Socrates. Then, after answering several questions correctly, the slave commits one of those predictable, system-1 errors about which Kahneman (2011) warns us, but the slave does not realize that he has made a mistake. Socrates now speaks directly to Meno, pointing out that the slave is in the worst possible position for learning anything further. The slave is confident

that he has arrived at a correct answer when, in fact, he is wrong, and the slave's confidence is itself a barrier to his learning the truth. As long as the slave thinks that he knows the answer, says Socrates, the slave has no incentive or capacity to discover the truth.

I have long been interested in the role of humility in learning, and the example of Plato's *Meno* provides an interesting point of reference. If we view Socrates as a classic teacher, the barrage of questions from Socrates that reduce Meno to a state of bewilderment serve as an important step in getting through to Meno. Choosing, on the other hand, to endow Meno with some measure of agency, we can also say that Meno needed to move beyond his arrogance and experience a moment of genuine befuddlement in order to see what Socrates had to show him. I will add here that as I read the dialogue, the significant feature of the slave is not his state of servitude or powerlessness, but rather his lack of formal education at an age when non-slaves in Meno's household—male members of the household, anyway—would have been schooled in the basics of geometry. If my reading is appropriate, then the account of Meno's slave reinforces Plato's earlier point: through the exchange with the unschooled slave, Socrates shows Meno that unless the slave is disabused of his false conclusions, of his misplaced confidence in his system-1 errors (Kahneman, 2011), the slave cannot take the next step in learning. Lack of humility, here, is not just an irritating character-flaw. Lack of humility is not simply a failure to show respect for other people's ideas, or a failure to involve others in decision making. It is the barrier that will prevent us from embracing the very learning that is at the heart of change.

A Literature Review: The Intersection of Decolonization, Indigenization, and Education

As described in the introduction of this dissertation, I did not fully appreciate the revolutionary nature of my topic, nor had I made more than superficial connections between my questions about education and larger issues of power and privilege that center Western ways of knowing (Sta. Maria, 2000). While I understood the ways in which my own framework was largely Eurocentric, I had not connected the pursuit of developmentally appropriate and culturally responsive education to larger movements toward decolonization and indigenization around the world. It was my encounter with the work of Marfo (2011) and others focused on developmentally appropriate education in Sub-Saharan Africa that helped me understand the larger issues underlying my questions. This, then, is the impetus that I took into my literature review for this dissertation, guided by a broad but specific question: How does the intersection between education and decolonization, on one hand, and education and indigenization, on the other hand, help me situate multiple paths to child-centered, culturally responsive pedagogies.

Using the key terms that arose from the encounter with scholars focused on Sub-Saharan Africa, I utilized the GSLC Library to begin identifying relevant articles for the literature review. Though experience suggested 3 or 4 databases that would likely be sufficient for a solid search, I took time to scan the descriptions of all 274 databases in the GSLC Library to make sure that no relevant articles would be missed. In the end, nine databases[11] fit my general topic area, and I performed two separate searches in each of the nine databases: the first looking for the intersection

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[11] Of the 274 databases available in the GSLC Library, I chose to utilize the following: Academic Search Complete, Bibliography of Native North Americans, Education Search Complete, ERIC, Humanities International Complete, JSTOR, MasterFILE Premier, Professional Development Collection, PsychInfo.

between decolonization and education and the second looking for the intersection between indigenization and education. For all searches, I downloaded relevant articles dating back to the year 2000 and began an initial review to discover evident patterns and themes.

Patterns Evident in Initial Data

Searches from these nine databases resulted in 547 total entries, of which 453 were unique articles—327 from the decolonization-specific searches and 126 from the indigenization-specific searches. A quick survey of publication dates of these initial 453 articles revealed a clear pattern. Specifically, the near-exponential curve that represented the increasing frequency of articles written on these intersecting topics over the two decades: Between 2000–2004, the average number of articles published was only 1.8 articles per year; between 2005–2009, the average had grown to 6.2 articles per year; between 2010–2014, the average nearly tripled to 18.2 articles per year; then tripled again, averaging 52 articles published per year between 2015–2019.[12]

To gain a sense for the level of academic engagement and exchange that might be detected between the authors of these articles, I used a feature of Google Scholar to capture the number of times that each of the articles had been cited in a separate scholarly publication.[13] Two articles stood out from the rest of the field with one (Tuck & Yang, 2012) cited 4,329 times and a second (Gruenewald, 2003) cited 2,639 times. At the other extreme, 48 of the 453 articles had not been cited in any other article according to Google Scholar by the date of my search. Here again the data reflect clear patterns in the frequency with which articles were cited by other academics. While

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[12] I conducted these searches over a four and a half month period (9/24/20–2/1/21). Although the searches resulted in 61 articles published in 2020, I must assume that data for 2020 is incomplete given the time of year in which I was actively collecting data.

[13] I collected detail from *Google Scholar* between 9/11/21 and 9/16/21 on the number of times each article had been cited; I was not able to locate this detail for three of the 453 articles.

only a handful of articles were cited more than 200 times, 11 articles were cited between 100 and 199 times. Of those articles cited between 1 and 99 times, the majority (205) were cited fewer than 10 times.

Geographic Representation

While there is value in characterizing how these articles are distributed geographically, the naming of places is fundamentally problematic and reinforces the very colonial assumptions that I hope to interrogate.[14] For the purposes of this analysis, I used identifying language from the title or abstract of each article to designate the geographic scope of each. In doing so, I acknowledge that I may be perpetuating injustices past and present. Where indigenous names were used by the authors, I have followed suit.

Region-Specific Scholarship. Of the 453 total articles, 332 focused on the intersections between education and either decolonization or indigenization in specific geographic regions. Though traditional division of the world's surface into some number of continents[15] is problematic, given the very topic of this literature review, I included details of how the region-specific scholarship was divided across conventional boundaries as often taught in the United States.

Africa. Of those articles that explicitly addressed decolonization or indigenization of education in a particular country, region or continent, 72 articles addressed issues on the continent of Africa. Within that number, 31 articles were specifically focused on South Africa, six articles focused on Nigeria, and three articles focused on Sub-Saharan Africa in general.

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[14] See Rivers (2023) for the account of an argument between two men, one Nande and one Belgium, that speaks to the normalized violence contained in the simple question, "Where are you from?" (pp. 32–35).
[15] Depending on where one grew up, one may divide the world's surface into a varied number of continents; in some parts of the world, the Americas (North and South) are treated as a single continent, and in other parts of the world, EurAsia or Afro-EurAsia may be treated as continuous land masses.

Asia. By contrast, 44 articles focused on related issues on the continent of Asia, including 12 articles on China, five articles on Israel and/or Palestine, four articles on Hong Kong; four articles on Korea, four articles on the Philippines, four articles on Malaysia, three articles on India, and three articles on Taiwan.

Europe. Only nine articles focused exclusively on regions or countries in Europe; of those, six articles focused on the United Kingdom.

North America. Of the 169 articles focused specifically on North America, it is notable that Canada and the United States were the focus of 75 and 74 articles respectively. Given the relative geographic size and population numbers involved, scholarship focused on Canada dominates the literature[16] worldwide on these interconnected themes.

Oceana / Pacific. Of the 31 articles focused on Oceana, 12 articles focused on Australia or the Torres Strait Islands. Another six articles focused on the Hawaiian Islands and Guåhan (Guam). Four of the articles focus on Aotearoa/New Zealand and the indigenous lands of the Maori people, and three articles focused on Papua New Guinea.

South America. Although only seven articles from my search focused on countries, regions and peoples of South America, in particular, it is important to note that my searches produced articles almost exclusively written in English. One article written in Spanish (Suárez & López, 2018) focused on the Colombian context, and a second article written in Portuguese (de Almeida Mello, 2018) focused on readings and readers for decolonized schooling. I suspect that research articles focusing on Spanish-speaking and Portuguese-speaking regions of South America would

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[16] As will be noted, my search focuses almost exclusively on scholarship published in English and the databases that cater to English-language scholarship. I acknowledge that I am not representing all valid research on the subject.

likely be found in databases devoted to academic articles in those languages. A more thorough exploration of my topic would ask similar questions about other regions of the world, at least acknowledging that not all academic articles are available in English or in English language-oriented databases.

Multi-Region and Globally-Focused Scholarship. Though, as noted above, the vast majority of articles focused on specific geographic regions, countries, or continents, a significant minority of articles (107) cannot be assigned to a single geographic area. In some cases, scholars focused on multiple locations that cross conventional geographic boundaries, and in other cases scholars were drawing conclusions, explicitly or implicitly, with global implications.

Multi-Region Scholarship. I identified 25 articles that addressed two or more distinct regions. For example, one article (Hickling-Hudson, 2014) considered the influence of Freirean pedagogy in Grenada, Jamaica, and Australia. Another article (Olsen & Andreassen, 2017) focused on Norway and Aotearoa / New Zealand as they implement national early childhood curricula in indigenous communities. I also took the liberty of including articles here that focus on countries that, collectively, are identified as the Global North (see Clapham, 2020), or Global South (see Claudio, 2017).

Scholarship with Global Implications. For the purposes of this analysis, articles were categorized as scholarship with global implications for multiple distinct reasons. In some cases, the authors were intentionally addressing transnational issues, such as a "decolonial reading of global university rankings" (Shahjahan et al., 2017), or "anti-Eurocentric international relations" (Murray, 2020). In other cases, authors did not contextualize their conclusions to an identifiable geographic region, leaving the reader to assume that the author intended to draw conclusions with global

applicability. For example, Cameron et al. (2016) considered recent interest in indigenous methodologies and paradigms in qualitative research without reference to any particular region of the world. Likewise, Chetty (2018) examined culturally responsive pedagogy in teacher education generally.

Recurring Themes

When I first undertook this literature search, I decided to let patterns in the literature help determine how to narrow my focus. Having discovered that the literature is widely distributed with regard to geographic focus, I next looked to see whether patterns in recurring themes might suggest a natural focus for my project. Given the terms used in the underlying searches, all articles included elements related to education, and either decolonization or indigenization. My work on that early research project led me to look again to see how many of the articles generated with the search term decolonization specifically mentioned indigenization or a related term (especially indigenous), and how many articles generated with the search term indigenization specifically mention decolonization or a related term (e.g., decolonizing, decolonial, anti-colonial). Of 453 total articles, only 88 articles mention both key words or related terms, but the two sets of searches showed significant overlap on a wide range of other related themes.

Identity and Civil Rights. Though identity and civil rights-related themes were mentioned infrequently, this lack of frequency is, itself, worthy of note. Only two articles mentioned *anti-racism* as a key term; only three articles included *queer studies, queer theory, homosexuality*, or *heteronormativity* as a key term; six articles included *whiteness, white spaces,* or *white supremacy* as a key term; six other articles mentioned *feminism* or *feminist* as a key term; *critical*

race theory was also mentioned by six articles, and *identity*, in general, was mentioned in nine articles.

Religion and Spirituality. While three articles mentioned *spirituality* (especially *indigenous spirituality*) as a key term, 18 articles included *Christianity, Christian theology,* or *Bible Studies* as a key term—with half of these focused on Africa.

Subtopics in Education. Five articles mentioned *cultural responsiveness* or *cultural competence*, in general, as a key term, and another 10 articles mentioned *culturally responsive STEM instruction* (especially math and science); six articles mentioned *cultural appropriation* as a key term; *language policy* was mentioned by 11 articles as a key term, and 26 articles mentioned *curriculum* or *textbooks* as a key term.

Epistemology, Knowledge Production, and Indigenous Ways of Knowing. When considering the intersections of education, decolonization, and indigenization, the most commonly recurring themes related to knowledge systems and ways of knowing: *knowledges*—note the plural form—and *knowledge* occurred as a key term in 34 articles, while 27 articles specifically mentioned *epistemology* and related terms (especially *epistemological* and *epistemologies*) as a key term. No other theme even came close to the frequency with which these closely related themes occurred.

The process of assessing the initial collection of 453 articles generated by my search included examining patterns in publication dates and in different aspects of representation (e.g., topics, scope, presence in the literature, etc.). As mentioned above, the frequency with which decolonization and indigenization appeared in the education-related literature created a

near-exponential curve between 2000–2019. Applying a similar lens to the 61 articles focused on ways of knowing, I discovered that the curve, so to speak, begins almost a decade later than that for the more general topics of decolonization and indigenization. Indeed, for the years 2000–2004, my search did not generate any articles focused on ways of knowing, and only one such article was published between 2005–2009. After 2010, however, the curve steepens dramatically, with nine articles published between 2010–2014, and then 35 articles between 2015–2019. As I mention above, data for the year 2020 should be considered incomplete. Even so, by the time of my search, 16 articles had already been published in the first part of that year, nearing half the total number published in the previous five years.

Without falling into the trap of considering databases as "innocent objects" (Christie, 2004, as cited in Harvey & Russell-Mundine, 2018, p. 801), I will simply note that the 61 articles focused on ways of knowing were not evenly represented across the nine databases that formed the basis of my search. Five databases—Eric, Academic Search Complete, JSTOR, Professional Development Collection, and Bibliography of Native North Americans—represented 47 of the 61 articles on ways of knowing, with fully 52 of the articles derived from the search for decolonization and education, while only nine were generated from the search for indigenization and education.

Dominant Voices in the Literature

Before examining the ideas and interpretations that dominate this narrow body of literature, I pause to recognize one article that stood out, not only for the number of times that is had been cited in Google Scholar, but for the frequency with which I encountered it in the narrow subset of literature. At the time of my search in September 2021, the article by Tuck and Yang (2012) had

been cited 4,329 times according to Google Scholar. The evident impact and influence of the article

suggested that a closer look was warranted.

The Contribution of Tuck and Yang (2012)

Tuck and Yang's (2012) highly influential article *Decolonization is not a Metaphor* drew

upon a broad range of resources and inspiration including 19th century American literary heroes

(pp. 14–16), tropes popularized by Oscar-winning movies (pp. 14, 17), social media posts from the

Occupy movement (p. 23), and the seminal works of Franz Fanon and Paulo Freire (p. 19). From

this diverse collection of resources, the authors constructed a deeply nuanced argument that true

decolonization, as opposed to metaphorical decolonization, is incommensurate with many human

and civil rights-oriented social justice movements (p. 28) to the extent that those movements are

not predicated on the repatriation/rematriation of occupied land to Indigenous peoples (p. 25).

Settler Moves to Innocence. Specifically, Tuck and Yang (2012) contended that

decolonization cannot be used as "a generic term for struggle against oppressive conditions and

outcomes" (p. 21), and that attempts to do so were largely motivated by settlers' desire to move

prematurely to a state of reconciliation that allayed the profound anxiety and guilt they—the

settlers—experienced around their complicity in the structures of settler colonialism. This

premature attempt at reconciliation was manifest in an array of strategies that, collectively, Tuck

and Yang named *settler moves to innocence* (pp. 9–28), embracing, as they did, Mawhinney's

(1998) analysis of "the ways in which white people maintained and (re)produced white privilege in

self-defined anti-racist settings and organizations" as settlers negotiated a pathway to the

experience of innocence (Mawhinney, as cited in Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 9):

The absorption of decolonization by settler social justice frameworks is one way the settler,

disturbed by her own settler status, tries to escape or contain the unbearable searchlight of

complicity, of having harmed others just by being one's self. (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 9)

These settler moves to innocence take a variety of forms, which Tuck and Yang explored in detail,

including (i) settler nativism; (ii) fantasizing adoption; (iii) colonial equivocation; (iv)

conscientization; (v) at risk-ing[17] / asterisking Indigenous peoples; and (vi) re-occupation and

urban homesteading (p. 4).

While Tuck and Yang (2012) acknowledged the experience of Black and brown people,

both in the settler-native-slave triad that sustains the settler colonial nation state and in the

experience of refugee/immigrant/migrant populations, they nevertheless assign the role of settler to

Black and brown individuals who engage in settler behaviors vis-à-vis occupation of stolen land.

As such, the authors observed that Black and brown people also engage in settler moves to

innocence when they fail to recognize their ongoing complicity in settler colonialism even if their

arrival (or that of their forebears) in the settler colonial state was violently forced upon them. Tuck

and Yang were particularly critical of the move to innocence "that is especially vogue in coalition

politics among people of color" in which all struggles against imperialism are described as efforts

to decolonize. As Tuck and Yang argued, this rhetoric "creates a convenient ambiguity between

decolonization and social justice work" with the common refrain, "We are all colonized." However

true this may be, argued Tuck and Yang, it is "deceptively embracive and vague, its inference:

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[17] Tuck and Yang (2012) intentionally used the term "at risk-ing" as a double entendre. As the authors explained, the settler practices decried here not only put indigenous youth *at risk*, but also reduce indigenous youth to an asterisk (or footnote) because the scale of relevance chosen by Western science renders that population as statistically insignificant (see p. 23).

'None of us are settlers.'" Such equivocation was little different from the claims to innocence by white settler colonialists, in the authors' estimation (p. 17).

Epistemology and Ways of Knowing. Given the dominant themes arising from the literature review, I pause to note where Tuck and Yang (2012) have taken up the topics of epistemology and ways of knowing.

Epistemology and Relationships to the Land. The first such reference occurs as the authors strive to distinguish settler colonialism from other forms of colonialism. Here, the authors observed, the success of settler colonialism has been contingent on settlers' claiming indigenous lands as their own. In this process, the very foundation—epistemic, ontological, and cosmological—of the indigenous relationship to the land is undermined, representing a violence that is perpetuated and reasserted every day:

> The disruption of Indigenous relationships to land represents a profound epistemic, ontological, cosmological violence. This violence is not temporally contained in the arrival of the settler but is reasserted each day of occupation. (p. 5)

Steeped in the epistemology and ontology of settler colonialism, these moves have been justified with the narrative of progress and productivity, with land considered a commodity and source of capital:

> In the process of settler colonialism, land is remade into property and human relationships to land are restricted to the relationship of the owner to his property. Epistemological, ontological, and cosmological relationships to land are interred, indeed made pre-modern and backward. Made savage. (p. 5)

Tuck and Yang (2012) further mentioned epistemology (along with ontology and cosmology) when they distinguished between settlers' relationship to land and that which exists between Indigenous peoples and the land. It is the very difference in this relationship to the land that, the authors contended, create the differences in their worldview and ways of knowing:

> Indigenous peoples are those who have creation stories, not colonization stories, about how we/they came to be in a particular place—indeed how we/they came to be a place. Our/their relationships to land comprise our/their epistemologies, ontologies, and cosmologies. (p. 6)

Settlers Supplant Indigenous Epistemologies. The topic of epistemologies arose yet again as the authors argued that settlers are fundamentally different from immigrants. The difference lies in the response to what each finds upon arrival—immigrants adjust to and adopt the culture they find already in place while "settlers become the law, supplanting Indigenous laws and epistemologies." As a result, the authors concluded, "settler nations are not immigrant nations" (Tuck & Yang, 2012, pp. 6–7).

Critical Consciousness and the Critique of Settler Epistemology. As part of their critique of the variations on settler moves to innocence, Tuck and Yang (2012) contended that the cultivation of critical consciousness is necessary but insufficient for the task of authentic decolonization. The authors admit that there is value in education that leads individuals to interrogate the foundations and structures of settler colonialism:

> We agree that curricula, literature, and pedagogy can be crafted to aid people in learning to see settler colonialism, to articulate critiques of settler epistemology, and set aside settler histories and values in search of ethics that reject domination and exploitation; this is not unimportant work. (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 19)

However valuable, though, without the requisite repatriation/rematriation of land to Indigenous peoples, the authors wondered whether an over-focus on critical consciousness might actually be a distraction from the more uncomfortable and messy task of authentic, material decolonization.

Unique Epistemologies are Further Marginalized. Finally, the authors asserted that common ways of accounting for underrepresented populations have the effect—intended or unintended—of further marginalizing and 'invisibilizing' Indigenous peoples:

> 'Urban education,' for example, is a code word for the schooling of black, brown, and ghettoized youth who form the numerical majority in divested public schools. Urban American Indians and Native Alaskans become an asterisk group, invisibilized, even though about two-thirds of Indigenous peoples in the U.S. live in urban areas, according to the 2010 census. Yet, urban Indians receive fewer federal funds for education, health, and employment than their counterparts on reservations (Berry, 2012). Similarly, Native Pasifika people become an asterisk in the Asian Pacific Islander category and their politics/epistemologies/experiences are often subsumed under a pan-ethnic Asian-American master narrative. From a settler viewpoint that concerns itself with numerical inequality, e.g., the achievement gap, underrepresentation, and the 99%'s short share of the wealth of the metropole, the asterisk is an outlier, an outnumber. It is a token gesture, an inclusion and an enclosure of Native people into the politics of equity. These acts of inclusion assimilate Indigenous sovereignty, ways of knowing, and ways of being by remaking a collective-comprised tribal identity into an individualized ethnic identity. (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 23)

While this may simply play into the settler narrative of the disappearing native culture, it is also part of the conflicting messaging that settler colonialists convey about the value of Indigenous peoples, their epistemologies and their ways of being (p. 9).

What Scholars from my Search Take from Tuck and Yang

As indicated previously, the influence of Tuck and Yang's (2012) article Decolonization is not a Metaphor was apparent in the frequency with which scholars cited this source, especially since 2016. While one of the references to Tuck and Yang was cursory and vague (see Patel, 2020), seeming only to give a requisite nod to fellow scholars who had clearly been influential, a number of scholars in this literature review took up Tuck and Yang's argument in substantive ways.

Metaphorical Decolonization. Within this small sample of articles focused on ways of knowing, multiple authors took up the demand that decolonization not be used as a metaphor. Williams and Claxton (2017) echoed Tuck and Yang's warning that "articulating decolonization work primarily as metaphor 'kills the very real possibility of decolonization'" (p. 61). Writing a year later with two additional co-authors, Williams and Claxton stressed again not only that decolonization is not a metaphor, but that "decolonisation work must ultimately be articulated in practical ways involving redistributive forms of justice" (Williams et al., 2018, p. 45). Hampton and DeMartini (2017) agreed that metaphorical references to decolonization among academics ended up being superficial and resulted in "re-centring whiteness, thus eliminating the possibility of actual decolonization" (p. 253). Finally, in their challenge to settler ontologies of land, Burow et al. (2018) observed that "Decolonization is often invoked as a metaphor without a clear sense of praxis" (p. 68).

Settler Moves to Innocence. Consistent with related challenges to re-centering whiteness, several authors highlighted Tuck and Yang's critique of settler moves to innocence. According to Williams and Claxton (2017), avoiding such strategies to reclaim a sense of innocence was a "decolonial imperative" as these strategies "decentre Indigenous Peoples and exacerbate their struggles" (p. 61). Of the six different strategies critiqued by Tuck and Yang, Hampton and DeMartini (2017) singled out the practice of claiming affinity to indigenous knowledge or an unspecified Indian ancestor as particularly insidious.

Indigenous Connections to Land and Story. Two articles took up the exploration of the ways in which settler colonialism disrupted Indigenous ways of knowing, and Indigenous relationships to the land. Whitlow et al. (2019) cited Tuck and Yang among others in making the case that "Onkwehon:we [indigenous] understandings were disrupted and interfered with by colonial codes of thought and behaviour that prized individualism and patriarchy, as settlers continued to undermine Onkwehon:we ontologies that focused on holism and community support" (p. 558). Hampton and DeMartini (2017) noted the ongoing struggle of Indigenous peoples to "reclaim land and sovereignty." In their view, the disruption in their relationship to the land has resulted in a loss of connection to the very origin stories that speak of their relationship to the land and which are steeped in "Indigenous epistemologies and pedagogies" (p. 251).

Incommensurability with Other Social Justice Agendas. Writing together, and later with two additional co-authors, Williams and Claxton commented on Tuck and Yang's concept of incommensurability, specifically that because colonial subjects, themselves—including descendants of enslaved peoples, refugees, migrants, and other often violently displaced peoples—participate in occupying stolen land, the agenda of decolonization has often been incompatible with

the agenda of other social justice efforts (Williams & Claxton, 2017, p. 67; Williams et al., 2018, p. 45). The authors concluded, echoing Tuck and Yang, that the collective work of decolonisation is necessarily messy, contested and *unsettling* [emphasis added] (Williams et al., 2018, p. 45). I assume that the double entendre is intentional all around.

The Possibility of Solidarity. One last argument made by Williams and Claxton (2017) deserves mention, though it departed significantly from Tuck and Yang's concept of incommensurability. Despite the complex relationships and competing agendas of diverse peoples within the settler colonial state, as noted above, Williams and Claxton remained committed to the possibility of "epistemological" and "relational solidarity" between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. Citing the works of Williams and Hall (2014) and Gaztambide-Fernandez (2012), Williams and Claxton argued not only for the possibility of solidarity between diverse peoples and their interests but also for the possibility of *re-indigenization*, a process that enables those no longer indigenous to place to find new connection to the land, and consequently each other. While this was a sharp departure from Tuck and Yang's position, Williams and Claxton made it clear that they have no intention of falling into the trap of settler moves to innocence:

> In the use of the term "re-indigenization," we are not advocating for neoliberalist forms of naturalization of settler peoples as becoming Indigenous to what is now known as Canada; a now common dynamic which Tuck and Yang (2012) name as one of several "settler move[s] to innocence." (Williams & Claxton, 2017, p. 66)

On the contrary, Williams and Claxton allowed for the possibility of reconnection with the land where one finds oneself through one's own cultural roots while, presumably, being respectful of indigenous claims to reclaim stolen land:

Locating onto-epistemology and the ethics of relationality (axiology) as the primary

undercutting challenges of social-ecological resilience provides a crucial way forward and a

form of guidance for those who no longer know what it is to be Indigenous to place.

Specifically, it opens the way for reconnecting with place in authentic and grounded ways

which have resonance with one's own cultural roots. (Williams & Claxton, 2017, pp.

66–67)

A Closer Look at a Subset of the Literature

Patterns in the literature review indicated the need for a closer examination of a small

subset of the literature, especially those that focused on way of knowing. Even in this subset of the

literature, there are clear positions on which many of the authors agree—e.g., social justice requires

an analysis of power in knowledge production (Dwivedi, 2020; Subreenduth, 2008; Trinidad, 2014;

Williams & Claxton, 2017, etc.). Other positions stand out as solitary voices running counter to the

dominant sentiment—e.g., a Chicana/Xicana critical feminist appeal for "a critical consciousness

of our multitudinous oneness" (Sosa-Provencio, 2018, p. 24). For the purposes of this paper, I have

focused on a combination of dominant and outlying themes, with special attention to the varied

ways in which these authors addressed epistemology and ways of knowing.

Dominant Themes in the Literature

In identifying themes as dominant, I am simply reflecting which themes were taken up by

multiple authors writing in different contexts and with different purposes. This is not meant to

suggest that frequency determines value or significance. Consistent with the topic I explore here,

some of the most critical themes may have been highly place-based and context-specific. That said,

what follows here is a synthesis of the most frequently occurring themes.

Hegemony of Western Colonial Epistemology. In writing about the barriers to decolonization and indigenization with regard to ways of knowing, the authors represented in this narrow body of literature challenged the hegemony of Western[18] colonial epistemology. For Wråkberg and Granqvist (2014), this imbalance in power stood in the way of true collaboration between Western and Indigenous scientists and practitioners. Other authors writing about classroom education observed that this hegemony was tantamount to a hidden curriculum in which Western thought "is normalised and naturalised as being universally true, rational, and objective, and thereby devalues all other forms of knowledge" (Harvey & Russell-Mundine, 2018, p. 792; see also Sosa-Provencio, 2018). For authors like Dei (2016), subverting and resisting such hegemony was a personal journey toward reclaiming ancestral and cultural knowledge:

> With formal European schooling systems devaluing my ancestral and cultural knowledges, claiming Indigenous knowledge for me is both a political and intellectual exercise in decolonization. I, therefore, write about Indigenous knowledge as an intellectual and political exercise to subvert and resist colonial hegemonic ideologies and Eurocentric discourses masquerading in the (Western) academy as universal knowledge. (p. 292)

Claims of Universality. Many of the authors contested the dominance of "Western cultures of scholarship, with the assumption of their universal scope, valid for all time and all societies"

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[18] Though using the term *Western* is problematic as a way to designate those regions of the world that enjoy undue power and privilege as a result of hegemonic rhetoric and structures, I have chosen to use this term because this term is the most commonly employed term in this body of literature. I follow Hampton and DeMartini (2017) among others who "use the term 'Western' to refer to ideology, epistemology, and cultural traditions attributed to Western Europeans and their descendants" (p. 250). A few authors prefer the language of *center–periphery* or *core–periphery*, though this has "fallen out of fashion." Others have adopted the language of *Global North* and *Global South*, which as "(a critical response to postcolonial critique of developed and developing) is a distinction that is of course still racialised, particularly when used as geographical shorthand" (Patel, 2020, p. 1467). More recently, Clemens (2020) suggests *European-North American* as another alternative.

(Mignolo, 2002, as cited in Patel, 2020, p. 1468). Dei (2016) joined Battiste and Henderson in arguing that "we must resist the Eurocentric temptation to define, label, and categorize all human experiences" (Battiste & Henderson, 2000, as cited in Dei, 2016, p. 294). Building on this critique, multiple voices pointed out that the practice of universalizing was actually a strategic tool of imperialism and settler colonialism. As Burow et al. (2018) argued, settler ontologies "tend to be universalistic" with the aim of suppressing "alternative worldviews" (p. 66). Hampton and DeMartini (2017), in turn, pointed out that this strategy is "an essential part of imperialism, which has enabled Western Europeans to impose their stories as universal truths" (p. 250). Far from simply a historical observation, "the colonial project of the west persists to this day as the west continues to be presented as the modern, rational, scientific front of a historical queue and as western knowledge is elevated to the level of universal truth to be emulated by others" (Wu et al., 2018, p. 507).

Knobloch (2020) observed, however, that the project of emancipation and liberation "can no longer be articulated universally" but will be "inter epistemic, dialogic and pluriversal" (p. 4). Root et al. (2019) followed Mignolo in contending that as we conceptualize the past from different perspectives, we must do so without universalizing. Rather, in this "epistemic shift" one must "foster an acceptance of multiple historical narratives concurrently" (Mignolo, 2009, as cited in Root et al., 2019, p. 12). According to Wu et al. (2018), the answer was "a philosophy of emergence" that "is articulated within and against the weight of western Enlightenment legacy that defines the essence of humans as conscious, free, universal, and rational" (p. 509).

A Reductionist Worldview. Another aspect of Western Epistemic hegemony that works as a barrier to decolonization and indigenization in education is the reductionist tendency of the

Western worldview. As mentioned above, Wråkberg and Granqvist (2014) wrote about the ability of indigenous scientists and practitioners, in this case in the Arctic High North, to collaborate with Western scientists, with the possibility of indigenizing Western science. In this context Wråkberg and Granqvist decried the "acute epistemological difficulties of merging indigenous knowledge with reductionist science" (p. 82). Ebersohn (2012), in turn, noted the challenges for indigenous psychologists and related knowledge production in the field of career resilience, when the assumptions of Western psychology suggest the use of "mechanistic and reductionist framework(s) supported by an empiricist methodology and a trinity of materialism, quantification, and objectivity immune to cultural context" (Dalal & Misra, 2010, as cited in Ebersohn, 2012, p. 806; see also Louie et al., 2017, p. 20).

A variation on the troubling tendency to reductionism is the Cartesian duality characteristic of Western epistemology, in which the mind (and spirit) are separated from the body (Wråkberg & Granqvist, 2014; Wu et al., 2018). Not only does this contribute to the uneasy relationship between indigenous and Western worldviews, but it makes the wisdom that arises from indigenous epistemologies all but incomprehensible and unrecognizable to those working from the Western framework (Rosiek et al., 2020, p. 332). Indeed, from the Western epistemological perspective, the wisdom of indigenous communities is readily dismissed as pseudo-science and "superstition, including shamanism, holism, sacral phenomena, spirituality, occultism" (Wråkberg & Granqvist, 2014, p. 91). This may represent a fundamental incommensurability that will prevent the recognition of alternative ways of knowing as long as the hegemony of Western colonial thinking remains intact. Wråkberg and Granqvist went on to observe that there is little hope of resolving

the incommensurability of scientific reductionism with holistic traditional wisdom…

Because nothing indicates that the epistemology of science is up for revision, one must

doubt the prospects of integrating, using or benefitting traditional knowledge in

multidisciplinary collaboration with ecology. (p. 90)

Some authors celebrated the introduction of indigenous ways of knowing precisely because

they undermined the "radical dualism of the west." In introducing the epistemology (and ontology)

of Ubuntu from southern Africa, for example, Wu et al. (2018) referenced the African priest who

first wrote about Ubuntu to observe that:

Correcting and invalidating the radical dualism of the west, the African worldview saturated

with Ubuntu 'hold[s] that created beings preserve a bond one with another, an intimate

ontological relationship' (Tempels, 1959, p. 58). Placide Temples, an African priest and the

first African to write about Ubuntu, continues: 'For the Bantu there is interaction of being

with being, that is to say, of force with force. Transcending the mechanical, chemical and

psychological interactions, they see relationship of forces which we should call ontological'

(Tempels, 1959, p. 58). This ontological relationship of forces and interconnectedness of

the Universe has its beginning on a plateau with whatever gods may be and can be traced to

and through the smallest pebble—truly a Cartesian nightmare; the death of dualism." (p.

514)

A nightmare it may be for those holding on to the rigid duality of Western thinking, but the

promise of an indigenous worldview such as Ubuntu was offered here by scholars who celebrated

the possibility of something emergent and holistic.

Modernism as a Tool of Colonialism. The hegemony of Western colonial thinking has also made itself felt in the rhetoric of Modernity. Drawing on a "predominantly Latin American stream of contemporary critical thought," Knobloch (2020) was one of multiple scholars who contended that epistemic decolonization is only possible if one recognizes the "constitutive connection between European modernity and European colonialism" (p. 2).

> For the development of decolonial thinking, the finding already mentioned here that the development of modern culture, at least in the well-known and dominant treatises, is usually traced back to a purely European or occidental intellectual history is central. 'Many (such as Jürgen Habermas or Charles Taylor) consider modernity to be an essentially or exclusively European phenomenon' (Dussel, quoted from Mignolo 2012, p. 58). Walter Mignolo (2002) speaks in this context of a philosophical macro-narrative through which modernity is associated with literature, philosophy and the history of ideas: 'modernity (and obviously postmodernity) maintained the imaginary of Western civilization as a pristine development from ancient Greece to eighteenth-century Europe, where the bases of modernity were laid out' (Mignolo 2002, p. 60). From a decolonial perspective, this narrative is problematic insofar as it conceals the connection between modernity and colonialism. (Knobloch, 2020, pp. 2–3)

Gregory Cajete clarifies the profound impact of this rhetoric when he observes that "modernity has ultimately resulted in the 'colonisation' of perception and consciousness, and a corresponding overemphasis on materialism, previously unimagined" (Cajete, 2000, as cited in Williams et al., 2018, p. 42). This can be seen in deeply held hegemonic perceptions of indigenous people and a racialized ethnocentrism—Eurocentrism—that suppresses or ignores alternative

points of view and ways of knowing (Knobloch, 2020; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2017; Williams &

Claxton, 2017; Wråkberg & Granqvist, 2014; Wu et al., 2018; Yang et al., 2019).

Though race and racism will be explored in greater detail below, it is important to note here

that the macro narrative of historical progress and modernity relies on the primitivizing of

non-Western peoples. Indeed, Knobloch (2020) observed that the appearance of Western progress

and modernity was achieved in large part by a campaign to paint the rest of the world as wilder,

darker, and more primitive: "Modern Europe had to appear all the more enlightened, progressive

and civilized the wilder, primitive and darker the image of the rest of the world was drawn"

(Knobloch, 2020, p. 3; see also Harvey & Russell-Mundine, 2018, p. 799). In the process of

describing the backgrounds of participants in their work, moreover, Williams and Claxton (2017)

alluded to the fact that the Western modernist view is a "major part of colonialism's weaponry,"

and that central to this view of reality are "powerful racialized discourses of Anglo-Saxon

exceptionalism… that privilege White bodies" (p. 61).

The Epistemological Violence of Racism. I pause in my writing to acknowledge the

overlap and interconnectedness of the topics covered here. While the demands of academic writing

dictate the need for some measure of categorization and clear delineation of subject matter, it is

evident that the content I am attempting to represent could be arranged in multiple different ways.

While the previous subsection ended with an observation about the role of racism in the macro

narrative of modernism, the significance of racism, and the epistemic violence inherent in racism,

deserve fuller development here. As I observed above, though, not all indigenous scholars refer to

their work as race work and the related terms of race—racism, whiteness, white spaces, white

supremacy and racialized bodies—may or may not appear in the literature around decolonization

and indigenization. For the purposes of this portion of my synthesis, I am focusing on the literature that expressly uses this terminology.

Defining the Terminology of Racism. For the most part, the authors in this narrow body of literature used the terminology of racism without defining terms, as though the meanings were self-evident. That may be a positive sign if it indicates that scholars no longer need to explain what racism is, that racism exists, or that the related terms belong in our collective discourse. Patel (2020) was one of a few who clarify how terms like *race* and *whiteness* are being used in their work. Citing the work of Shilliam (2014) and Wilson (2012), Patel noted that even though race is a social construct (as opposed to a biological category of difference) it nevertheless is experienced in profound and material ways, with implications for the decolonization agenda (Patel, 2020, p. 1464). Following Elliot-Cooper (2018), they went on to argue that "whiteness is not 'what people are' (i.e., white bodies) but is 'an idea that shapes actions and thoughts.'" For Elliot-Cooper and Patel, "engaging with whiteness as an idea thus replaces 'tired debates on diversity and representation that at best result in putting Black faces in high places, or peppering a reading list with a darker face or an exotic name'" (Elliot-Cooper, 2018, as cited in Patel, 2020, pp. 1465–1466).

In an argument that reads like a tailor-made response to Tuck and Yang (2012), Dei (2016) asserted that the settler identity (in settler colonialism) is inherently white. Though Tuck and Yang argued that Black and brown bodies may be identified as settlers to the extent that those bodies occupy stolen land, Dei (2016) responded that

> The nomenclature of "settler" has a historic specificity to the Euro-colonial, the dominant
> body, that of Whiteness. Historically the settler has been installed in a particular way, which

worked to erase the atrocities done onto Indigenous peoples. We cannot forget that "settler" is about hegemonic relations with Indigenous peoples; settler is about power and privilege as endowed through the Euro-American body. (pp. 296–297)

Subreenduth (2008), writing on transnational issues of race, adopted Hall's (2002) "conceptualization of race as a floating/sliding signifier." As a woman of Indian ancestry who grew up in South Africa and now lives in the U.S., Subreenduth agreed with Hall that

the shifting, relational meaning of race is essential in understanding how the body gets (re)signified to mean different things within different spaces. It is the something left unsaid about race, the sliding meanings of race and identity that makes the decolonizing project an ongoing endeavor. (Hall, 2002, as cited in Subreenduth, 2008, p. 43)

In the narrow subset of literature that I reviewed for their focus on ways of knowing, only the authors of these three took time to define the ways in which they were defining specific terms used to explore racism. That said, the discussion of the impact of racism in various forms was a dominant theme in this body of literature.

Preservation of White Spaces. Sosa-Provencio (2018) was particularly critical of the ways in which public schooling in the United States committed acts of epistemic violence through a curriculum and pedagogy that preserves "public schooling and teacher education alike as White spaces, despite the diverse racial and ethnic composition of the students it purports to serve" (p. 16). From their perspective in higher education, Wu et al. (2018) acknowledged their role in a corresponding epistemic violence of academic elitism. Elitism and Whiteness in higher education comprise a central focus of recent student movements around the world to protest the ways in which "whiteness marginalises and renders invisible the distinct voices, experiences and

knowledge of black people in elite university spaces." This was evident in the *I, too, am Harvard* campaign in 2014; both *I, Too, Am Oxford* and *Rhodes Must Fall Oxford* movements in 2014 and 2015; and the *Why is my curriculum white?* campaign at University College London in 2015. Each of these movements, argued Patel (2020), "foregrounded symbolic and discursive race-work centred on illuminating the workings of whiteness as ontology in academic knowledge production, and its validation when coded into curricula" (p. 1465). While Patel is particularly interested in the UK experience, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2017) added the 'Rhodes Must Fall' protests from South Africa, in 2014 and 2015, as yet other examples of students challenging the enduring whiteness of faculty, curricula, and pedagogy.

Interrogating Race as Crucial to Decolonization. The topic of race is far from tangential to my discussion of decolonization and indigenization with regard to ways of knowing. According to Quijano (1993), race and racism serve as organizing principles that cross the boundaries of multiple hierarchies that comprise what he calls the colonial matrix of power ("patrón de poder colonial") (as cited in Grosfoguel, 2011, p. 11). Subreenduth (2008) concluded that interrogating race was fundamental to the decolonization process because race pervades issues of power and privilege in knowledge production. Since such "power intervenes in legitimating certain forms of knowledge and action... Interrogating race becomes a crucial component to the decolonizing process" (p. 43). In their examination of Indigenous concepts of non-human agency, moreover, Rosiek et al. (2020) cited racism—inextricably bound up with Eurocentrism—as one of the primary reasons for the lack of engagement by "scholars trained exclusively in Eurocentric philosophical traditions" (p. 332). The lack of engagement, long overdue in the estimation of Rosiek et al., precluded any movement toward the indigenization or decolonization of epistemology and ways of knowing.

Epistemology Inextricably Bound to Ontology. Yet again, the subdivisions of this literature review feel somewhat arbitrary as subtopics overlap and inform one another. Patel (2020) was cited above in the context of their discussion of anti-racist student activism at universities [mainly] in the UK. Here, as I take up yet another dominant theme in the literature—the place of ontology in this discourse—Patel's argument helps me understand that because "whiteness marginalises and renders invisible the distinct voices, experiences and knowledge of black people in elite university spaces," discursive race-work is needed to illuminate "the workings of *whiteness as ontology* [emphasis added] in academic knowledge production, and its validation when coded into curricula" (Patel, 2020, p. 1465). Thus, Patel, among others whose work follows here, extended the scope of the decolonization (and indigenization) discourse beyond the limits of knowledge and knowledge production to our very understanding of being and reality. For scholars such as Sosa-Provencio (2018) and Patel (2020) who were each concerned with the hegemony of whiteness in pedagogical spaces—in U.S. public education and U.K. higher education, respectively—the ontology of whiteness represents a foreclosure not only on alternative ways of knowing but on what is acknowledged to exist at all. The connection between epistemology and ontology was also seen as an opportunity by some scholars and practitioners who want to change not only the way we think but the ontological underpinnings of the world, *writ large*:

> Countering these developments are calls from a wider ranging number of disciplines for strategies—including the incorporation of Indigenous ontologies and knowledge systems—which fundamentally challenge and transform our current global economic-cultural order. Among the most radical…of proposals is M�aori Indigenous education scholar Makere Stewart-Harawira's assertion of the urgency of effecting 'transformation of the ontological

underpinnings…[of] The world order' as this is conceived and articulated through societal discourses and structures. (Williams et al., 2018, p. 42)

The potential for large scale impact, on what is understood to be real and on the material reality of societal structures, as imagined by Makere Stewart-Harawira and Williams et al., seems the perfect response to what I take to be a note of caution not to get lost in simply thinking about thinking: "If we limit our thinking to thinking through how other people think we will always end up circumscribing ontology by epistemology" (Kohn, 2013, as cited in Burow et al., 2018, p. 64). If the goal is to affect positive change that dignifies, protects, and nourishes human beings and their environment, then the invitation to marry epistemology and ontology suggests the potential for real and material change. Furthermore, as Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2017) contended the inextricable connection between epistemology and ontology is not a strategic decision, but simply a revelation that "the ontological/identity question… is always linked to the epistemological question" (p. 69).

Agential Realism. In the discussion of modernity and duality, above, knowledge ends up being largely reduced to a narrow body of theories arising from Western empirical science and scholarship. The holism characteristic of indigenous epistemologies and ontologies, by contrast, expands the realm of knowledge in fundamental ways. Not only are humans understood to be intimately connected with physical, metaphysical and spiritual ontologies (Root et al., 2019), but even in the physical world humans are able to access knowledge through relationships with non-human entities, entities that are understood to have agency of their own. With implications for ethics and responsibility, the concept of non-human agency, or "agential realism," moves beyond an ordinary notion of environmental awareness and connection to nature as it is commonly conceived (Rosiek et al., 2020, p. 332). Kim Tall Bear clarified that this is not simply a question of

recognizing the agency of animals, plants and other living things, but extending our notion of agency to even non-living entities, thereby expanding the scope of human experience upon which humans may draw understanding and knowledge: "indigenous standpoints accord greater animacy to non humans, including nonorganisms, such as stones and places, which help form (Indigenous) peoples as humans constituted in much more complex ways than in simple biological terms" (Tall Bear, 2017, as cited in Burow et al., 2018, pp. 64–65). As Tall Bear argued, this stands as a criticism of post-humanism, which in turning away from indigenous ontologies has missed critical insights. The implications of this oversight become more dire when we consider that "one of the greatest strengths of multispecies ethnography is the 'speculative wonder' captured in its ontological revisions, a wonder rife with potential to generate alternative ethical possibilities for living in the world" (Feinberg et al., 2013, as cited in Burow et al., 2018, p. 65).

Ontologies of Land. While the agential realism of many indigenous ontologies includes a concept of agency for the land, including geologic features, the mineral world, and specific places, several scholars wrote of *ontologies of land* in a different sense. In this portion of the literature, we find discussions of "the coexistence, contradictions, and consequences of different ontologies of land." According to one scholar "land is an assemblage that can be viewed for its ontologies—'the nature of its thing-ness'—and its affordances—'what it's good for—its values'" (Li, 2014, as cited in Burow et al., 2018, p. 58). In this context, an examination of differing ontologies of land captures the profound differences in how land is conceived and valued in indigenous and non-indigenous frameworks. From the indigenous perspective, connection to land helps us understand what it means to be human: "All peoples develop from ecological origins. Ecology is the animating force—derived neither from political or theological ideology—that teaches us how to

be human" (Battiste et al., 2005, as cited in Williams et al., 2018, p. 42). This highlights the

profound loss for those who are no longer indigenous to place (Williams et al., 2018)—a concept

that will be discussed below—but also helps us understand the patterns of settler colonialism and

the profound complexity of material decolonization. Along with his colleagues, Burow (2018):

> explores ontologies of land as they are constituted across the contested political boundaries
>
> of settler states where settler ontologies work to dispossess, commodify, and extract
>
> economic value from land…Viewing land through the lens of ontology (what kind of thing
>
> it is), and how different people see land, helps to unwrap the diverse ways land is
>
> constituted. This is central to examining histories of Indigenous dispossession and
>
> contemporary struggles for revitalization, resurgence, and decolonization in settler colonial
>
> contexts. (pp. 57–58)

With our/their ontology (and economics) of resource extraction, settlers—past and present—

identified natural spaces as underutilized and waiting to be claimed (Williams et al., 2018).

Indigenous scholars and activists are not striving to simply transfer ownership of land from settler

colonists back to indigenous peoples, but return the land to a place of relationship with other

agents, material, spiritual and cosmological (see Burow et al., 2018, p. 67).

    Onto-Epistemologies of Place. While the prior section focused on the differing ontologies

of land that help us understand the incompatibility of settler and indigenous relationships to the

land, especially in settler colonial states, there is yet another way that some authors have been

exploring placed-based knowledge and relationship, what I will call onto-epistemologies of place.

This is not only a descriptive framework to capture the indigenous experience of land, but also the

basis of healing methodologies as scholars and practitioners strive to help individuals and cultures

recover lost connections to the land. Williams et al. (2018) referenced the work of Aninshnabe and Haudenosaunee scholar Vanessa Watts, among others, when making the case that "the bedrock of experience is always place" and the onto-epistemological framings of this are manifest in the conception of

> Place Thought, a distinctive space which recognises the interconnectedness between thoughts and place, based on the premise that the land is alive and thinking and that humans and non-humans derive agency through the extensions of these thoughts. (Watts, 2013, as cited in Williams et al., 2018, p. 44; see also Dei, 2016, p. 295)

> In their healing work, Williams and colleagues adopted a "praxis of decolonisation" that

Sommerville (2010) called "reproduction of culture in place." This decolonial praxis was developed in answer to a key question that arose from the inaugural summit of the International Resilience Network (IRN), namely: "What are the pedagogical practices/nature of the learning community that will enable reconnection to place and people?" (Williams et al., 2018, p. 43). This will be explored further in the context of exploring what it means to be no longer indigenous to place.

Taking the thread of discourse in a slightly different direction, Root et al. (2019) drew upon the scholarship of Benham (2008) when they stressed the importance of place-based curriculum, place-based rituals and place-based leadership. In their phenomenally successful experiment with an open-access course on Mi'kmaw knowledge, history, culture, identity, and contemporary issues, the authors documented the profound effect of place-based rituals led by local elders. Importantly, this was not a generic course on indigenous knowledge(s). Instead, the course brought in elders to

share L'nu teachings, through ritual, storytelling, and shared experiences (Root et al., 2019, pp. 11–12) grounded in place and local practices.

> This critical grounding in physical space, metaphysical place, and spiritual place is a vital part of the process that allows students to reawaken and become conscious of how ontologies are shaped and reshaped by culture and landscape. Ceremony should always be guided by local protocols and facilitated by those who are deemed by community to be the holders of those traditions. (Benham, 2008, as cited in Root et al., 2019, p. 12)

Onto–Epistemological Philoso-Praxis. Wu et al. (2018) considered new ontological possibilities in their effort to work "against the gravitational pull of western hegemonic discourse in postqualitative research" (p. 505) largely because "the exercise of western ontologies perpetuates the crisis of Eurocentrism and precludes imaginative alternatives[19] to live-be-write differently" (p. 507). As they look beyond the accustomed methods of Western scholarship, they acknowledge the risk of perpetuating a new version of colonialism in which Western scholars borrow inspiration from distant cultures and repackage it as something fresh and innovative:

> Resonant with Tuck and Gaztambide-Fernandez (2013), Snaza et al. (2014) are attuned to the colonizing possibilities of such a perspective—namely, that privileged scholars of the North and west swoop in, engage, and ravage non-western and non-Northern epistemological and ontological traditions—packaging them as 'new' and 'cutting edge' –

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[19] As will be discussed in Chapters IV and VI, the capacity to imagine alternatives to *the way things are* is considered critical by Santos (2014) and Rivers (2023) both of whom chart a pathway or process for reaching beyond the limits of colonial thinking.

propping up the academic industrial complex without altering relationships, domination, power, or politics. (Wu et al., 2018, p. 507)

Guarding against such appropriation, as best they can, the authors presented two different indigenous, non-Western perspectives to perturb the possibilities for new insight: Taoist philosophy and the "African onto–epistemological philoso-praxis" of Ubuntu (Wu et al., 2018, p. 513). Both of these worldviews present us with examples of the

entanglement, the inseparability of ontology and epistemology (onto–epistemology), and an ontological positionality of immanence—interpenetration—impermanence. Re-conceptualizing the postqualitative regime, we offer a turn to non-western indigenous ontologies illuminating African and Eastern philosophies pregnant with multiple possibilities for living–thinking–being ourselves, postqualitative research, and the world anew. (Wu et al., 2018, p. 504)

Both worldviews provide examples of "fluidity, multiplicity, and vagueness of reality" (Wu et al., 2018, p. 510). Again, Wu et al. did not intend to create a new hegemony centered outside the west. Rather, they introduced multiple alternative worldviews to disrupt habitual patterns of thinking[20] and stimulate possibilities that would otherwise be hidden.

Taoism, for example "embraces paradoxical thinking." Taoist cosmology represents a worldview in which human and non-human entities are inextricably connected with one another, the division between the two being a social construct (Wu et al., 2018, p. 511). Unlike classical Western philosophy, Taoism involves a more flexible and fluid ontology. Unlike classical Western

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[20] See Rivers (2023) for the argument that habits of perception are the true enemy when trying to see beyond the limits of colonial ways of thinking (see p. 16). See also discussion in Chapter VI.

philosophy, ultimate truths may be unknowable, and even if known, they may be irreducible to expression in language:

> As Lau contends, 'what in Plato qualifies the Forms for reality is precisely that which would disqualify the Tao from being the immutable way' (1963, p. xviii). The Way along which all things move is neither knowable nor representable in language, as suggested in the opening sentence of Lao Tzu, 'The way that can be spoken of is not the constant way' (I, 1). Transformation is global and progressive. Rather than seeing opposite concepts as contradictory and impossible to exist in tandem, Taoism recognizes that one (A) can only exist if the opposite (non-A) also exists, as they are one and the same, complementary and mutually transformative. (Wu et al., 2018, p. 511)

For Wu and colleagues, the "ontological underpinning of Taoist tradition, the flux of oneness transcends the 'post' of postqualitative writing–thinking–theorizing–philosophizing" (p. 12). As such, Taoism provides an opportunity to step back from the assumptions and conventions of the Western tradition and gain the perspective required of authentic reflexivity.

Like Taoism, Ubuntu offers a provocative alternative to conventional Western epistemology and ontology. Wu and colleagues referenced the scholarship of Ramose (2002) when they contended that "*Ubuntu* is an African onto–epistemological philoso-praxis. In other words, it 'is the indivisible oneness and wholeness of ontology and epistemology'" (Ramose, 2002, as cited in Wu et al., 2018, p. 513). Ubuntu stands in contrast to the extreme reductionism and individualism of Western frameworks, stressing instead the wellbeing of the whole rather than the individual—though not at the individual's expense. According to Wu et al. (2018), unlike Taoism,

Ubuntu is anthropocentric and humanist in nature, but like Taoism it embraces an ever-changing

state of flux and becoming, with an ultimately unknowable universe:

> In this way, Ubuntu as a southern African philosophy and ethic can be understood as a
>
> holonic onto–epistemological entanglement with and in relation to all in the (un)known
>
> Universe. A holon is 'whole in one context, yet at the same time is a part of another
>
> context' (Forster, 2010, p. 5). They are whole-parts. All things are holons. Ubuntu
>
> conceives being as a continual unfolding and exchange of the forces of life, as unceasing
>
> flows of knowledge, experience, being–becoming in a dynamic, relational, and necessarily
>
> uncertain/unknowable universe. (Wu et al., 2018, p. 514)

Robinson-Morris—one of Wu's coauthors—described Ubuntu as a "generous ontology." By this

he means an ontology that resolves the dichotomies and tensions of Western thinking into a

wholeness that transcends the "so-called postepistemologies":

> A generous ontology removes the cleavage between subject–object, ontology–epistemology
>
> and fuses these western dichotomies into an indivisible wholeness, entangles and knots
>
> them into an indivisible oneness. Ubuntu, a generous onto–epistemology, requires being
>
> always already engaged in relationship, in communion with all things; it transcends the
>
> so-called postepistemologies. (Robinson-Morris, 2015, as cited in Wu et al., 2018, p. 514)

> Like so many other indigenous ways of knowing described in this body of literature,

Ubuntu embraces a holistic vision of life and the Cosmos. Being is relational, and those

relationships extend to all entities "both seen and unseen reality (spirit beings, human beings,

plants, animals, mountains, waters, stellar bodies, and all)" (Wu et al., 2018, p. 514). It is in this

radical departure from the Western rational, modern, reductionist worldview that these authors cast

the seeds of possibility, not to adopt or center Ubuntu (or Taoism) but to use each alternative worldview as a lens to perturb, disrupt, and interrogate ingrained assumptions and habits of thinking. This is exactly the critical self-reflection that Harvey and Russell-Mundine (2018) saw as essential to the process of decolonization:

> Critical self-reflection is an especially useful decolonising tool as it asks us to interrogate our assumptions about what knowledge is assigned value in our institutions and why. It can help students (and staff) identify not only the colonising but the deep colonising tendencies of individuals, groups and institutions by making visible those theories and practices that seem 'natural' but which in reality might be harbouring injustice and racism. (Harvey & Russell-Mundine, 2018, pp. 797–798)

> Nakata et al. (2012) join the call for this kind of critical reflexivity to identify and challenge imbalances in power and other inequities that we have come to take for granted:

> Aligned with emancipatory approaches to critical thinking, critical self-reflection encourages students to be 'open to critical analysis of their own social locations and what these obscure from their view, what remains unarticulated in their language, and what has been absent from their thoughts.' (Nakata et al. 2012, as cited in Harvey & Russell-Mundine, 2018, pp. 797–798; see also Root et al., 2019, p. 13)

Wu et al. (2018), then, provided a practical approach to stimulating the kind of reflexivity and critical self-reflection that Nakata et al. (2012) and Harvey and Russell-Mundine (2018) have identified as bridging the gap between our accustomed ways of thinking and the capacity to interrogate long held assumptions, values, and beliefs. Further, the nature of Taoism and Ubuntu philosophies are consistent with Nakata's charge that we explore even that which remains

unarticulated in language. If, as Harvey and Russell-Mundine (2018) argued, this task requires a willingness to dwell in "complexities, ambiguities, tensions and paradoxes in our sense-making… [that] shake up certainties and encourage unlearning," (Harvey & Russell-Mundine, 2018, p. 798) then spending time with the concepts of Taoism and Ubuntu—or similar forms of indigenous onto-epistemological philoso-praxis—seems like time well spent.

Isolated Themes in the Literature

Here I pause to share details of my process in the interest of transparency. While I chose topics for the previous section simply based on the frequency with which they were represented in the literature, effectively privileging themes that were explored by multiple authors, I am using the following section to share isolated themes that had far less representation in the literature. It goes without saying that this synthesis is not exhaustive, and there will remain many significant issues unrepresented in this project.

Provocative Terminology. Though many of the articles in this body of literature make use of terminology that is in widespread use in academic discourse, there were several provocative terms that were *new to me*. Whether their newness is simply a reflection of my limited experience with and exposure to the larger body of literature, or whether their *newness* is indicative of ideas that are genuinely novel or innovative, I cannot say. Each of the terms I have chosen to feature, though, add to my greater understanding of the current topic.

Coloniality. Often used as an alternative to the term *colonialism*, the term *coloniality* was used in six different articles in this small body of literature (Dwivedi, 2020; Hampton & DeMartini, 2017; Knobloch, 2020; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2017; Patel, 2020; Sosa-Provencio, 2018). Given the publication dates of these articles, it may be that *coloniality* is gaining acceptance as the preferred

term in this context. Though the term was used by a significant number of articles in this collection, most of the authors used the term without explanation or discussion of its meaning. Dwivedi (2020) referred to "India's postcoloniality" as in *India after it had been colonized* (p. 27). Patel (2020) considered the intersection of "theorisations of decoloniality" with "development scholarship" in the larger context of decolonization and seemed to be using *decoloniality* as a theoretical state of *being no longer colonized* (p. 1464). Adopting the perspective of Paperson in saying that "deconstructing coloniality is not the same as decolonization," Hampton and DeMartini seemed to be using a similar notion of *coloniality* as a theoretical state to be deconstructed in academic discourse (Hampton & DeMartini, 2017, p. 253). In her critique of public education in the U.S., Sosa-Provencio (2018) decried the role of public schooling in "preserving a coloniality of power, which naturalizes and systematizes a link between race, language, and labor." Sosa-Provencio credited this idea to Quijano and Ennis (2000) and seemed to be adopting the term *coloniality* as *a state of being colonized* (pp. 16–17).

Two authors spoke to the origin of the term *coloniality* in the literature: Ndlovu-Gatsheni writing in 2017 and Knobloch writing in 2020. Ndlovu-Gatsheni used the term in the context of writing about the history of higher education on the continent of Africa, tracing the campaign for decolonization back to the introduction of the first universities built on a Western model:

> Decolonisation/decoloniality is one of the most resilient languages of liberation ranged against colonialism/coloniality. It has today re-emerged in a far more radical form in Latin America, where concepts such as coloniality and decoloniality have been coined and where the 'decolonial turn' has been emphasised and is traceable to the Haitian Revolution. The decolonial struggles in the Americas, Asia and Africa which delivered the new flags and

anthems are today being carried over to the realm of epistemic freedom. (Ndlovu-Gatsheni,

2017, p. 56)

In his sentence structure above, Ndlovu-Gatsheni set up two sets of interchangeable terms:

Decolonisation was equated to decoloniality, and colonialism was equated to coloniality. He also

traced the use of coloniality and decoloniality to decolonization efforts in Latin America. Writing

three years later, Knobloch (2020) wrote about the connection between modernity and colonialism.

In this discussion, Knobloch wrote:

In order to get a better idea of the connection between modernity and colonialism, it is

helpful to fall back on the concept of coloniality coined by Quijano. 'Coloniality, unlike

colonialism, is… a continuous power relationship that emerged with the colonial expansion

of Europe into the Americas and as such represents the downside and the necessary

precondition of Western modernity.' This power relationship, which is also referred to as

the coloniality of power or the colonial matrix of power, encompasses different but

interwoven areas. (Knobloch, 2020, p. 3)

In this view the coloniality of power (colonial matrix of power) extends far and wide to

include hegemonic relationships in "economy, authority, nature, gender and sexuality as well as

subjectivity and knowledge" (p. 3). Citing the contributions of Mignolo extensively, Knobloch

made the case that "modernity and coloniality represent two sides of the same coin, whereby

modernity, as it is imagined in the philosophical narrative of Western civilization, is described as

the bright side, coloniality, on the other hand, as the dark side of modernity" (Knobloch, 2020, pp.

3–4; see also Grosfoguel, 2011, p. 13), especially as the "myths" associated with modernity and coloniality are used to justify "the violence of genocides" (Knobloch, 2020, p. 4).[21]

Provincializing. One article (Wu et al., 2018) introduced the concept of *provincializing* as a strategy for addressing the hegemony of Western ways of thinking. This strategy works to decenter and deprivilege what would otherwise represent a "hegemonic vantage point" (Wu et al., 2018, pp. 506–507). Consistent with their rationale for looking South and East to alternative worldviews (e.g., Taoism and Ubuntu), Wu et al. (2018) sought to disturb and disrupt assumptions and inequities in the Western framework. By provincializing Western ways of thinking, they did not strive to erase the Western worldview, but relegate it to the status of only one of many possible perspectives in a pluriverse.

> We attempt to provincialize Anglo-Francophone philosophies and welcome non-western wisdom traditions into an expansive perspective of our critical boundaries in the postqualitative turn… We have to look beyond and outside of dominant Western European philosophies of knowledge to the indigenous, non-Western (non-Northern), nonwhite, non-masculinist, non-humanist, non-hegemonic ontologies and epistemologies that Western humanism has systemically [*sic*] attacked. (Wu et al., 2018, p. 507)

By spending time with these *non* perspectives, the authors hoped to create the possibility of new ways of thinking and fresh insight. While I find this compelling as an aspirational goal, I am troubled by an insistent concern. Where hegemonic structures (including colonized thinking) are

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[21] Since completing the literature review, I have expanded my understanding of *coloniality* and *decoloniality* through new sources, particularly Maldonado–Torres (2020). In order to maintain the integrity of my narrative approach, I have not gone back to revise the literature review. Newer, expanded understandings will be shared later in the dissertation.

deeply entrenched, simply giving voice to non-Western worldviews seems wholly inadequate to the task of promoting critical reflexivity and self-reflection, much less the actual dismantling of coloniality. By their very nature, the assumptions of coloniality (modernism, universality, reductionism, exceptionalism, duality, etc.) are exclusive and do not allow space for a pluriverse of worldviews. Not unlike a monotheistic religion that believes itself to be the *one true religion*, it is incommensurate with other alternatives, even unable to acknowledge the existence of genuine alternative views.

 Indigenist. The term indigenist is used by two different authors (Chung, 2019; Knobloch, 2020). "The term "indigenist" allows non-Indigenous people to employ Indigenous theory and perspective, in much the same way males might discuss "feminist" theory and perspective without being identified as female" (Wilson, 2007, as cited in Chung, 2019, p. 14). I am less clear about how Knobloch uses this term. He spoke of three phases in a particular author's career (*preindigenist, indigenist,* and *postindigenist*). Since the author in question (Reinaga) is clearly a supporter of indigenous interests, I do not understand what was meant by *postindigenist*. Knobloch's puzzling usage aside, I will be interested to see whether indigenist may become synonymous with being an ally to indigenous peoples.

 Perspectivist. One author (Burow et al., 2018) introduced the term *perspectivist*. Burow cites the scholarship of Hornborg (2001) in which he commented on the worldview of the peoples of the Amazon river basin who, he explained, "have acknowledged the limitations of their own, human powers of perception, and the empathy with which they have imagined other species' ways of viewing the world" (Kohn, 2013, as cited in Burow et al., 2018, pp. 65–66).

Hornborg was interested in the Amazonians' capacity to consider non-human perspectives. Burow, in turn, considered the implications within the settler colonial state where indigenous peoples develop a capacity to see how they are seen by those in power. Burow named this capacity *perspectivism*:[22]

> Shifting from the forest to the plantation, from the animal umwelt to settler ontology, a similar asymmetry holds: perspectivism is a Native, subaltern facility. To survive, Indigenous peoples develop a keen sense of how settlers and ruling elites see them. (Burow et al., 2018, p. 66)

As conceived here, perspectivism is a desirable trait that indigenous peoples develop as a survival mechanism. They need to develop this capacity precisely because they exist in a world in which others wield power over their lives. The tragedy (and irony), of course, is that the impetus to develop this capacity is contained in their marginalization and oppression. If it were beneficial to indigenous peoples for members of the dominant subculture to develop the capacities of perspectivism, it is not clear how that would be achieved.

Indigenous to Place / No Longer Indigenous to Place. The word *indigenous* and its variations (indigeneity, indigenist, indigenization, etc.) featured throughout the literature, even among those articles generated by a search for *decolonization* and *education*. A quick search for terms in a *Google Doc* that I created for the purpose indicates that *indigenous* or a related word appeared more than 600 times in the quotes I collected from this small body of literature. Some

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[22] The PHDLC faculty member who reviewed this literature review in its original form helped me connect Burrow's (2018) concept of *perspectivism* with Du Bois's understanding of *double consciousness*, as articulated in *The Souls of Black Folks*, originally published in 1903.

form of the word appeared in all the articles. That said, most of the authors used these terms as though their meanings were self-evident. A few articles, however, used one of a related set of expressions in a thought-provoking way: *indigenous to place, no longer indigenous to place,* and even *(re)indigenization*.

Especially when considering the difference between the two categories of *indigenous to place* and *no longer indigenous to place*, I heed the warning from Williams et al. (2018) not to fall into the simplistic binary of Western identity politics, namely that one is either indigenous or not. In one respect, identities are complex and contested, interpreted and understood differently in different contexts. In another respect, Settler-migrant peoples may have lost their "deep empathetic links to the land," but they are descended from ancestors who were indigenous to place (p. 42; see also Dei, 2016, pp. 295–296). These same "ancestors may have been colonised in their own homelands preemigration, and were and/or are subsequently to varying degrees complicit in the colonisation of others postmigration" (Williams et al., 2018, pp. 42–43).[23]

For Williams and her colleagues, there were a range of subject positions represented in the categories of *Indigenous* and no longer *Indigenous to place*. The critical distinction between these subject positions appeared to be tied to continuous occupation of the land or continued connection

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[23] Santos (2014) added additional nuance to this discussion by putting it in the context of the monoculture of linear time, which Santos named as one of the mechanisms by which coloniality exercises hegemony over other ways of knowing. See Chapter IV for a discussion of Santos' ecology of temporalities: "Linear time was adopted by Western modernity through the secularization of Judeo-Christian eschatology, but it never erased, not even in the West, other conceptions of time such as circular time, cyclic time, glacial time, the doctrine of the eternal return, and still others that are not adequately grasped by the images of the arrow or circle. *That is why the subjectivity or identity of a given person or social group at a given moment is a temporal palimpsest. It is made up of a constellation of different times and temporalities, some modern, some not, some ancient, some recent, some slow, some fast, and they are all activated in different ways in different contexts or situations* [emphasis added] (Santos, 2014, p. 176).

to the cosmology, language and culture of one's place of origin. As Williams et al. argued, this state of being *indigenous to place* is an "ontological continuance:"

> Indigenous and no-longer Indigenous to place, encapsulates a range of subject positions that include Indigenous peoples living on traditional territories, those who are Indigenous to their country or place of origin and identify with and are grounded to varying extents in their cosmologies, languages and cultures; and those who are not in the place of origin of their ancestors, being one or more generations removed. In this sense, being Indigenous to place is an ontological continuance and not being in 'place' is an act of colonial continuance. (Williams et al., 2018, p. 42)

> For Dei (2016), it was important to distinguish between indigeneity and aboriginality.

While being *indigenous to place*, in Dei's estimation, implied an uninterrupted connection to and occupancy of the land—presumably to the time of one's ancestral origin story—one may still lay claim to indigeneity:

> This distinction is not only helpful in finding the moments when claims of Indigenousness are being denied, invalidated, or negated. But such distinction is also helpful with engaging the points of convergence and divergence, for example, between Aboriginality and Indigeneity. Indigenous is a much broader concept than Aboriginal. The latter is specific to a place. But a broader conception of Indigenous and Indigeneity (which includes understanding of Aboriginality) may also allow for discussion of Diasporic and myriad Indigeneities as well. I would argue that the distinction between "Aboriginality" and "Indigenous" allows us to bring a complex reading to the term Indigenous. One may not be

"Indigenous" in the sense of an uninterrupted, long-term occupancy of a place, but she or he

can still work with the knowledge and politics of Indigeneity. (Dei, 2016, p. 297)

While I recognize the way in which Dei's distinction addresses the claims of those "living in a

diasporic context," there are two [related] issues that come to mind. First, Dei's use of terminology

is at odds with the practice evident in many of the positionality statements contained in the

literature where authors appear to identify themselves as *indigenous* based on membership

(sometimes referred to as enrollment) in a recognized indigenous community, even if they

personally are living in a diasporic context or otherwise disconnected from their ancestral

homelands. Further—and I venture cautiously here—it is my understanding that the history of

indigenous peoples, at least on Turtle Island, is far more complex than Dei's language seems to

permit. For example, the history of Turtle Island in the Pre-Columbian era includes changing

identities, internal migration, and displacement [sometimes violent] of one indigenous population

by another (e.g., Kiowa by Comanche). My point is *not* to question the legitimacy of any of their

claims to being indigenous. On the contrary. I simply question whether *uninterrupted occupancy*

should be a criteria for claims to be indigenous, since that is not reflected in practice (i.e., in the

form of positionality statements) or complex histories.

Dei (2016) took his argument one step further, asserting that claims to indigeneity that arise

out of a liberation agenda of marginalized and colonized peoples should be taken seriously. Though

Dei, himself, did not use the terminology of *indigenous to place/land* in this context, I include his

argument here because Dei cited another scholar who did use such terms:

We are compelled therefore to heed Churchill (1993, 2003) when he pushes us to think of

the limitations (and I might even add possibilities) of claiming an *Indigenous identity to*

land [emphasis added] and territory that one is not Indigenous to. On the other hand, claims

for Indigeneity that are grounded in marginalized and colonized peoples' struggles,

resistance, and liberation need to be taken seriously within this context, as they open up

possibilities and creative designs for Indigenous bodies to re-narrate their own experiences

and histories. (Dei, 2016, p. 296)

I do want to acknowledge the claims made by Dei and Robinson-Morris (see Wu et al., 2018) that

those living in the diasporic context carry with them "local cultural resources" and place-based

indigenous knowledges even if they are geographically removed from their ancestral homeland. As

a traditional Ghanian elder/Chief living in Canada, Dei (2016) contended that the wisdom of his

culture, history, and ancestry is always with him. Robinson-Morris writing from the U.S. argued

for the same possibility for those of "African American heritage" whose ancestors were forcibly

removed from their homelands generations ago. Despite the conditions under which their ancestors

arrived in the British Colonies or the U.S., Robinson-Morris observed, there are deep cultural

knowledge and characteristics (e.g., Ubuntu) that "have survived the brutality of slavery and

colonialism" and represent indigenous connections across space and time (Wu et al., 2018, p. 510).

Dei's (2016) full statement is worth including here:

I seek to claim my Indigenous roots even while today living in a Diasporic context. My

Indigeneity is rooted in my African experience, having been born, raised, and schooled in

the surroundings and rootedness in my Ghanaian and African culture, history, and ancestry.

Through the passage of time and living in different and multiple places, my local cultural

resource knowledges have never left me. As a traditional elder/Chief in Ghana I respect and

honor my ancestral knowledge, which requires that I bring myself continually in tune with

traditional customs, practices, and knowledge that have sustained many local communities

over the years. It does not mean these knowledges are static. Neither does it mean that such

knowledge should not be interrogated for their sites of empowerment and disempowerment

for self and groups. Such knowledge resides in my cultural memory, and I know and use it

to guide everyday social action. My everyday understanding and interpretations of the

world around me have been shaped by Indigenous histories, cultures, heritage, myriad

identities (including spiritual identity), and social experiences. My identity is steeped in my

Indigeneity. (p. 292)

Dei went on to describe the ways in which "indigenous knowledge can reside in bodies and cultural

memories notwithstanding global migrations, globalization, and the emergence of Diasporic

communities." Like Robinson-Morris, Dei saw this possibility as arising from the fact that "as

colonialism uprooted Indigenous peoples it also uprooted their knowledge systems" (Dei, 2016, pp.

298–299).[24]

 Creolization. Sosa-Provencio (2018) offered yet another perspective on what it means to be

indigenous to place, adding the notion of being "*newly indigenous to the place*" (p. 18). This

concept arises from her lived experience as a Chicana/Xicana woman living and teaching in the

southwestern United States. Her personal identity is helpful here, as the "confluence of European,

Indigenous, and African ancestry of so-called Hispanic People(s)" led her to find inspiration in the

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[24] For my evolving understanding of indigeneity and connection to place, I am indebted to Santos (2014) who put this in the context of the monoculture of linear time. In an ecology of temporalities, as I understand Santos, I would see myself as both indigenous and non-indigenous, not only deeply connected to place but also utterly adrift. Rivers (2023) provided a poignant commentary on what it means to *have a from*. Finally, one of my students wrote a remarkable master's project on ecological identity work (see Minehart, 2023) in which he documented his work to help children connect to the place where they find themselves no matter whether they have *a from*.

historical phenomenon of creolization. Following Sandoval (2000), Sosa-Provencio "assert[ed] a transnational, transborder Mexican/Mexican American citizenship wherein hybridization offers tools of agency and renewal" (as cited in Sosa-Provencio, 2018, p. 18). For Sosa-Provencio, the discussion of indigeneity, including whether someone is *indigenous to place* and *no longer indigenous to place*, ignored the reality that for many people ancestry is complex and crosses simple boundaries of cultural identity and membership in recognized indigenous communities. Instead, she contended, "creolization as a necessary aspect of the human world" in which generations of migration, displacement, and colonization have created a rich hybridization.[25]

Sosa-Provencio (2018) rejected the interpretation of creolization coopted by a "xenophobic nationalistic discourse that touts an idealized postracial blending and colorblindness" (p. 20). Rather, she drew upon the insights of Gordon (2014) and Anzaldúa (2015) to contend that creolization theory reflects an authentic and embodied experience of the "Mexicana/o, mestiza/o people:"

> The power of Gordon's creolization theory emerges through the epistemologies of a Mexicana/o, mestiza/o people who embody the complexity of La Mestiza's reality who "eats, breathes, dreams, and lives every day en diferentes y multiples mundos y … multilingual conciencias [different and multiple worlds, multilingual consciousness. (Sanchez, 2003, as cited in Sosa-Provencio, 2018, p. 20)

Sosa-Provencio also drew on the scholarship of Anzaldúa to stress the authentic and embodied nature of this hybridized identity:

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[25] See also Wu et al. (2018) for "the hybrid and nomadic nature of lived realities" (p. 505).

Being Mestiza means living as 'neither hispana india negra española ni gabacha," neither Hispanic, Black, Spanish, nor White, but "mulata, half-breed caught in the crossfire' For some, Anzaldúa writes, mestizaje is but a fiction—another concocted reality for ordering the world, but for Chicana/os and Mexicana/os who embody the fusion, collision, and conflict of la frontera, the Border, it is 'the reality of our lives. Mestizaje is the heart of our art. We bleed in mestizaje, we eat and sweat and cry in mestizaje.' By theoretically binding Gordon's theory of creolization and Chicana Feminism, I hold tightly to mestizaje as an agentive, multihued conviviality that thrives in the delicate balance between oneness and multiplicity. (as cited in Sosa-Provencio, 2018, p. 20)

The historical and embodied experience of creolization, which Sosa-Provencio also named "mestizaje—[referring to the] cultural blending emanating out of sixteenth-century Spanish conquest of the Americas and the mestiza/o people(s)"—offered a picture for how new insights and possibilities might arise. Herein lies the inspiration that Sosa-Provencio took into her teaching, and it is in this process that she found the possibility of becoming *newly indigenous to place*:

The historical phenomenon of creolization is a spatially bound process of heightened cultural contact emerging predominantly out of the establishment of plantations and settler colonialism wherein, 'previously unconnected … were thrown together in violently unequal relations, threatening any and all existing orders of collective meaning. Out of these sudden ruptures, new perspectives, largely based in reinvention … began to take shape … distinguish[ing] creolization from other more familiar and ongoing forms of cultural mixture were the radical and intensified nature of the interchange of symbols and practices … [as] new combinations of once disparate meaning took on degrees of stability and

standardization, charting a distinctive genealogy, newly indigenous to the place.' (Gordon,

2014, as cited in Sosa-Provencio, 2018, p. 18)

Before closing this section, I will only note that Sosa-Provencio is one of two women of color, both

of whom identify as feminists, who take inspiration from the work of Anzaldúa. In her exploration

of higher education in the U.K., Subreenduth (2008) also draws on the "interplay of postcolonial

and feminists of color theory" represented by Anzaldua, among others.

Pedagogical Approaches. As I shared above, I approach this topic in response to questions

that arise in my classroom. As such, it is not just intellectual curiosity that brings me to this

discourse, but a sense of deep responsibility to my students and my practice. It will be no surprise

then that I took careful notes whenever I encountered ideas about pedagogical practice. I highlight

a few of these below.

Indigenous Pedagogies. I must start by acknowledging the role of formal education in the

profound harm done to indigenous populations, families, and children under settler colonialism.

Historically and into the present day, schooling is and has been the instrument of child abuse,

family separation, and cultural genocide (Wu et al., 2018, p. 506; see also Sosa-Provencio, 2018, p.

18). So much more could be documented here, but, for the purposes of this project, I will shift my

gaze to the rich alternatives found in indigenous pedagogies.

Since education is a "transmitter of cultural mores, values, and knowledge" (Wu et al.,

2018, p. 506), it follows that indigenous pedagogies reflect an indigenous culture and knowledge

that is tied closely to the land: "Such knowledges are … dynamic, experientially based, holistic,

relational, and connecting physical, metaphysical, and the cosmos" (Dei, 2016, p. 295). The

relational aspect of indigenous pedagogies was taken up by Harvey and Russell-Mundine (2018) who also drew on the scholarship of Chrona (2014) and Sherwood and Russell-Mundine (2017):

> Indigenous pedagogies tend to be based on relational learning, which is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential and focused on connectedness, reciprocal relationships, and a sense of place. Relational learning reflects the Indigenous perspective wherein education is not separate from the rest of life and relationships are seen as vital. (as cited in Harvey & Russell-Mundine, 2018, p. 800)

The healing possibilities of such an education were brought into stark relief by the goals of the IRN conference led by Williams et al. (2018). Not only did they seek to recultivate the "human spirit in ways that are life giving in the collective sense" but they saw indigenous ways of knowing as the path to answering two important questions:

- What are the pedagogical practices/nature of the learning community that will enable reconnection to place and people?

- What are the kinds of practices that will facilitate the alchemical potential of the collective—enabling epistemological, relational, and creative solidarities to emerge? (see Williams et al., 2018, p. 43)

My attention is caught by a word of caution from Louie et al. (2017) with implications for my own classroom practice. Aligning themselves with "Indigenous academics, such as Battiste (2013), [they] reminded us to avoid the temptation of including Indigenous pedagogies under the banner of Western critical theories." Instead, Louie and colleagues "heed the guidance of Elder Dr. Reg Crowshoe, who conceptualizes Indigenous and non-Indigenous theories as being parallel to one another…, [and] heed the counsel of Ermine (2007) in imagining an ethical space in between

worldviews" (as cited in Louie et al., 2017, p. 20). I am particularly interested in the counsel not to indiscriminately blend Western, Indigenous, and other ways of knowing, and to imagine an ethical space between worldviews. I read here a partial response to and partial alignment with Sosa-Provencio (see discussion of creolization above). I imagine that the creolization process, while a source of pride for the transnational Mexican/Mexican-American/ Latinx community, may reek of further attempts of cultural genocide to those who are still connected to a single origin story. At the same time, Sosa-Provencio (2018) spoke to the ethical dimension of retaining transparent links in her process of *mezitaje*—links that reveal and honor sources of inspiration from disparate cultural sources. Nevertheless, I doubt Sosa-Provencio's precautions and reassurances would be sufficient to allay the concerns expressed by Louie and colleagues.

Storytelling as a Pedagogical Tool. An aspect of Indigenous pedagogy that is of particular interest to me as a Waldorf educator is the use of storytelling. While storytelling, in some form, is mentioned in passing in numerous articles in this collection, three articles delved into the pedagogical practice of storytelling in meaningful ways (see Hampton & DeMartini, 2017; Louie et al., 2017; Whitlow et al., 2019).

Whitlow et al. (2019) reminded us that the storytelling practice essential to indigenous pedagogy is delivered orally rather than in written form,[26] with the result that students/listeners are more deeply engaged and thus lessons are more likely to be digested and integrated:

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[26] My colleague Angela Zhaawanongkwe Lindstrom reminded me that when I read a story from a printed page—rather than telling a story from memory—I do not allow myself to become a medium through which spirit can emerge; read from printed form, the story is a fixed artifact instead of an opportunity for a version of the narrative to emerge in a form called forth in that moment for those present.

In oral traditions active listening proves more powerful than the written word—the return to

storytelling provides a more powerful engagement with the teller and other listeners.

Monture (2014) emphasizes John Mohawk's understanding that the "collective 'hearing' of

cultural narratives is imperative to having people actively and deeply engage in 'thinking'

about their content" (p. 218). The Onkwehon:we view of active listening engages the whole

being and requires the listener to engage, digest, and then integrate ancestral teachings into

action and practices that modify and improve our way of being in and interacting with the

world. In terms of our understanding of Onkwehon:we ways of teaching, this oral

storytelling method holds a great deal of power in working with Onkwehon:we young

people to build identity and with non-Onkwehon:we young people to build responsibility.

(Whitlow et al., 2019, pp. 559–560; see also Louie et al., 2017, pp. 27–28)

As Whitlow and colleagues observed, the increased level of engagement and corresponding

effectiveness of teaching results in benefits for Indigenous, non-Indigenous, and presumably other

peoples as well. Whitlow et al. concluded that for indigenous (Onkwehon:we) young people, this

effectiveness means building and maintaining identity and connection; for "non-Onkwehon:we

young people" this effectiveness translates into a greater sense of responsibility.

Hampton and DeMartini (2017) observed that "storytelling is a widespread practice across

cultures" (p. 250), but warned that this has taken an insidious turn in settler colonial cultures where

the production of stories, about their own imagined history and that of the Other, are used to

maintain hegemonic structures and beliefs:

There is a long-standing Western tradition of creating and telling stories about other

peoples' histories, societies, and cultural practices while misrepresenting non-Western

narratives as the fantasies, superstitions, and lies of naïve, unsophisticated, and uncivilized

less-than-humans. (Hampton & DeMartini, 2017, p. 250)

I find the authors' argument compelling, and yet there is an interesting tension embedded here as to how one set of stories is valued while another set of stories is rejected as gross misrepresentation. While I acknowledge that it is critical to make this distinction, Hampton and DeMartini's (2017) further argument makes me question the grounds on which I would draw such a distinction. They write: "Western European stories—like all stories—represent historically and culturally specific ideas, desires, and socio-political and economic interests" (p. 250). As noted above, the extreme contextualization of knowledge runs the risk of casting all of us into a morass of relative truths. I know that was not Hampton and DeMartini's intention, and yet here, as elsewhere, I am troubled by the need to establish a footing from which to celebrate the stories that Whitlow found to be so effective, while decrying the stories that settler colonists have promulgated to justify a multitude of violences, including genocide, slavery, denial of basic human and civil rights, environmental degradation, and child abuse.[27]

Louie et al. (2017) shifted the discussion in interesting ways. Drawing on the scholarship and indigenous methodology of Smith (2012), Louie and colleagues challenged that while the oral tradition deserves emphasis, there is also a role for the "textual stories of Indigenous writers" (as cited in Louie et al., 2017, p. 27). Importantly, as Smith and Louie et al. contended, stories— whether written or oral—"can transform academic work by enabling diverse understandings, shifting power dynamics, and connecting with cultures" (p. 27). Importantly, the use of storytelling

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[27] See Chapter IV for an argument against the kind of relativism suggested here.

as a pedagogical tool serves to disrupt the ordinary power structure of teacher-student relationships: "Storytelling is an Indigenous principle that transforms the classroom by shifting the relationships between teachers, students, and knowledge," effectively distributing the locus of power from the instructor (Louie et al., 2017, p. 28).

Louie and colleagues went on to note several other benefits to using storytelling as a pedagogical tool. The very practice of storytelling reinforces the fact that knowledge is essentially embedded in experience: "Stories demonstrate the importance of situating knowledge. Learning from stories involves understanding how truth or validity is "embedded in the actual experience," as well as how "experience is understood as particular, subjective, and contextual" (Louie et al., 2017, p. 28). Storytelling also creates the conditions for more respectful interactions, which is described as fundamental to indigenous ways of knowing and being:

> Stories foster respectful relationships between tellers, listeners, and stories—a process that reflects and embodies Indigenous knowledges and epistemologies. Stories can create an environment in which learning emerges from individuals' meaningful experiences and multiple ways of knowing are honoured. (Louie et al., 2017, p. 28)

As a Waldorf educator, I am struck by the echo of these ideas in Waldorf pedagogy (see Steiner, 2000, pp. 182–183), but also understand the need to be cautious as I approach the ways in which I can respectfully point to these similarities. I recognize that there are also significant differences to the extent that storytelling in the literature here seems to mean telling one's personal story. The storytelling in a Waldorf classroom is more fraught with possibilities for misappropriation as teachers embed lessons in stories, some of which are chosen from literature from around the world.

Indigenous Approaches to Assessment. One final pedagogical practice struck me in relation to my work with adult students, in particular. Louie described their practice of using the indigenous ritual of negotiation as the basis to "collaboratively assign grades" essentially engaging each student in a one-on-one negotiation to determine the grade that best reflects their efforts and accomplishments:

> Negotiating has been adopted in my [Dustin Louie] classes by collaboratively assigning grades. In this negotiation I provide students with extensive formative feedback on their written assignments, withholding a final grade until students are given an opportunity to negotiate the merits of their submission. (Louie et al., 2017, p. 25)

Louie chose this approach, in part, as a response to Smith's call for indigenous methodology and practice:

> As outlined by Smith (2012), the protocols and rituals of negotiation are the most important elements of meaningful interactions. The outcome of the negotiation, the grade, is actually the least important in the long-term implication for pedagogy… Negotiations, within this context, flatten the hierarchical structure between the educator and student, while eliminating the adversarial components of assessment. Seeing this behaviour modelled by an educator in a position of power allows student teachers to recognize the necessity of engaging with students from a humbled position. Creating classrooms that democratize basic structures through negotiation can establish a forum for honouring Indigenous and other cultures—validating instead of denying access. (as cited in Louie et al., 2017, p. 25)

For Smith and Louie, then, the ritual of negotiation as a tool of assessment was both a way to honor the indigenous values and ways of knowing that inform Louie's practice, but has the potential to

democratize the structure of the classroom in ways that counter hegemonic expectations of authority and privilege

Remaining Questions and Observations

I approach the end of this literature review with many unanswered questions but understand this to be a healthy place to be. I share some of these questions below, even though I am not yet prepared or even able to begin to seek answers.

Skirting the Limits of my Understanding

Struggling with Academic Language. Throughout this project I have struggled to comprehend some of the academic language that commonly appears in the literature. I can tell, for example, that Wu et al. (2018) expected me to understand what is meant by the "ontological turn in postqualitative inquiry" (p. 509), but I am still grappling with the way the noun 'turn' is frequently used in the literature[28] much less what exactly is meant by postqualitative inquiry. Since I have, over time, become comfortable with other idiosyncratic usage in academic literature, I trust that I just need to live with this language long enough and engage others in an exploration of this and other unfamiliar terms.

Grappling with What is Respectful and Academically Responsible. When I was exploring the scholarship of Marfo (2011) and others in the context of Sub-Saharan Africa, one of my strategies for making sure that I was working with literature in respectful and academically responsible ways was to focus on a body of literature the authors of which were already in

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[28] See also "ontological turn in Burow et al., 2018; "ontological turn" in Rosiek et al., 2020; see also "decolonial turn" in Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2017; "decolonial turn" in Patel, 2020; "postqualitative turn" in Wu et al., 2018; "positivist turn" in Wu et al., 2018; "international turn" in Wråkberg & Granqvist, 2014.

academic dialogue. In other words, I did not want to bring ideas to bear on their discussion of developmentally appropriate, child centered education in Sub-Saharan Africa that might not be appropriate to that context. By using the bibliographies, in-text citations, and relevant conference proceedings for scholars in that discipline area, I could tell which other scholars' voices were respected in that context, and I limited myself to those voices.

When I try to use a similar approach to this chapter, I find too many disconnects between scholars who are addressing very different subtopics, populations, and goals. As such, I am unsure of whether, for example, Ndlovu-Gatsheni's (2017) account of the stages of decolonization in the history of higher education in Africa formed a valid response to Tuck and Yang's (2012) contention that decolonization is meaningless unless it is tied to, if not contingent on, the material "rematriation" (see Whitlow et al., 2019, p. 562) of stolen land. Tuck and Yang seemed to dismiss the use of the term *decolonization* in *epistemic decolonization* on the grounds that this reduced the term to mere metaphor. This is not to say that Tuck and Yang were arguing against the important underlying concept of epistemic decolonization, but that they argued for preserving the use of that term—decolonization—for the important work of unsettling the land. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2017), on the other hand, described epistemic decolonization as one of many steps toward authentic decolonization. For the continent of Africa, Ndlovu-Gatsheni observed, the process started in the 60s and 70s with the kind of political decolonization that involved the return of land and control to Black leaders, but that was just the beginning of a decolonization process that would later address economic decolonization and finally epistemic decolonization.

What is unclear to me even after reading Ndlovu-Gatsheni's (2017) argument several times is whether the stages must always follow a prescribed order (e.g., political control over land before

economic concerns and economic concerns before epistemic ones). This seems critical to understanding my response to Tuck and Yang. If political control of land is a necessary first step, then what does it even mean for me to be considering epistemic decolonization before Turtle Island is unsettled?

What is clear from Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2017) is that material/political decolonization is insufficient, and only a first step. Even if Tuck and Yang are right to center and demand the rematriation of stolen land and resist the use of the term decolonization in more metaphorical senses, it will still only be a starting point. Speaking of the process as it played out in African institutions of higher learning, Ndlovu-Gatsheni wrote:

> What must not be forgotten though, is that the Africanisation and decolonisation of the universities in the 1960s and 1970s was largely superficial, entailing changing the names of universities, taking over the administration of universities by installing black chancellors and vice-chancellors, increasing the number of black academics and black students as well as including work by African academics in the curriculum. This type of Africanisation and decolonisation did not touch the structural Eurocentric epistemological scaffolding on which the university in Africa is built and did not constitute the genuine epistemic disobedience called for by advocates of decoloniality. (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2017, pp. 60–61)

Beyond Reading and Thinking

Before stepping back and bringing this literature review to conclusion, I will return to a cautionary note from Chung (2019) with implications for my next steps. With all the unresolved issues brought to light by the scholars represented here, it seems natural to ask what my next step

should be. In this regard, I find inspiration in Chung's thoughts about where we might find the inspiration we need and how we approach that knowledge:

I believe that the knowledge of how we do this in a way that does not further oppress Indigenous people is contained in Indigenous knowledge. Indigenous knowledge is a relational knowledge or way of knowing that cannot be gained by books or reading alone. It is gained by walking beside someone who, like you, has the right to live without oppression and be at home on unconquered land where equity is normalized. Indigenous knowledge is its own universe and an incisive critique of western knowledge. I want to tell you this: It is so not about thinking.

Thinking will not get you home. (Chung, 2019, p. 21)

Applying a New Lens to my Work with Teachers

Even as I was working on the literature review I could not resist looking for ways to apply my growing understanding in my classroom and scholarship. This took many forms, formal and informal, explicit and implicit, as the body of knowledge worked inside me and informed my thought, feelings, and actions.

The acknowledgement of multiple worldviews is, as I understand it, a critical first step but insufficient in itself. It is insufficient because the acknowledgement of a pluriverse is an outward facing gesture that may or may not have any influence on the transformation of one's own practice. And, it is with this realization that I find myself compelled to return to Hampton and DeMartini's (2017) provocative study with pre-service teachers—that is, teacher candidates still in their teacher training. For, it was in my consideration of their pilot study that I found myself articulating the fundamental relevance of this larger academic topic to the problems of my own practice. Indeed,

the problem and promise of my practice lies in the privilege of nurturing the teachers who will

work directly with children for years to come. My students either enter their classrooms oblivious

to the soul-crushing narratives hidden in plain sight, or they are cultivating the capacity to see and

reveal, disrupt and heal patterns that would otherwise be perpetuated through their choices as

teachers, knowingly or not. I need to cultivate my own powers of perception not simply as an

academic exercise to fuel moral outrage,[29] but as a practical capacity that enables me to serve my

students' needs—serving my students that they might better serve theirs.

As I shared with the faculty advisor for my research redesign project, Hampton and

DeMartini (2017) wrote from their perspective as faculty/instructors in the school of education at a

Canadian university, preparing aspiring teachers for success in the Canadian public school system.

Following Strong-Wilson, Yoder, and Phipps, Hampton and DeMartini (2017) noted that the

stories through which pre-service teachers make sense of the world "shape their emerging teaching

philosophies and pedagogical practices" (p. 247). Further, as these teachers "will act as the central

storytellers in their classrooms," the narratives that thread through their worldviews will shape the

stories they tell their students (p. 247). The implications of this are made clear: If the teachers'

worldviews are shaped by coloniality[30] and other hegemonic discourses, then the inequities

inherent in these systems will be normalized, justified or otherwise disguised for what they are in

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[29] See Chapter VI for a discussion of the lethal impotence of moral outrage that distracts one from identifying the etiology of the injustices one decries (see also Rivers, 2023, pp. 60–62).

[30] I follow Nelson Maldonado-Torres in distinguishing coloniality (as opposed to colonization) as a system of hegemonic power relationships that persists even when political decolonization has been achieved (see Maldonado–Torres, N. (2020, October 18). *Coloniality of power and metaphysical catastrophe* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7rpFb1_gbIk).

the stories that shape these teachers' classrooms, as evidenced in curriculum content, pedagogical approaches, and class/school culture.

Hampton and DeMartini (2017) considered one of their primary responsibilities, as teacher/scholars committed to indigenizing and decolonizing their own "methods of inquiry and pedagogical practices" (p. 248), to be helping aspiring teachers develop the critical consciousness necessary to unseat and disrupt habitual, colonial ways of thinking. Further, they located the possibility of "anti-colonial praxis (thinking and acting against coloniality)" in the development of what they called "critical land literacy" (CLL), which fosters a receptiveness to more complex understandings of land, including indigenous ways of knowing (p. 248). It is in this reflexive process, they argued, that pre-service teachers become aware of the ways in which national narratives (e.g., discovery, progress, civilization, etc.) disguise the atrocities (e.g., child abuse, family separation, genocide, denial of civil and human rights) justified by the settler-colonial worldview (p. 250).

A Case Study to Support my own Professional Development. After completing the research redesign project assigned to all PHDLC students, I was inspired to consider ways to apply an emerging understanding to my own work with pre-service teachers. Allowing my gaze to extend beyond the narrow confines of Hampton and DeMartini's critical land literacy, I was nevertheless committed to asking where the stories I told myself, or the stories that I brought to the classroom might be disguising a settler-colonial worldview, presenting the assumptions of that worldview as universal and unquestioned. I scanned my bookshelves and thought through the grades curriculum that I teach each year, thinking of content that would make a fruitful case study for my own learning process. Tuck and Yang's (2012) discussion of James Fenimore Cooper's Leatherstocking

Tales came to mind, as did some of the classic class readers such as Elizabeth George Speare's Newberry award winning book *The Sign of the Beaver*, often assigned in 4th or 5th grade. Either of these would have given me ample opportunity to explore the romanticization of the relationship between settler-colonists and First Peoples. As rich as these resources certainly were, choosing either would have felt like taking a shortcut. I felt deeply that neither would provide the learning experience I needed.

   The "Greek Miracle" Hypothesis. I recalled a book I had discovered a little more than a year prior when I was preparing to teach a 7th grade algebra block as a guest teacher. At the time, I was looking for biographical details for Muhammad ibn Musa al-Khwarizmi, and I stumbled across Teresi's (2002) book *Lost Discoveries: The Ancient Roots of Modern Science—from the Babylonians to the Maya* at my local library. In my rush to prepare, I was relying heavily on the index to find details specific to al-Khwarizmi, so I nearly missed the import of what I had found. Somehow, a critical paragraph in the first chapter caught my attention:

> The short form of the hypothesis is this: science was born in ancient Greece around 600 B.C. [*sic*] and flourished for a few hundred years, until about 146 B.C. [*sic*], when the Greeks gave way to the Romans. At this time science stopped dead in its tracks, and it remained dormant until resurrected during the Renaissance in Europe around 1500. This is what's known as the "Greek miracle." The hypothesis assumes that the people who occupied India, Egypt, Mesopotamia, Sub-Saharan Africa, China, the Americas, and elsewhere prior to the 600 B.C. [*sic*] conducted no science. They discovered fire, then called it quits, waiting for Thales of Miletus, Pythagoras, Democritus, and Aristotle to invent science in the Aegean. (Teresi, 2002, p. 6)

I remember having a complex reaction to Teresi's formulation of the hypothesis as I rummaged around for a post-it-note or other bookmark that I could use in a library book. I recognized the fundamental absurdity of the hypothesis, but I also recognized the far-reaching impact of this worldview in my own education and the larger world around me. This narrative was not new to me precisely because I recognized that much of the science I had learned was predicated on this fundamental assumption.

A story my father had related more than once sprung to mind. One fall he returned to his position as a high school math teacher after a summer camping trip had taken our family to Chaco Canyon National Historical Park. As my father tells the story, in the first days of school he found himself sitting near some of the history teachers and asked them why the scientific achievements of the indigenous cultures of places like Chaco Canyon were not featured in the curriculum. The answer was unequivocal and unapologetic: since Native Americans had not contributed to the development of modern culture, much less modern science, their accomplishments—whatever those might be—did not have a place in curriculum. Even as a teen, I could tell that the answer did not sit well with my father, but I do not remember anything I recognized as a response. Decades later, as I ordered a used copy of Teresi's book for myself, I knew that I could not yet formulate a coherent response either. Budding capacities allowed me to recognize the absurdity of the "Greek miracle" hypothesis, but those same capacities had not yet developed enough to help me envision a generative response.

All of a sudden, I knew just what resource I needed to use as a case study. I have reached for Diggins' (1965/2012) youth reader *String, Straightedge, and Shadow: The Story of Geometry* countless times. When teaching 5th grade, I have drawn on Diggins' account of the rope stretchers

of ancient Egypt who worked along the Nile each year remarking the perimeter of farming plots after the flood waters receded. When teaching 6th grade, I usually use a version of Diggins' story of Thales' calculation of the height of the Great Pyramid of Giza to set up a lesson about using ratio and proportion. Diggins' book is equally helpful in providing lesson ideas for 7th and 8th grade geometry (e.g., Pythagorean Theorem, Golden Ratio / Golden Rectangle / Golden Spiral, and Platonic Solids). Even though it is written and illustrated in a manner that suggests that it can be assigned as a reader, I have only used the book as a teacher's resource when planning lessons and creating curriculum. That said, I will admit that I remember using some of Diggins' expressions in my presentations.

Thus, I sat down to reread a book that I thought I knew cover to cover, asking myself what narratives and assumptions might be hiding in plain sight. Admittedly, to describe these narratives and assumptions as "hidden" is misleading. They can be described as hidden only in the sense that I had failed to see them. And as I looked to see what I had missed before, I wondered about the conditions that would make something newly visible to me. If I did not find anything that struck me as relevant to my search, that might or might not mean that there was something or nothing to be found. If, on the other hand, I recognized material as based in coloniality, would that be anything more than an indication of my own stumbling learning journey? I wondered as I read and reflected, and then a passage from Diggins (1965/2012) caught my attention:

> [At the start of the sixth century B.C.E.] the spotlight of ancient history was starting to swing West. For the next 300 years, the mainspring of civilization would be Greece in her creative age. *The Greeks were to introduce a new element into culture: reason* [emphasis

added]. Their love of reason would transform art and architecture, philosophy, literature,

science, and, in the first place, mathematics. (p. 60)

I searched my memory with a growing sense of unease. Might I have given the ancient Greeks

credit for the introduction of reason? I read on, realizing that I have read these words multiple

times without seeing what I see now:

These Ionian Greeks were keen and imaginative. They asked questions about everything

and began to collect old answers and frame new ones. Their lively Ionian temperament,

their crossroads location, the times they lived in, and the new Greek spirit—all combined to

produce a stimulating intellectual environment. Here, in the sixth century BC [*sic*], there

flourished a remarkable group of individuals. Among them were great poets, and Aesop of

"fable" fame. But most fascinating were those whom we would call the world's first

scientists. (Diggins, 1965/2012, pp. 60–61)

Diggins' assertion supports Teresi's (2002) central argument: that in the dominant Western view,

Greece is given credit as the birthplace of science while the scientific contributions of other

cultures are dismissed or utterly ignored. Indeed, while Teresi lays out the evidence that, for

example, the Pythagorean theorem had already been discovered and used mathematically long

before Pythagoras was even alive, Diggins (1965/2012) devotes a chapter to celebrate the unique

contributions of Pythagoras, dismissing earlier use of the mathematical relationship (such as the

work of Egyptian rope stretchers' use of a 3–4–5 right triangle) as cases of trial and error, if not

simple blind luck.

The Implications of a Broader Macro-Narrative. The evidence of Diggins' worldview

growing as I continued to read, I challenged myself to articulate why it mattered. After all, there is

no doubt that Pythagoras made a profound contribution to the world of mathematics, even if he should not be given credit for the one theorem most associated with his name. Would it not be enough to soften one's claims in the classroom with phrases like, "According to some accounts…" or "Based on what I've read…"? The attribution of ideas is inherently problematic, after all. Even within the Western academic cannon, Newton was long given credit for the development of calculus when Western mathematicians now agree that Leibnitz developed calculus independently of Newton's influence. There is also the question of our reliance on existing or available records. Even if we can trace a system of place value back to the Babylonians of the third century B.C.E., why do we have any confidence that a previous culture had not created a system of place value even earlier? Such questions may offer a tantalizing intellectual puzzle—depending on one's temperament—but they are an easy distraction from the real world impact of worldviews steeped in coloniality.

The voices I first encountered in my recent literature review on the topic of decolonization and education spring to mind. It was there that I came to understand, even before I made connections to Teresi's (2002) efforts, that the elevation of Greece as the source of reason and true science fits into a larger macro-narrative in which Europe is the sole beneficiary of Greek exceptionalism, and that modernity, itself, is characterized as the unique product of this account of the birth of ideas. The arguments I encountered in my literature review resounded once more:

> Walter Mignolo (2002) speaks in this context of a philosophical macro-narrative through
> which modernity is associated with literature, philosophy and the history of ideas:
> "modernity (and obviously postmodernity) maintained the imaginary of Western

civilization as a pristine development from ancient Greece to eighteenth-century Europe,

where the bases of modernity were laid out." (as cited in Knobloch, 2020, pp. 2–3)

As Knobloch went on to clarify, the problem with this perspective is that it "conceals the

connection between modernity and colonialism" (p. 3). The impact of this rhetoric is truly felt

when one considers that "modernity has ultimately resulted in the 'colonisation' of perception and

consciousness, and a corresponding overemphasis on materialism, previously unimagined" (Cajete,

2000, as cited in Williams et al., 2018, p. 42). Further, the impact of this rhetoric can be seen in

deeply held hegemonic perceptions of indigenous people and a racialized ethnocentrism—

Eurocentrism— that suppresses or ignores alternative points of view and ways of knowing

(Knobloch, 2020; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2017; Williams & Claxton, 2017; Wråkberg & Granqvist,

2014; Wu et al., 2018). In other words, how I characterize the contributions of Pythagoras in a 7th

grade geometry block, far from being innocent, may reinforce or disrupt a larger narrative with

profound implications for the perpetuation of coloniality and colonial ways of thinking, including

white supremacy.

      From Contemplation to Action. As mentioned above, I undertook the case study of

Diggins' (1965/2012) book in preparation for the workshop I had been invited to design and

co-lead, scheduled for 4.5 hours spread over three consecutive afternoon sessions in June 2022.

Knowing that our collective learning experience would be deeper if I were able to share initial

ideas with the participants of the workshop ahead of time, I proposed the creation of an

introductory video in which I would set the stage for a richer discussion. The resulting half-hour

video introduction to the topic was posted for all participants approximately 10 days prior to the

first workshop session.

The participants who joined us for those three sessions had all signed up for a grade-specific one-week intensive to prepare for the coming year. This approach to professional development is common practice in the Waldorf education community where elementary and middle school teachers are following their students through the grades. Even those teachers who are fully trained and have taught the coming grade before will often take a grade-specific preparatory course of this kind to bring their focus to the developmental changes of the coming year, to what curriculum content and methods are commonly used in the coming grade, and to what other teachers are thinking of doing to enliven their classrooms and meet the developmental needs of their students. So on the afternoon of our first workshop, all the rising middle school teachers took a break from sessions specific to the grade they would be teaching the next year and gathered in a single Zoom room where my co-presenters and I were prepared to receive them.

Angela Lindstrom, Heather Scott, and I have worked together several times over the past three years. We bring three diverse perspectives, as well as years of experience in Waldorf classrooms and a shared commitment to seeing Waldorf teachers take up the difficult work of reimaging and reinterpreting the Waldorf curriculum to meet the needs of the students in each classroom and in each community. We are also committed to creating learning spaces (for children and adults) where teachers do not dictate what is to be learned, but look for opportunities to stimulate creative engagement. As such, Angela, Heather, and I do not script our joint presentations in these settings but come together ready to ask really good questions and have authentic conversations, as a threesome and in discussion rooms. To complement these rich conversations, I prepared a slide show and short talk on the case study above, both of which I offered on the second day.

I will not take time for a fuller description now, but the three sessions turned out to be both generative and extremely difficult. Some of the participants were clearly very new to the idea that some of the narratives we bring might be reinforcing patterns of coloniality. This was actually less stressful for us, the presenters, than it was for some of the other participants who wanted to move beyond the initial process of acknowledgement and mutual understanding. The idea that multiculturalism might not be enough to counter structural racism, for example, was well accepted by some in the room, and completely new to others.

One learning experience was worth sharing then and now. Each of the three days, after our afternoon session had come to a close, Angela, Heather, and I stayed in Zoom for a while to process and plan for the next day. On the second afternoon, with just one more day to go, I felt a moment of deep emotion at what was shared, and I put my head in my hands. Instantly, both Angela and Heather spoke up, sharing words of comfort and reassurance for my efforts. Startled by the implications of what was happening—my BIPOC[31] colleagues comforting the privileged, middle aged white woman in the mix—I asked us to pause. I gently pointed out the situation that I had created, however unintentionally, by drawing attention to my own emotional response. I had not meant to ask my colleagues to carry any more of the emotional burden of our collective work than they already do, so I had to reorient myself in that space. Angela, Heather, and I spent a little time reflecting on our different perspectives and experiences of what had happened, and we agreed to share a short account with the larger group when we met the next afternoon. From the feedback we received, that simple vignette was one of the most powerful messages we shared and I cannot

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[31] See Deo (2023) for criticism of the use of BIPOC as a shorthand signifier for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. I have chosen to employ this term as it was used in the context I describe here.

help but think that the effectiveness arose in large part from the authenticity of the situation. We were not just *talking about* what it means to carry the emotional labor of this work—participants could feel the truth at some deeper level.

Landing on a Researchable Question

As I engaged in the various activities and conversations leading up to the creation of my dissertation proposal, I also remembered that one of my primary tasks was to arrive at a researchable question. The final questions that have emerged contain elements inspired by all aspects of my journey, especially by the informal case study I detailed above. And, as a teacher of teachers, I found myself continually projecting my individual process of inquiry, imagining the best design for a group process—not unlike the ones that I create for graduate students in my curriculum classes. The resulting questions, then, reflect my ongoing development as a teacher.

1. *How do teachers, including myself, take up both the deep inner work and outwardly visible work of identifying the narratives, implicit and explicit, in our classrooms and curricula that perpetuate patterns of coloniality?*

2. *How do we come to understand the ways that we can disrupt the narratives that perpetuate coloniality and then do so in creative and generative ways?*

3. *How do we reveal, curate, and enact the narratives that have the power to heal and transform our classrooms, communities and culture in the wake of centuries of coloniality, while leaving the children we teach in freedom to come to their own understandings and meet a future yet to unfold?*

CHAPTER III: DESCRIBING A METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

When I introduce myself to other PhD students in the Antioch University Graduate School

of Leadership and Change, I often find myself clarifying that my path was only minimally

disrupted by COVID. As many communities in the world grappled with the genuine horror of

overflowing emergency rooms and morgues, or inadequate access to life-saving care, my

cohort-mates and I encountered the very *first-world problem* of attending our culminating Santa

Barbara residency online instead of in-person. In the context of what was happening globally in the

spring of 2020, the shift to online learning seems inconsequential, but I remember our collective

disappointment. Ever since our very first orientation session with the director of the PHDLC

program years before, we had been looking forward to what was described as a pivotal experience

in the program where we would gather in sunny, southern California to celebrate the conclusion of

a rich, 3-year, cohort experience and turn our attention to the largely individual path of completing a dissertation.

At the heart of that final residency were small group breakout sessions in which each student presented a brief picture of their emerging research question and the small group—a handful of fellow students and several faculty members—responded with encouragement, questions, insights, and other expressions of support. Even several years later, I feel the crushing weight of vulnerability that I experienced the day of my presentation. As much as I tried not to break down in tears that day, I am not surprised that I lost all sense of equanimity. I feel the symptoms of that distress in my body even now. I also remember the final straw, so to speak—the topic at which my voice broke and tears streamed down my face. Interestingly enough, I still hesitate a little with apprehension at the task of exposing myself, revealing what I know may be the cause of ridicule and censure in an academic community.

The anticipation of ridicule and censure was—and perhaps still is—well founded. One of the readings assigned for my very first residency in the program, for example, was *The Believing Brain* by Michael Shermer, in which the author marvels at the percentage of adults who actually believe in angels, as though such a belief is proof of the obstacles standing in the way of empirical, evidence-based knowledge claims, as though those who believe in angels cannot be trusted to be able to discern solid research or generate well-reasoned arguments. The problem for me, of course, is that I do believe in angels—not to mention a spiritual world and the agency of non-human entities. Even before the very first residency, I wondered where my personal beliefs would find resonance when trusted resources provided by lauded faculty denigrated the beliefs that I held dear. By the time I was preparing for the small group work at that final residency several years later,

though, I knew I needed to muster the courage to bring my whole self forward. So, even knowing

that I would likely break down in tears—a somewhat predictable response for me when I feel that

vulnerable and exposed—I prepared to share my deeply held beliefs about the nature of education.

I am reminded of another residency session during that first year, this time an introductory

session on methodology. One of our core faculty was confirming that we were all comfortable with

the difference between ontology and epistemology, and that we understood the ontological and

epistemological positions associated with various research paradigms. As I listened to the faculty

member, it sounded all very strategic to me—if I align myself with the agenda of post-positivism or

critical theory, for example, that suggests certain ontological or epistemological *choices*. I clearly

remember the question that I finally posed: Is one's choice of method and methodological approach

a strategic decision or is it—should it be—a reflection of one's authentic beliefs and perspective on

the world. The faculty member seemed to pause before responding that yes, of course, the choice of

methods and methodology should reflect one's genuine beliefs. I remember the quizzical brow that

marked the space between question and response and wish it had seemed appropriate to push on,

but I had already spoken up several times in class and felt a need to make space for others to share

their thoughts and questions. In the weeks and months that followed, though, I tried to unravel the

knot that seemed to have formed around this question, and then I realized that I had yet to see my

own deeply held ontology and epistemology reflected in any of the paradigms presented in our

residency sessions. How could I choose among the methods presented if none of them fit my

beliefs? This would puzzle me for some time.

Recognizing my Methodological Approach

Aware of my own long held assumptions about human development and child-centered education, I reminded myself throughout this project to let the ideas and arguments of so many scholars sink in and suggest new and unexpected connections. I prepared myself to be surprised. It helped that I actively worked on the literature review for a year and eight months, reading and re-reading, creating tables to organize my findings, and devising systems to collect notes on the inspired and provocative content. I am naturally one who needs extra time to read and digest ideas, but even for me this was an extended process.

I can recall the first few weeks of the project, near the end of September 2020, when I was trying to create ways to organize and access all the information I was just starting to collect. Over the course of several weeks, I was simply entering search terms into library databases, identifying relevant articles and downloading pdfs into clearly marked folders on my electronic desktop. Determining that an article was relevant usually involved reading the abstract, reviewing the key word list, scrolling through the article, glancing at subheadings, and scanning the conclusion. Even as I reviewed articles in this cursory fashion, there was one article that caught my eye. I knew it would be among the first articles that I would read with care.

Since I was going through the databases in alphabetical order, I can pinpoint where Sae-Hoon Stan Chung's (2019) article appeared in my search—the ninth article I downloaded from the fourth database I searched; it was the 249th of 547 articles I would end up collecting on my desktop. Though my primary focus at that early stage was on observing a methodical process and keeping everything well organized, I found myself impatient to spend time with an article that clearly stood out.

Part of my attraction might have been an affinity for the layout of the journal *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*—clean and spare, with a pleasing font and plenty of negative space on the page—but I attribute most of my initial interest to the first few lines of the article which leapt off the page at me:

> The Kootenay sky is the color of seventies eye shadow. The new snow squeaks. Fresh powder clings to the branches of pine, spruce, tamarack, and fir. Crunch–step–crunch. The colder it gets, the more I hear the language of winter. (Chung, 2019, p. 13)

I stopped and re-read the very first line: *the color of seventies eye shadow*? I am of an age to remember exactly what color that is. A shade of sparkling cerulean blue came instantly to mind. In those first few weeks, I was committed not to be distracted by articles that did not match my research topic, so I was taking care not to get caught in any rabbit holes, however intriguing. Even as I felt captivated by the first lines of Chung's article, I scanned the rest of the first page to make sure that it was, indeed, relevant to my search. There was no question. With a title like *The Courage to Be Altered: Indigenist Decolonization for Teachers*, I knew I had stumbled upon a clear match. The abbreviated abstract, italicized and set off at the top of the page only confirmed my first impression:

> *This chapter employs autoethnography to reflect upon the intersection of decolonization with Indigenous knowledge. It considers relational engagement with Indigenous people, land, and language, and summarizes the practice as "the courage to be altered."* (Chung, 2019, p. 13 [italics in the original])

It would be several weeks before I could sit down and take the time I wanted with Chung's intriguing text. On the first sitting, I read the complete article twice from start to finish, rereading a few paragraphs that were particularly poignant. I was stunned. Something more than my thought process had been engaged. I saw vivid images in my mind's eye, and I had the impression that I could hear the crunch of snowshoes on fresh powder and smell the bark of the ponderosa pines that grew along the trail. In the spaces between and around the words printed in ordinary letters on the page, Chung had managed to transport me to a living, breathing place, full of knowledge and deep engagement with the elements. Reading Chung's words was an embodied experience. How was that possible? I returned to the first page again, where Chung outlined the aims of his paper:

> This paper aims to do two things: It discusses decolonization; it also invites the following question—how do we write about decolonization in a decolonized manner? How might writing engage the personal, relational, and revolutionary sense of decolonization? (Chung, 2019, p. 13)

Over the course of 12 pages, Chung engages his reader in a feast for the senses, a compelling narrative of humble striving, incisive reflections on what it means to be an ally, and concrete suggestions for teachers interested in the indigenist decolonization of their classrooms, all in a writing style that reminds me of the difference between prose and poetry, a style that weaves and connects but also creates spaces for unutterable truths to emerge and take shape.

Chung models a positionality statement that changes my entire notion of what that might entail. Richly worded descriptive paragraphs are punctuated, here and there, by provocative observations and direct questions set off, for effect, in a different font with empty space above and below as a buffer. I notice that my eyes, usually so quick to move on to the next line, so quick to

capture the next semantic prize, settle for a moment in these empty spaces, pause to take in the change in pace, the visual effect created before me, the meaning of the words so carefully curated. By the time Chung explains what he means by *autoethnography*, I have already absorbed a deep, visceral sense for the promise of this approach. My teacher-self smiles in admiration, recognizing a master of inductive teaching and learning.

Elsewhere I described my experience of this article as transformative. Here, I have tried to capture and share an inkling of that experience. I was not exaggerating when I wrote that "This article opened my eyes to the possibility of writing in a way that challenges assumptions about how one formulates an academic argument." Against all odds, I found myself pondering whether I might be capable of creating such an experience. Recalling all the conversations at PHDLC residencies about the formulaic aspects of the dissertation—Chapter one is the introduction, Chapter two is the lit review, and so on—I could feel a stubborn streak rising up. Ah, how my mother would chuckle.

I began to strategize, wondering whether if I were to follow all the standard rules for academic writing in my learning achievements, proving that I was capable of meeting faculty expectations, might I be able to get away with something more creative, something decolonized for my dissertation! My imagination went in so many directions. What would that mean? What could I include? Who would have the right to judge whether my approach—whatever it turned out to be—represented a decolonized approach? I thought of the paintings that indigenous scholar-scientist Gregory Cajete creates as part of his process (G. Cajete, personal communication, November 5, 2021), and imagined creating an original drawing to go under the heading of each chapter. I even imagined what medium I would use and the style I might employ. Then I paused

and reflected, wondering why I, as a settler colonist, had any right to even try, not out of a sense of inadequacy but in recognition of the hubris inherent in such an attempt.

This ends up as a telling place to land. Even though I have described how the intertwining topics of decolonization and indigenization are authentically and integrally connected to the real issues I grapple with in my professional practice, as a settler colonist I stand on shaky ground—epistemologically and ethically—when taking up these topics. Though Indigenous scholars such as Eve Tuck have called on non-Indigenous researchers to take up this work (as cited in Rosiek et al., 2020, p. 343 [see note #1]), I am profoundly aware of the limitations of my ability to see beyond my narrow experience, cultural upbringing, and long-held habits of thinking. To say that I experience imposter syndrome is not quite right. The issue is not one of underestimating my self-worth or capacities. It is about intellectual humility and a genuine respect for the lived experience of others, an experience I can never claim to have had. Yet it is here that I find reassurance in the title of Chung's paper. Even though I am not in a position to make any claims to understand what it means to be *decolonized*, I can muster the courage to be altered. That I can do.

Exploring Autoethnography

I've been struggling with the notion of *performance* and *performativity* in the literature around autoethnography. Self-professed advocates and practitioners of the method toss these words around as though they are perfectly clear, but I just barely have a sense for what they might mean. This is not a statement of false modesty, as when a would-be scholar strategically discounts their ability before proceeding to show off their evident command of the concepts at hand. No, I am genuinely baffled by phrases like "a performative-I positionality employs performativity" (Spry, 2006, p. 344), and this from the autoethnographer who wrote the book—well, chapter—on

autoethnography in Denzin and Lincoln's (2018) *Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*. I wrote a frustrated email to my mentor, copy-and-pasting two paragraphs from the offending text. I think this topic went on the yellow pad of paper where she keeps a list of items for future discussion—a list that is growing absurdly long.

The Path to Ethnography from Participatory Action Research

It does not help that I came to autoethnography with great reluctance. This in no way stems from a lack of respect for the value and advantages of the method, but I am coming to understand that there were several internal barriers that prevented me from seeing the fit that I am just coming to understand. First, I was so certain that I would be choosing participatory action research for my dissertation based on the principles and values of Waldorf education, that I had a hard time considering other possible approaches. As I explained to one of my faculty:

> I have suspected for some time that I would engage in some elements of participatory action research for my dissertation. Even more specifically, I have long known that if I wanted to focus my dissertation on classroom curriculum, I would need to involve current teachers who are actively engaged in creating classroom content for a class of children they know well. This speaks to a fundamental tenet of Waldorf education: those working closest to the students are in the best position to address matters of pedagogy and pedagogical innovation, in particular. My years of classroom experience in past decades cannot take the place of current engagement, day-in and day-out, with students, families and school communities. I may have been able to sense exactly what my fifth graders needed from me a decade ago, but I now need to consult with current fifth grade teachers if I wish to understand the ways in which the fifth grade curriculum might need to be reimagined for the students in their

care. This final qualification—for the students in their care—is actually essential. The

Waldorf curriculum was never imagined as a fixed body of content that could be applied in

all Waldorf schools indefinitely. The very first Waldorf teachers understood that Waldorf

education is intended to be highly place-based, and customized by each teacher to meet the

unique needs of the children and community in which they teach.

My thinking is unchanged, and yet everything has changed. Perhaps it is that I just could not yet

see the possibilities that seem so promising now. Allow me to explain.

When I began working with a mentor in the fall of 2022, I indicated my interest in creating

a pilot study with practicing Waldorf teachers to explore how I could best support their

development as teachers. More specifically, I was interested in supporting their emerging capacity

to identify the narratives, implicit and explicit, that serve to perpetuate coloniality (see

Maldonado-Torres, 2020) and to understand how narratives can not only disrupt patterns of

coloniality but lay the groundwork for a different future. Since I teach the curriculum courses for

Antioch University's Waldorf Teacher Education Program, I saw this project as a natural extension

of my existing teaching practice, but, as I would come to realize, the operative words turned out to

be an *extension of my practice*. For, as I worked on the details of a pilot study, working through

questions of scope, size, recruitment, engagement, teaching materials, and scheduling, I became

increasingly aware that something was wrong.

An Approximation of What I Want to Study. Between the time that I proposed my pilot

study and the time that I started working on the finer details of the pilot, my mentor and I had been

meeting almost weekly for just over two months. During that time, in addition to considering

introductory material from de Oliveira Andreotti et al. (2015) and Maldonado-Torres (2020), we

had been working through two books together chapter-by-chapter: my mentor's recent work, *To be Nsala's Daughter: Decomposing the Colonial Gaze* (Rivers, 2023), and Santos's (2014) *Epistemologies of the South: Justice Against Epistemicide*. I document this here as I am certain that our work together influenced my decision to move away from participatory action research (and toward autoethnography), even if I cannot quite articulate how. What I know for sure is that as the plan for a participatory action pilot study became increasingly clear, I realized that no matter how much I tried to duplicate an authentic experience that approximated both the work I already do and the natural planning processes that my students—practicing teachers or aspiring teachers—undertake as they prepare curriculum for their own students, it was only that: an approximation. It took me some time to unravel the discomfort that was evident in my shoulders, neck, and furrowed brow, but the realization that I was proposing something that would be fundamentally artificial finally struck me as nonsensical and completely inconsistent with my values and goals. It did not make sense to think that I could understand the authentic process by studying an artificial approximation of the process.

A Barrier in the Form of Assumptions. My earlier fixation on participatory action research was just one of the barriers that prevented me from approaching autoethnography sooner. As I began reading what I could find on the practice of autoethnography in earnest, I was reminded of the first time that I encountered the method in a meaningful way. I was reading the exemplars provided for one of the PHDLC learning achievements, and I encountered a paper written by another student in my program who had chosen ethnography and autoethnography as a way to better understand her work as a Black, female minister with a protestant congregation in the South. I understood her argument that ethnography and autoethnography helped to reveal both the

embodied experiences of herself, her colleagues, and her parishioners as well as the complex

cultural and structural patterns impacting their community. Reflecting back now, I think I must

have also assumed that her efforts fit into a larger effort to elevate marginalized voices and make

visible cultures and experiences that were often invisible to—if not invisiblized by—the dominant

culture, including mainstream academia.

Having Been Asked not to Center my Voice or Experience. As I try to uncover something

that is not quite clear, I am thrown back to a memory of May 30, 2020 when my husband and I

arranged for our youngest to stay with a friend while we traveled to Boston to join the Black Lives

Matter march in the wake of George Floyd's murder at the hands of Minneapolis police just days

earlier. Local news later reported that thousands of protesters were there, but I only knew that as

we marched along the wide thoroughfares, I could not see the beginning or the end of the column

of marchers who gathered with handmade placards in some combination of grief, horror,

heartbreak, and rage. Before we started marching, the organizers spoke to the gathering protestors

to set the tone and lay out some ground rules. I remember quite clearly the role I was asked to take

as a privileged, middle aged white woman. The message was explicit and clear. While my support

was welcome, my contribution came in not centering my experience or voice. Even more, the one

clear direction I received—directed to all marchers who would likely be identified by police as

white—was to be ready to insert myself between the police and any of my fellow marchers who

might be targeted by police. I remember being a little caught off guard by the last direction, but I

was certainly willing to take up this role as needed. It seemed right that I would de-center my own

experience and voice and only make myself visible if my whiteness could protect a fellow marcher.

I do not think I questioned whether I was being asked to decenter my own voice and experience in

a particular setting for a particular purpose, or whether this was a broader request about how I show up in the world.

   Paying Penance for the Privileges I Enjoy. I share my memory of May 30, 2020 as it springs to mind not by way of explanation—I do not really know all of what it explains, after all. Rather, I share it because this is the memory that comes most clearly to mind as I ponder why I have assumed that I might not have the right to use autoethnography because it would unduly center the voice and experience of a privileged, middle aged, white woman. Or, even if I decide that I have the right to use autoethnography, that it might be unethical to do so based on my own values and beliefs. As I shared with my mentor in a recent note, I thought that she and I had already talked our way through the problems with this way of thinking, and yet if I use my lingering assumptions as a more reliable indicator of my deeply held understanding, then I am only now finding my way through this morass of self-doubt, self-diminishment, and even self-loathing that I thought I was called upon to enact, not as a perfunctory gesture but as, I guess, penance for the privileges I enjoy. I am clearly still sorting out a set of assumptions that have been influencing my thinking, feelings, and actions for some time.

   Finding an Affinity for Autoethnography After All. So, as I let go of—or at least set aside—the assumptions that have hindered my embrace of autoethnography, the promise of this method becomes more and more clear. I feel the promise of a method that inspires me in ways that participatory action research never did.

   Embracing a Way of Communicating That Sings to my Heart. One of the most exciting connections I have made in this shift to autoethnography is having the opportunity to experiment

with a style of writing that I find particularly inspiring. The single most transformative article I

read in a literature review on decolonization and education (conducted between September 2020

and April 2022) employed autoethnography to stunning effect. I actually remember thinking as I

finished reading Chung (2019) for the first time, "I want to be able to do this." Indeed, in the

concluding paragraph to one faculty member, I shared my hope not only that I would have the

courage to be altered but that I might likewise be inspired to write in a way that aligned with my

deeply held beliefs and commitments—beliefs about the power of inductive learning, a

commitment to bringing the lens of decoloniality to the classroom, and a new commitment to

writing in a *decolonized* manner (as Chung had modeled).

>   ***Recognizing a Description of my Current Practice.*** After working through the assumptions

that were standing in the way of my recognizing the fit of autoethnography, I began reading about

the method and practice in earnest. Before I share more of what I discovered, I pause to draw one

more connection that makes autoethnography a welcome choice in another important sense.

Granted, this method and methodological approach were new to me when I began my dissertation,

but no sooner did I start reviewing reliable resources on the method than I discovered that the

description of evocative ethnography (Adams, 2017; Atkinson, 2006; Denzin, 2014; Ellis et al.,

2011; Le Roux, 2017; Lockford, 2017) matched an approach that I already employ in my teaching

practice. That is, evocative autoethnography appears to align with a method I have cultivated in my

search for a way to gently and indirectly invite students into a space of deep reflection and personal

inquiry around key issues without their feeling exposed or pressured. If I am correct, then a more

conscious and thoughtful embrace of evocative autoethnography puts me in the enviable position of

not having to choose a methodology based on some strategic decision to embrace this or that

ontological and epistemological position. Rather, evocative autoethnography would already appear to represent my own deeply held ontology and epistemology. It already reflects who I am, what I believe, and what I do.

A Look at the Literature on Autoethnography

Part of my process in coming to embrace autoethnography, of course, was diving into the literature and confirming that I did, indeed, have a solid understanding of what this method entailed. In addition to the resources I already had on my bookshelf and electronic desktop (Chung, 2019; Denzin, 2014; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018), I spent time with several of the databases[32] that had been most generative for my literature review on decolonization and education, this time searching for a number of different terms including *autoethnography, autoethnography as method, autoethnography: an overview,* and *autoethnographic research*. As this was meant to be a sampling of the available research, I scanned possible articles for a sense of scope and variety. In the end, I selected 19 additional articles and book chapters for review. In particular, I selected articles that stood out to me for one of several reasons:

- They offered a clear or compelling definition of autoethnography

- They described different types of autoethnography

- They employed autoethnography when writing about the method

- They took a stand about the practice of autoethnography (either critic or advocate)

- They purported to teach the method (e.g., provide a handbook)

- They stood out as exemplars of autoethnographic research methods in use

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[32] Academic Search Complete, Bibliography of Native North Americans, Education Search Complete, JSTOR, Professional Development Collection, PsychInfo.

As I scanned articles, I was also generally aware of the citations that authors used when explaining autoethnography and its different forms. In other words, I wanted to make sure that I was including the respected source material as reflected in the citations. Within this sampling of literature on autoethnography, it was evident that Carolyn Ellis (see Adams et al., 2015; Ellis et al., 2011) and Norman Denzin (2014, 2017; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018) were among the most respected sources for the authors included here. As another—albeit imperfect—attempt to gauge the influence of each of the sources I included, I used a feature of Google Scholar to check on the frequency with which each has been cited by another academic publication. Beyond the works of Ellis and Denzin mentioned above, three additional articles—one critical of and two advocating the method—stood out as having gained the attention of fellow scholars (Atkinson, 2006; Le Roux, 2017; Spry, 2006).

Defining Autoethnography

Ellis et al. (2011) offered a widely accepted definition of autoethnography that focused on the social justice aspect of the method from the outset:

> Autoethnography is an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze (graphy) personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno) (Ellis, 2004; Holman Jones, 2005). This approach challenges canonical ways of doing research and representing others (Spry, 2001) and treats research as a political, socially-just and socially conscious act (Adams & Holman Jones, 2008). (p. 1)

They also made it clear that the autoethnographer employs a combination of autobiography and ethnography to achieve their ends, and that "as a method, autoethnography is both process and

product" (Ellis et al., 2011, p. 1). Writing from the context of consumer psychology, Budrich

offered another simple and clear definition of autoethnography:

> Autoethnography is a research method, which connects a researcher's personal story,
> including broader cultural meanings and political and social understandings, with the
> researcher's first-hand experiences through a process of self-reflection and writing… The
> autoethnographer is simultaneously the subject and the object of the research, observing and
> interpreting culture through reflecting on his or her personal life experiences" (Moisander
> and Valtonen, p. 63). An autoethnography is an autobiography that looks at how the
> autobiographer is immersed within a culture and carrying out cultural practices. (Budrich,
> 2016, p. 87)

Denzin (2014) also placed autoethnography, and interpretive autoethnography in particular,

in the tradition of biographical methods. Indeed, Denzin considered *Interpretive Autoethnography*

to be the new, renamed edition of what was previously titled *Interpretive Biography* (p. vii). In this

context, Denzin indirectly defined autoethnography through a list of key terms: "narrative,

meaning, voice, experience, reflexivity, presence, and representation" (p. viii). In the endnotes,

moreover, Denzin curated a collection of definitions from fellow scholars:

1. Analytic autoethnography has five key features. It is ethnographic work in which the
   researcher (a) is a full member in a research group or setting; (b) uses analytic
   reflexivity; (c) has a visible narrative presence in the written text; (c) engages in
   dialogue with informants beyond the self; (d) is committed to an analytic research
   agenda focused on improving theoretical understandings of broader social phenomena.
   (Anderson, 2006, p. 374, as cited in Denzin, 2014, p. 19)

2. Autoethnography is a blurred genre … a response to the call…. [I]t is setting a scene, telling a story, weaving intricate connections between life and art … making a text present … refusing categorization … believing that words matter and writing toward the moment when the point of creating autoethnographic texts is to change the world. (Jones, 2005, p. 765, as cited in Denzin, 2014, p. 20)

3. Autoethnography is the use of personal experience and personal writing to (1) purposefully comment on/critique cultural practices; (2) make contributions to existing research; (3) embrace vulnerability with purpose; and (4) create a reciprocal relationship with audiences in order to compel a response [paraphrase]. (Jones et al., 2013, as cited in Denzin, 2014, p. 20)

While several definitions drew connections between autobiography and autoethnography, the latter relies upon a set of methodological and theoretical tools that distinguish autoethnography from merely telling one's story:

When researchers do autoethnography, they retrospectively and selectively write about epiphanies that stem from, or are made possible by, being part of a culture and/or by possessing a particular cultural identity. However, in addition to telling about experiences, autoethnographers often are required … to analyze these experiences…

Autoethnographers must not only use their methodological tools and research literature to analyze experience, but also must consider ways others may experience similar epiphanies; they must use personal experience to illustrate facets of cultural experience, and, in so doing, make characteristics of a culture familiar for insiders and outsiders. (Ellis et al., 2011, p. 4)

Different Kinds of Autoethnography[33]

As several of the authors pointed out, there are multiple ways to practice autoethnography, and the products of autoethnographic research can take a variety of forms. Denzin (2014) cataloged a wide range of new approaches to autoethnography and closely related approaches (see p. viii):

- narrative ethnography, meta-autoethnography (Ellis, 2009, p. 12)

- autoethnography (Jones, Adams, & Ellis, 2013)

- collaborative autoethnography (Chang, Ngunjiri, & Hernandez, 2013)

- co-constructed decolonizing autoethnography (Diversi & Moreira, 2009)

- duoethnography (Norris & Sawyer, 2012)

- collaborative writing (Wyatt, Gale, Gannnon, & Davies, 2011)

- ethnodrama (Saldana, 2011)

- performance ethnography (Conquergood, 1998; Denzin, 2003; Spry, 2011)

- sociopoetics (Pelias, 2011)

- performance writing (Pelias, 1999, 2004; Pollock, 1998b)

- writing stories (Richardson, 2000b)

- ethnographic fiction, polyvocal texts, and mystories (Richardson, 2000b; Ulmer, 1989)

In their discussion of the need for criteria for evaluating good autoethnography, Adams (2017) shared four overall categories within the method. As above with Denzin, I include the author's citations for future reference:

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[33] It was not until I had completed writing this dissertation and went back, finally, to consider the whole and write the abstract that I fully recognized that I had used critical and evocative autoethnography. Importantly, I did not set out to enact these accepted forms of research according to guidelines laid out in the literature but rather recognized, retrospectively, that these categories best describe the process that arose naturally out of my practice.

1. Some autoethnographies are more analytic and social scientific (Anderson, 2006). These treat personal experience as tangential to the fieldwork experience (Heath, 2012), code and thematize personal experience (Kestenbaumetal, 2015), and/or adhere to traditional academic-writing structures and practices (Zibricky, 2014). (Adams, 2017, p. 62)

2. There are interpretive/humanistic autoethnographies that use personal experience to offer ''thick descriptions''(Geertz, 1973) of cultural experience in an attempt to promote an understanding of these experiences (Boylorn, 2013; Richardson, 2016; Speedy, 2015). (Adams, 2017, p. 63)

3. There are critical autoethnographies—often informed by feminist, critical race, queer, postcolonial, indigenous, and crip sensibilities—that focus intentionally, and fiercely, on identifying and remedying social harms and injustices (Berry, 2016; Boylorn & Orbe, 2014; Briscoe & Khalifa, 2015; Zibricky, 2014). (Adams, 2017, p. 63)

4. There are creative, performative, and evocative autoethnography that offer accessible, concrete, emotional, and embodied accounts of personal and cultural experience (Bochner & Ellis, 2016; Pelias, 2016; Speedy, 2015; Spry, 2016). (Adams, 2017, p. 63)

Validity and Rigor in Autoethnography

Le Roux (2017) addressed the essential nature of rigor by asserting that "without rigour, research is meaningless" (p. 195). That said, Le Roux acknowledged that criteria for establishing rigor are the subject of considerable debate. Certainly the criteria long held for quantitative research—internal and external research reliability and validity, generalizability and objectivity—would be misplaced, but Le Roux took up an empirical and autoethnographic study of

"research integrity or trustworthiness" through a combination of reflexivity, literature review, and field research (p. 196).

Truth and Verisimilitude in Autoethnography. Especially in the context of autoethnographic performance, Denzin (2014) challenged any narrow sense of what makes autoethnographic expression true. Indeed, he pointed out that:

> Various standards of truth or verisimilitude in autobiographies have been proposed. These include sincerity, subjective truth, historical truth, and fictional truth. The sincere autobiographer is assumed to be willing to tell the subjective truths about his or her life. A historically truthful statement would be one that accords with existing empirical data on an event or experience. An aesthetic truth is evidenced when 'the autobiography is an aesthetic success' (Kohli, 1987, p. 79). (Denzin, 2014, p. 13)

I continue to ponder the distinction that Denzin drew between *facts, facticities, truth, reality,* and finally *verisimilitude*, but I do note the importance that Denzin appeared to place on believable[34] experiences:

> There are, then, true and false fictions, that is, fictions that are in accord with facts and facticities as they are known or have been experienced, and fictions that distort or misrepresent these understandings. A truthful fiction (narrative) is faithful to facticities and facts. It creates verisimilitude, or what are for the reader believable experiences. (Denzin, 2014, p. 13)

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[34] While I appreciate the importance that Denzin (2014) placed on believability, I note here the absence of the subsequent question, "Believable to whom?" One of the basic issues with which I grapple in this dissertation is the fact that coloniality has conditioned perception in such a way that certain narratives and accounts of history, for example, are believable while others are not. As far as I can tell, Denzin did not address these questions within the literature on autoethnography.

Further, Leigh et al. (2022) took up the question of validity and truth when explaining that they choose to report their findings in fictionalized vignettes designed to "evoke embodied responses from readers" (p. 20). As they elaborated, their decision to use fiction and creative writing follows in a well-established tradition in social research, and allows the researchers to

> share stories that are drawn directly from lived experiences, that come from a subjective and personal perspective, and that resonate with the members of the collaborative autoethnography project, rather than objectify them, or describe them from an outside perspective. (Leigh et al., 2022, p. 20)

Importantly, while the vignettes allowed the researchers to effectively share their experiences in these composite accounts that still feel personal and emotive, the composite account was effective in protecting individuals from accusations of whistleblowing (Leigh et al., 2022, p. 19).

The Role of Reflexivity in Validity and Rigor. For Leigh et al. (2022), the hallmarks of validity in autoethnography had little to do with the objective truth of the narratives shared and more to do with the use of critical reflexivity:

> Validity, rigour, and repeatability, hallmarks of more traditional research approaches, are interpreted differently within autoethnographic research. Validity is gained by the researcher being critically reflexive (that is, reflecting on events, the thoughts and feelings associated with those events, and their part in creating them along with the impact and implications for those around them), self-aware (that is, conscious of the thoughts, feelings, bodily reactions, and responses to events and to others), and honest about their vulnerabilities, privilege, and position in the work they are doing (this is often termed positionality in research). This is where the idea of embodiment comes in, as it is used here

to mean the totality of thoughts, feelings, emotions, sensations, images, and kinaesthetic or

proprioceptive awareness that arise from the body and mind. Embodied awareness allows

the researcher to access data about themselves, the world around them, and how they react

to others, and for this to then become part of the reflexive research process. (Leigh et al.,

2022, p. 21)

However, Greer (2016) pointed out that it's important to distinguish between

self-reflexivity and self-reflection. "Self-reflection entails thinking about one's experience with

some phenomena (e.g., events, texts, outcomes) to aid sense making" (p. 90). Self-reflexivity, on

the other hand, is a more advanced process:

[Self-reflexivity] may be thought of as an advanced stage of self-reflection (Quinn, 2013;

Ryan, 2014). It entails thinking about oneself in relation to some phenomena in order to

better understand the phenomena, oneself, its impact on the self, and how one has (or has

not) changed as a consequence (Kempster & Iszatt-White, 2012). It is a more complex and

action-oriented process than self-reflection—one that requires a questioning of "the ends,

means, and relevance" of one's practice (Cunliffe & Jun, 2005, p. 227). Whereas the goal of

self-reflection is to better understand something, the goal of self-reflexivity is to question its

underlying assumptions, as well as our own, in order to see and think anew. (Greer, 2016, p.

90)

Highlighting Researcher Fallibility Instead. Greer (2016) took an entirely different

approach that I still consider as a commentary of validity and rigor. While Greer highlighted the

essential role of a critical reflective stance in creating a foundation for research integrity and

validity, he turned the argument on its head, so to speak, by arguing that such a critical reflective

stance actually serves to make the "the fallibility and incompleteness of the author's thoughts and experiences… transparent [slight paraphrase]" (Greer, 2016, p. 88). The research project, I think Greer was claiming, is actually strengthened by a gesture of intellectual humility on the part of the author/researcher. This seems a powerful approach.

Establishing Criteria for Evaluating Autoethnography. Adams (2017) observed that it is incumbent on autoethnographers to not only articulate the goals of different types of autoethnography but lay out the criteria by which good autoethnography can be judged. Not surprisingly, Adams pointed out, the criteria differ significantly depending on the kind of ethnography being employed (see pp. 62–63). For Adams, autoethnographers who fail to set out their approach, goals, and the criteria that they strive to meet are likely to be misunderstood and subjected to criticism that arises from that misunderstanding.

Le Roux (2017) referred their reader to the seminal work of Lincoln and Guba in the 1980s for a rich exploration of alternative criteria for judging the merit and validity of qualitative research, in general. More contemporaneously, Le Roux cited the work of Tracy (2010) who argued for eight criteria for determining whether qualitative research is of high quality: worthy topic, rich rigour, sincerity, credibility, resonance, significant contribution, ethical, meaningful coherence (as cited in Le Roux, 2017, p. 197). But Tracy also warned that it is unwise to "'grasp too strongly' at any list of criteria" for, as Ellis (2007) cautioned, "good qualitative methodologists conduct research in the way they conduct themselves in their personal lives and 'seek the good' with the key being honesty towards self and the audience for whom the research is intended" (as cited in Le Roux, 2017, p. 197).

Autoethnography as Activism

Lockford (2017) was one of the authors in this small body of work who employed autoethnography to communicate their beliefs about the task of the autoethnographer. The result was a list of provocative (and evocative) statements that largely hint at the potential for autoethnography to "function like tuning forks," heightening somatic awareness, compelling change and "peel[ing] away ideological blinders" (p. 73). Speaking specifically about the dialogic engagement between ethnography and performance studies, Spry (2006) contended that "by continually (re)activating our methods of representation" we are able to approach "such crises as political fissures in the status quo, as fractures interrupting hegemonic practices, and as ruptures in imperialistic research routines" (p. 339). Spry continued, citing Conquergood, Denzin and others: "Performance and ethnography continually turn back upon themselves emerging as praxes of participatory civic social action" (Spry, 2006, pp. 339–340).

For Denzin (2014), it was in the discussion of Sartre, Ulmer's concept of my story, and Denzin's own notion of epiphany that autoethnography as activism became particularly evident: "With Sartre and Ulmer there is a political component to interpretive autoethnography, a commitment to a social justice agenda—to inquiry that explicitly addresses issues of inequity and injustice in particular social moments and places" (p. x). Taking up the gesture of a manifesto, Denzin (2017) was even more clear about the role of performative qualitative research—including performance autoethnography—as a form of social activism:

> The current moment asks that the social sciences and humanities become sites for critical conversations about democracy, race, gender, class, nation-states globalization, freedom, and community. In the second decade of this century, we struggle to connect performative

qualitative research to the hopes, needs, goals, and promises of a free democratic society.

(Denzin, 2017, p. 45)

Autoethnography as a Means to Explore Other Ways of Knowing

An Embodied Way of Knowing. Spry (2006) joined the chorus of voices that contend that the subject(ive) position of the autoethnographer is fundamentally embodied. Citing Craig Gingrich-Philbrook, Spry continued, casting doubt on the language of listening to what the body tells us as though the body were somehow separate from our being (p. 340). Leigh et al. (2022) also shared their experience of autoethnography—in this case collaborative autoethnography —that is embodied and relational. As Leigh et al. explained, this approach "privileges knowledge that originates in the body, and the feelings, emotions, and sensations that are present [and]... draws on Black feminist and Indigenous approaches to research" (p. 18). To the extent that embodied awareness is critical to reflexivity, moreover, embodied awareness has implications for validity and rigor, as well:

> This is where the idea of embodiment comes in, as it is used here to mean the totality of thoughts, feelings, emotions, sensations, images, and kinaesthetic or proprioceptive awareness that arise from the body and mind. Embodied awareness allows the researcher to access data about themselves, the world around them, and how they react to others, and for this to then become part of the reflexive research process. (Leigh et al., 2022, pp. 21–22)

Decolonizing Methodologies. Denzin embraced the perspective of Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) in observing that

> untroubled by contemporary critics who challenge terms like voice and presence, indigenous persons in colonized spaces turn to oral history, myth, and performance

narratives to make sense of their lives, themselves, and their collective histories. Words,

rituals, and performances matter for them. (as cited in Denzin, 2014, p. viii)

In this context, Denzin observed clear alignment between Smith's (2012) description of

decolonizing methodologies and interpretive autoethnography. For Leigh et al. (2022) it was as

simple as saying that autoethnography "is an inclusive approach that incorporates viewpoints and

understandings of knowledge that are not limited to white, Eurocentric ideas" (p. 21).

In their account of the historical and theoretical antecedents of autoethnography, Ellis et al.

(2011) noted that autoethnography "eschew[s] rigid definitions of what constitutes meaningful and

useful research" and, as such, was a response to "canonical forms of doing and writing research

[which] are advocating a White, masculine, heterosexual, middle/upper-classed, Christian,

able-bodied perspective" (p. 3). Importantly, Ellis et al. observed, "following these [canonical]

conventions, a researcher not only disregards other ways of knowing but also implies that other

ways necessarily are unsatisfactory and invalid" (p. 3). Autoethnography, on the other hand,

"expands and opens up a wider lens on the world, eschewing rigid definitions of what constitutes

meaningful and useful research" and welcomes different ways of knowing (p. 3). Connecting back

to the historical context in which autoethnography emerged, Ellis et al. (2011) further observed that

> there was an increasing need to resist colonialist, sterile research impulses of authoritatively
>
> entering a culture, exploiting cultural members, and then recklessly leaving to write about
>
> the culture for monetary and/or professional gain, while disregarding relational ties to
>
> cultural members (Conquergood, 1991; Ellis, 2007; Riedmann, 1993). (Ellis et al., 2011, p.
>
> 2)

Adams et al. (2015) added their voices, enumerating aspects of the colonial worldview that contributed to what they deemed the "crisis of representation" in mainstream social research:

- The goal of seeking universal Truths, especially with regard to social relations;

- The possibility of making certain and stable knowledge claims about humans, experiences, relationships, and cultures;

- The prohibition against stories and storytelling as ways of knowing;

- The bias against affect and emotion;

- The refusal to acknowledge "local knowledge" and how social identities (e.g., race, sex, age, sexuality, ability, class) influence how persons research, read and interpret, and write and perform;

- The (standard) use of colonialist and invasive ethnographic practices—going into and studying a culture, leaving to write about (represent) this culture, and disregarding member concerns, relational ethics, and what the representation might do to the culture.

Despite the fact that the colonial worldview is still prevalent today, scattered recognition of the implications of this worldview and the atrocities committed in its defense have sparked resistance in some quarters. As described here, new, decolonizing methodologies were one way in which scholars responded in creative ways to the hegemony of mainstream research.

Criticism of Autoethnography

Among the articles in this small collection, two are openly critical of autoethnography (Atkinson, 2006; Moors, 2017). Other authors included references and even responses to the critics of autoethnography. Denzin (2014) noted that the defining elements of autoethnography and related life story forms are viewed as self-indulgent examples of poor scholarship:

[the key elements of autoethnography]—narrative, meaning, voice, experience, reflexivity, presence, and representation—are put under erasure by a new generation of critics. For critics these terms are regarded as leftovers from an age of humanistic inquiry that uncritically valorized the self and its social experiences (Jackson & Mazzei, 2009, 2012; MacLure, 2011, 2012, 2013; Pollock, 2009; Scott, 1992; St. Pierre & Pillow, 2000).

(Denzin, 2014, p. viii)

Indeed, Atkinson (2006) decried the "contemporary fashions for subjective and evocative ethnographic work" that gets in the way of solid analysis and theorizing (p. 400). Like Anderson, Atkinson suggested that there must be an insistence on the analytic aspect of autoethnography. For, without that redeeming element, Anderson claimed, the "tendency to promote ethnographic research on writing on the basis of its experiential value, its evocative qualities, and its personal commitments rather than its scholarly purpose, its theoretical bases, and its disciplinary contributions" (Atkinson, 2006, pp. 402–403) is indicative of a larger problem in which the purpose of social science research becomes self-fulfillment and self-transformation on the part of the researcher: "The fact that these personalised, experiential accounts are sometimes justified in terms of social criticism does not excuse their essentially self-absorbed nature: the personal is political, but the personal does not exhaust or subsume all aspects of the political" (Atkinson, 2006, p. 403).

Atkinson also joined Anderson in observing that the reflexivity claimed as the purview of autoethnographic work has long been a practice in ethnography, and social science research, in general. The desire to claim new territory for autoethnography, Atkinson continued, fits into a larger agenda of characterizing earlier generations of social scientists as unreflective:

Protagonists of recent research styles make far too much of supposed ruptures between "postmodern" work and its antecedents. It is far too easy—and misleading—to attribute to earlier generations of field researchers an unreflective or "positivist" approach to social research. (Atkinson, 2006, p. 400)

In the context of their work in consumer psychology, moreover, Budrich (2016) observed that "because the researcher conducts the autoethnographic procedure, inevitable biases arise in both the management of the fieldwork and the analysis" (p. 88). There is also the issue of reasonable transferability since "in general, as with other sole-respondent research, it is difficult if not impossible to extend the insight gained from the individual participant to other people" (p. 88).

Positionality and the Choice of Autoethnography for a Project on Decoloniality

In addition to the pitfalls identified by the critics of autoethnography, there are other complications related to positionality and my choice of autoethnography for a project on decoloniality. I was reminded that methodologies are not ethically neutral (S. Chung, personal communication, June 5, 2023). I use verbs such as *recognize* and *choose* when talking about my path to autoethnography, but it is also possible to *commandeer, appropriate, wield* and *abuse*. One of several complications arising here is that the relatively loose parameters surrounding autoethnography are all too attractive to the ersatz scholar who wants to chart their own path and make up their own rules. Especially when employed by a settler-colonist, myself, who has been— and may still be—complicit in the colonial enterprise of education, autoethnography could represent simply one more instance of a settler's move to innocence (see Tuck & Yang, 2012), especially as I quote sources that align autoethnography with decolonizing methodologies (Smith,

as cited in Denzin, 2014, p. viii), Black feminist and Indigenous approaches, and other viewpoints "not limited to white, Eurocentric ideas" (Leigh et al., 2022, pp. 18, 21).

As Chung pointed out, the ethical response is largely a matter of addressing positionality—grappling with one's own identity (embodied, intergenerational, spiritual, terrifying, revelatory) and being transparent with one's reader about the lens or lenses through which one looks at the world (S. Chung, personal communication, June 5, 2023). For, lenses create blind spots. They create assumptions and knee-jerk reactions of which we are not even aware. Despite my best attempts at the kind of authentic and critical reflexivity prescribed in the literature (Anderson, 2019; Denzin, 2014; Greer, 2016; Leigh et al., 2022; Le Roux, 2017; Nakata et al., 2012; Root et al., 2019; Russell-Mundine, 2018; Wu et al., 2018), I have no doubt that others reading my work will be aware of many of the blind spots and assumptions that still constrain me.

My response starts with acknowledgement—here and throughout the paper—that I don't know what I don't know. I try to move through life with the kind of humility, intellectual and otherwise, that creates opportunities for learning and transformation, but I freely admit to the severe limitations posed by my lived experience. As I will address in greater detail in Chapter IV—when I explore theory and meaning making—I try to be prepared, each day, for the kind of revelation that leads me to conclude that I had it all wrong, that the narratives that I trusted for so long all have to be tossed, because they no longer help me understand the world I live in. But, as counter-intuitive as it may seem, my response to the demand to grapple with positionality and transparency, is actually to fully embrace the potential of narrative within autoethnography. In doing so, I call again on the understanding that the thick description indicative of narrative and storytelling will actually reveal more about my positionality and the lenses through which I see the

world that I can possibly explain. Even more, my reader will gather insights about my positionality that I do not yet know myself. For example, when I shared in the preface to this dissertation, that I left a job and sold a house in order to be able to be an at-home mother for a little more than a year, I sense that some readers will take my decision as just one more indicator of my privilege while other readers may interpret the story quite differently. My point here is that the use of narrative in my dissertation makes room for a broad range of interpretations on the part of the reader, some of which will be beyond my own understanding. My treatment of positionality,[35] then, is not limited to what I already understand or imagine that I know about myself.

In many respects my positionality makes the topic of decoloniality a difficult fit. My lived experience does not provide a natural resource on which I can draw. On the contrary, I trust my reader can see evidence that I am working to see beyond the natural obstacles posed by a range of life experiences that are complemented by colonial ways of thinking. As uneasy as the fit may be, though, what I have discovered—and tried to illustrate above—is that working through the fundamental problems of my teaching practice necessitate that I take up this work, however imperfectly, however much I may stumble and fall. Whether or not it proves to be valuable to others, I still must take up the questions that face me.

Recognizing a Familiar and Effective Approach

In many respects, my pathway to autoethnography was precipitous. Just weeks before submitting my dissertation proposal, I was still working on the details of a pilot project based on

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[35] For those readers who are looking for a formal positionality statement as called for by some scholars (see Duarte, M. E. (2017). *Network sovereignty: Building the internet across Indian Country.* University of Washington Press; The University of British Colombia (n.d.). *Positionality & intersectionality.* CTLT Indigenous Initiatives https://indigenousinitiatives.ctlt.ubc.ca/classroom-climate/positionality-and-intersectionality/) I have included my attempt in the appendices.

participatory action research. Yet, as I took up the fresh task of gaining a more solid footing in autoethnography, I found myself surprised that it took me so long to discover this path. I sense that my earlier abundance of confidence and utter self-assurance were part of the problem. I was so certain that I knew the way forward that I missed all the signs that I was getting lost.

One source of unrestrained joy is the personal discovery that a well-established approach to autoethnography—evocative performance autoethnography—actually describes a practice that I have honed over the last decade or more in my teaching practice. I routinely share and reflect on experiences from my personal teaching journey to invite students into a reflective space of their own. I find this approach particularly effective when I am working with students or participants around fundamental shifts in their thinking. This approach has proven to create a safe[36] space in which students can explore shifting perspectives that leave them feeling vulnerable. The research questions that guide my inquiry path—shared above and reproduced below for convenience—are largely questions that I will ask of myself over the coming months.

In Lieu of Collecting and Analyzing Data

One of the challenges of autoethnographic research, of course, is the difficulty of predicting, much less articulating, the research path before it unfolds. In retrospect, one can trace the path of personal discovery, but the path is often obscure until then. This can feel irresponsible to those who carry responsibility for ensuring that research follows ethical guidelines and standards of validity. I take this to heart and honor the legitimate oversight of the Institutional Review Board

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[36] The expectation of safety as a precondition for deep engagement is fraught with issues of White fragility and White privilege. For an exploration of these issues, including the evolving discussion of safe spaces, brave spaces, and accountable spaces, see Elise Ahenkorah's Medium® post dated September 21, 2020: (https://medium.com/@elise.k.ahen/safe-and-brave-spaces-dont-work-and-what-you-can-do-instead-f265aa339aff).

(IRB) committee to ensure the safety of any participants. Since I sit on an IRB committee for my department, I have deep respect for the guidelines surrounding engagement with participants.

When I met with my dissertation committee to discuss my proposal, I admitted that I was not sure how my research path would unfold. I listened to their concerns, noting where I would need to take precautions, but I think they understood my argument that there is a special quality to a process that is emergent, dialogic, and organic. I have learned from practice that I need to create spaces for new understandings to arise. These spaces occur when I engage over time with others, with ideas, and with the natural environment. Throughout my journey, I continued to meet with mentors. My professional practice, moreover, brought me in contact with students, colleagues, and new acquaintances who share my interest in these ideas. I am grateful to be in relationship with individuals whose lived experience and identities are very different from my own. As I continued to read and reflect on the ideas that I encountered, I was fortunate to have opportunities to engage with these others and listen to their perspectives. Throughout, I used a regular reflective writing practice to explore how those texts and exchanges were shaping my evolving understanding. I must also add that I am fortunate to live in places—plural—where I can experience the natural world across a variety of seasons. All these experiences featured in my dissertation research path.

Research Questions

1. *How do teachers, including myself, take up both the deep inner work and outwardly visible work of identifying the narratives, implicit and explicit, in our classrooms and curricula that perpetuate patterns of coloniality?*

2. *How do we come to understand the ways that we can disrupt the narratives that perpetuate coloniality and then do so in creative and generative ways?*

3. *How do we reveal, curate, and enact the narratives that have the power to heal and transform our classrooms, communities and culture in the wake of centuries of coloniality, while leaving the children we teach in freedom to come to their own understandings and meet a future yet to unfold?*

My Mother's Insight

Pushing my mother's wheelchair back to her room, I took in the stream of voices and noises coming from rooms as we passed by. The laughter of visitors mingled with shrill complaints and the calming voices of the nursing staff. The sound of oxygen machines and televisions competed with each other. The hallway of the nursing home was scrupulously clean, the walls lined with abstract paintings in soothing pastels that coordinated with the color of the walls and trim paint.

As we approached her room, my mother's quiet voice drifted up to me, "I feel disoriented." I slowed our pace as I leaned over to say something, but she spoke first. "Who is pushing me?" she asked in a hesitant voice. "It's me, Mom," I told her and then wondered if that was enough. "It's Alison." I leaned over and placed my hand on her shoulder, my head near hers. My mother continued to face forward, but her hand reached up to cover mine. It seemed to be enough to comfort her, and I started pushing her wheelchair once more, a little disoriented myself at what had just transpired.

A little later we made our way out onto a little inner courtyard. We sat in the shade of a porch but looked out on landscaped beds crisscrossed with the exposed tubes of an aging irrigation system. I recognized a possible topic of conversation—a topic that would not expose the fact that we no longer seem to have many shared memories. "It looks as though they need to put down fresh mulch," I offered, thinking to elicit some interest from the master gardener who raised me. My

mom looked out over the beds and seemed to take in the clumps of liriope laid out in long orderly rows. When mom only nodded, I looked around for another possible connection. I pointed to the coneflower plants a little further away now topped with dried brown heads: "I bet you would deadhead those if you had your druthers." My mom simply nodded and I began to search for an open topic that might elicit something more than a nod. We sat in silence for a while as I thought about this.

"You know, mom, I have a question that I have been holding on to, but I really do not want an answer." My mom looked up, the unmistakable light of curiosity in her eyes. "Well," she replied, "I don't know if I have an answer." "That's okay," I teased. "I would be very disappointed if you did." I wanted to craft a version of my question that would speak to a gardener, so I took a moment to collect my thoughts. "You know when you go to the nursery to buy perennials, and the tag shows you the shape and expected height of the mature plant?" My mom nodded in what appeared to be genuine recognition, and I continued. "As the plant grows, each leaf seems to have a perfect size and length that it is trying to achieve." I paused to think through how to word the next part, not sure that I had found quite the right analogy. "The leaves don't just keep growing and growing indefinitely. Each leaf is reaching toward a final destination, a perfect size and length so that the plant as a whole has achieved a sense of…" I floundered for the right word, "completeness?" My voice rose naturally as the last word arrived as a question instead of a statement.

I had yet to articulate my actual question, but I had clearly said just enough. My mother's face lit up with a broad smile, and I reveled in a moment of true connection—moments that are growing increasingly rare. "Do you understand why I don't want an answer?" I asked. Mom

actually gave me a little smirk as she nodded in agreement. "Who knows?" my mother offered as she shrugged her shoulders, seeming to fully appreciate the delight of being in a realm of wonder.

Our conversation was set aside as we interacted with another resident who had wandered over to our corner of the courtyard. It was sometime later when we were alone again that I confided that I was working on a big project for my doctoral program. I described a little of what I had been doing over the recent months for my doctoral studies and concluded by saying, "Now, I just need to write a paper." This seemed the simplest explanation of my task. I paused before sharing, "I like to write, but I always wonder where to start."

My mom turned her gaze to me. "Start in the middle," she stated with conviction. I cocked my head and smiled, "Why in the middle?" My mother did not pause at all: "Because then you can go in either direction." I sat back in satisfaction, and we beamed at each other. "Could it be in every direction?" I asked. Immediately, my mother's hands splayed out in a gesture of rays emanating from a center point. She understood me perfectly! We just sat there smiling at each other, appreciating the shared image.

"But how do I know where the middle is?" I asked with genuine interest. "You won't know until you start writing." My mother's voice was sure and clear. Gone was the confusion and disorientation all too common of late. Gone was the sense of emptiness I sometimes feel when I am reminded that even though she knows who I am, my mother does not seem to remember my childhood, much less the last time I visited. I sat forward and wrapped my arms around her shoulders, overcome with gratitude.

I will start in the middle. Where else could I start?

CHAPTER IV: STORY AS METHODOLOGY & THEORY

Perhaps it is surprising that I still have any faith in the healing power of stories. Certainly since taking up the research that has culminated in this dissertation, I have come face to face with many insidious aspects of story and storytelling. The evidence has been compelling and discouraging. Sta. Maria (2000) cautioned about the implications of a grand narrative that all but eliminated the possibility for cultural responsiveness. Mignolo (2002) warned against the "the imaginary of Western civilization as a pristine development from ancient Greece to eighteenth-century Europe (as cited in Knobloch, 2020, p. 3). A wide range of voices decry the Eurocentrism that suppresses points of view and ways of knowing (Knobloch, 2020; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2017; Williams & Claxton, 2017; Wråkberg & Granqvist, 2014; Wu et al., 2018; Yang et al., 2019).

As my journey has unfolded, more and more voices have joined the chorus. Harvey and Russell-Mundine (2018), Williams and Claxton (2017), and Hampton and DeMartini (2017) each observed that Modern colonialism relies for its success on a narrative that depicts Europe as enlightened, civilized, and progressive while also depicting the rest of the world as savage, dark, and primitive. This argument was driven home by Teresi (2002) in his sharp criticism of the Greek miracle hypothesis, as explored in Chapter II above. And, yet, despite the overwhelming evidence that story and narrative have been used to justify, sustain, and perpetuate coloniality and colonial ways of thinking, I have somehow held onto my conviction that stories can also be part of the solution.

Holding Onto my Faith in Stories Anyway

For many years, I held onto my faith in the healing power of story as a teaching tool without much critical reflection. Initially, I trusted the perspective of trusted mentors. Then, I tried my hand at storytelling and was struck by what was possible. I also trusted those leading the DEIJ+ efforts in the schools where I have worked, and beyond, who pointed to the story content of the curriculum as an arena in which transformative changes could be made. Indeed, in addition to engaging client schools and their faculty in critical intersectional identity work, my colleagues in the DEIJ+ movement were and are working with schools to re-map the curriculum, so to speak, identifying places in the curriculum of each grade where new content can bring fresh perspectives, highlighting previously underrepresented voices and laying the foundation for antiracist classrooms.

Now in my current role as a teacher of teachers, I am as committed as ever to ensuring that teachers are bringing a diverse set of voices and perspectives to their classrooms, but I am also

becoming increasingly aware of the limits of this approach in addressing the perpetuation of coloniality. In other words, successful DEIJ+ efforts may prove insufficient to interrupt these patterns of reproduction *even when* they are successful in increasing diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice as measured by those efforts.

Storytelling as a Methodology—A Practice to Gain More Knowledge

In the chapters that follow, I share the insights that are just surfacing for me through my research—insights about what it will take to actually disrupt patterns of coloniality. To make my case, though, I first need to explore the dimensions of story, theory, and meaning making.

I pause to reflect on the fact that stories and storytelling are not merely the subject of my inquiry but also a critical aspect of my methodology. This decision reflects my evolving understanding of methodology and my emergent experience of story-writing as a vehicle for critical reflexivity. I appreciate how Wilson (2008) positioned methodology as reflective of his research paradigm and worldview. I am accustomed to encountering the trio of ontology, epistemology, and axiology in discussions of research paradigms. Wilson adds methodology to the mix and helps me understand why I keep telling stories even as I ask questions about the nature of stories and storytelling:

> So a research paradigm is the beliefs that guide our actions as researchers. These beliefs include the way that we view reality (ontology), how we think about or know this reality (epistemology), our ethics and morals (axiology) and how we go about gaining more knowledge about reality (methodology). (Wilson, 2008, p. 13)

In the same way that I see story as a vehicle for my students to gain greater knowledge and understanding, I find that the same is true for me as a doctoral student. I reject the notion that stories are somehow the purview of children and that adults learn better through disconnected data points, abstract concepts, and empirical observations. The very process of complex thinking and problem solving, in my experience, takes the form of trying out different versions of a story to see which one holds up under scrutiny. My choice of story as a methodology reveals my experience and conviction about story as a vehicle for learning even at this stage in my life.

Stories also allow us to wander and get lost in a way that creates space for revelation. The most direct path is not always one that gives us time for self-discovery. In this vein, I am inspired by O'Flaherty's (1988) observation that,

Stories are not designed as arguments, nor should they be taken as arguments. Rather, the stories provide us with metaphors that make the arguments real to us; the metaphors of the hunter and the sage in the cave of echoes help us to approach certain problems of otherness. For me, they are a way of thinking that works better than the development of a step-by-step argument. The reader may wonder, from time to time, whether I have gone off on a tangent, telling stories and losing the thread of the point that I want to make. But the stories *are* the point that I want to make; I am telling methodological stories about the stories I am telling. Methodologies, after all, are stories too, and every storyteller is a methodologist. (p. 2)

In the previous chapter, I made a case for my choice of autoethnography as a research approach, and I remain convinced that autoethnography is the best way to describe to others in the social sciences how I am approaching the process of gaining more knowledge, as Wilson (2008)

says, but in common terms, what I mean by autoethnography is bound up in the art and craft of curating and telling stories.

Storytelling That is Dynamic and Responsive

It may be helpful to hear that the stories I imagine as I write this are rarely fixed objects independent of those who write, interpret, or share them. Over the course of this chapter, I trust that my reader will experience for themselves the realm of story in which I live and work. I offer the following invitation as a way to communicate what I mean: imagine yourself surrounded by those you know and love, perhaps at the conclusion of a shared meal. All of a sudden, someone around the table asks you to relate a story that you know well. Sense that moment when you look around the table, thinking about these people for whom you care, what they might already know and what would be the best way to begin. I assert that you are not imagining the first lines printed on the page of a book somewhere on a bookshelf. Instead, in the dynamic space between you and those right in front of you, a version of the story takes shape, uttered sentence by uttered sentence. As those around you respond with knowing gazes or quizzical brows, you might leap forward in the narrative or slow the pace of the story, adding details and context that you think are needed for the story to be effective in that space at that time. This, right here, is my best account of the dynamically creative, interactive, and responsive activity that I know as storytelling, a space where story is both a reflection of my efforts as a storyteller and something that completely transcends my meager effort and understanding.

Perhaps my reader has also had the experience of beginning a sentence not knowing quite where it will lead, and then there is the pregnant pause before, indeed, something new and even unexpected emerges. Such is my experience with writing in general and crafting stories in

particular. So it is that I have left behind the straightforward argumentation indicative of many research methodologies and, instead, share my experience of embracing the circuitous path that may seem to lead us astray before we realize that we have arrived just where we needed to be.

Stories as Truth and Stories as Fiction

The word *story* can mean many different things. In a certain dismissive tone, the cautionary refrain, *they're just telling stories* equates story with falsehood if not a down-right-lie. Or if co-conspirators sit down to *get their stories straight*, we have little confidence that what we hear from them later matches even what they think happened. To call someone's account *their story*, moreover, may sound as though one is casting doubt on its objective truthfulness—that is if one is inclined to think that objective truth is possible. Indeed, one Jewish mother in our school community was upset by references to Hebrew stories, instead of Hebrew history, as the word *story* suggested something less than the truth in her view.

At the same time, we appreciate the narrative quality of long form journalism to help us understand the varied dimensions of conflict reported all-too-briefly in headlines. We look to stories in the form of histories and biographies that are often carefully researched for accuracy and substantiating evidence. Even works of fiction may be researched and lauded for their accuracy in capturing some aspect of the human experience. As my middle school students discovered in a creative writing block, a short story that ventures too far from recognizable experience often loses its power to hold the reader's attention, while it is a true compliment to hear that one's short story—albeit entirely made up—is considered *true to life*.

A Story about Theory

My students often ask where I find stories, and I remember wondering the same when I was new to Waldorf teaching. I have spent hours in the stacks of my local library, for sure, but my experience is that when I am paying attention, stories pop up in unexpected places. Such was the case with the biography of Marie Tharp. I came across a hardcover edition of Felt's (2012) exploration of Tharp's life and work by chance, and a cursory glance sparked my interest. When I first started reading Felt's biography of Marie Tharp, I didn't know exactly how I might use the story in my classroom, but I quickly realized that I could use an account of Tharpe's work for any number of different lessons—geology, plate tectonics, the mid-Atlantic Rift, women in science, etc. For reasons that I hope will become clear, let me offer a sample of what I would share with my students. Teachers—especially Waldorf teachers—who are interested in my notes on the choices I made as a storyteller below will find a heavily annotated version of the following story in Appendix B.

Marie Tharp and the Theory of Plate Tectonics

When I was thinking about how best to introduce the biography of Marie Tharp to my sixth grade students, I was struck by one remarkable fact—that she attended roughly 17 schools before she graduated from high school! I knew that this would catch the attention of my students and cause them to wonder about Marie's childhood experience. When I read that Marie described her mother as her best friend, it occurred to me that Marie would not have had time to make good friends outside her family and even if she had, she would have had to say goodbye just months after they met. There were even a few times when Marie didn't go to school for months at a time, once when she was quite sick, and other times when she was traveling with her mother and father.

Biographer Hali Felt had to piece together details of Marie's life from many different sources, and there are large gaps in what we know of Marie's life. Fortunately for us, Marie started to write an autobiography late in her life, and she was interviewed a few times before she passed away in 2006.

Marie's Childhood. We do know that Marie was born in 1920 in Ypsilanti, Michigan, and that her father worked for what was called the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Soils. Since his work took him all over the area between Iowa to the northwest, upstate New York to the northeast, and Alabama to the south, their family of three spent long days along small dusty roads between towns where Marie's father took soil samples, surveyed the landscape, drew maps, and collected details that he would submit in his formal reports to the Bureau of Soils every four years when they would add Washington DC to the many cities and towns where they took up temporary residence. Marie and her parents traveled in a little Model T coupe that ran on thin, stiff tires so that they felt *every* bump and rut on the dirt and gravel roads they traveled. Marie's biographer found a picture of Marie sitting on the running board of her father's Model T when she was about 4 or 5 years old. The day after I told this story to my students, I brought in this and other pictures to pass around.

Since all the family's possessions were often piled in the back of their car, Marie did not have many personal possessions, much less many toys, but she did have a tremendous amount of freedom. Marie was free to explore and occupy herself along the roadsides and fields where her father was surveying, drawing maps, and taking soil samples. In later years she recalled hunting for arrowheads in fields, looking for interesting trees, and otherwise happily keeping herself

company when she was not needed to help her parents. They were a tight-knit family of three, perfectly happy to be what Marie later called "perennial gypsies" (Felt, 2012, p. 17).

Even though Marie Tharp's family did not get to take what we might call vacations, Marie's childhood took her to many interesting places. In 1926 Marie's family was living briefly in Indiana where they were within driving distance of the farm where the Ringling Brothers Circus animals were cared for and trained between tours. On Sundays, Marie and her father went out to see the lions, tigers and elephants relaxing in oat fields. Later that same year, Marie and her mother lived for a while in a boarding house in Pascagoula, Alabama, within walking distance of the soft sand beaches where Marie had her first experience of the ocean. In 1929, Marie and her parents got to see the inauguration of Herbert Hoover—years later she still had vivid memories of the "the pouring rain, the top hats and horses, and the men slowly waving from open-roofed cars" (Felt, 2012, p. 18). For all the transitions in her life, Marie looked back with fondness on all these experiences.

When Marie was about 16 years old, her parents finally decided to settle down in one place. They bought an old, dilapidated farm in Bellefontaine, Ohio. According to Marie's biographer, "everything was run-down. Fences toppled, barn falling over, house in disarray. But when he [Marie's father] took Marie and her mother to look at it, in the pouring rain no less, they all loved it" (Felt, 2012, p. 33). Unfortunately, Marie's mother was already showing signs of sickness, and not long after they moved in, it was clear that her mother was dying. Marie later recalled that as the leaves turned bright colors outside her mother's bedroom that fall, her mother slipped further and further away. That winter Marie's mother passed away. Marie's final years of high school must have felt even more lonely without her mother's company and loving support.

Marie's College Years. Late in her life, when Marie became an important figure in some scientific circles, she was interviewed by journalists. These interviews were especially valuable to Marie's biographer and give us insight into Marie's memories of her younger years. Marie shared with one interviewer that she always assumed that she would go to college even though attending college was not as common back then, especially for young women. Indeed, as a female, Marie would not have been allowed to follow in her father's footsteps, but her mother had enjoyed being a teacher in her younger years and Marie assumed that she would become a teacher, too, since it was one of the few professions open to college educated women in the U.S. at that time. What Marie could not have foreseen was the impact of World War II on her choices in college. When Marie started college she considered majoring in art or music, then, Marie took first a course called historical geography, and then a course called physical geography. Not only had Marie found a subject that really interested her, but one of her professors became something of a mentor. Perhaps Dr. Clarence Dow recognized Marie's potential as a scientist. Regardless, it was Dr. Dow who recommended that Marie study drafting so that she would be more likely to get a job. Dr. Dow also recommended that Marie take advantage of an accelerated program at the University of Michigan. With so many young men off fighting in the war, the petroleum industry was guaranteeing employment to young women who enrolled in a two-year advanced degree program in Geology at the University of Michigan. This kind of opportunity would never have been possible before the war, but the big oil and gas companies needed geologists to help identify new sources for drilling and with few if any male graduates entering the field, the oil and gas companies were now willing to hire women for the first time in those positions.

Earning an Advanced Degree in Geology. Studying geology happened in the classroom and in the field. During the summers, Marie and her classmates headed west to Wyoming, Montana, and the Dakotas where they lived in small huts and spent their days studying the remarkable rock formations in places known now as the Black Hills and the Devil's Tower. That part of the western United States has dramatic cliffs where it looks like you are seeing a cross section of the earth's crust—as though someone cut away a section of a mountainside revealing layers upon layers of differently colored rocks, minerals, and dirt. Here again, the day after I told this story, I brought in pictures to share.

Studying Competing Theories. When the summer field experiences were over, and Marie and her classmates headed back to Michigan, they took classes on the characteristics of different rocks and minerals, and they also heard a lot about competing theories of how the earth's surface was formed. The thick geology textbooks that Marie was required to read for her classes covered the most widely accepted theories written by notable scientists and scholars in the field. One textbook asserted that "the cause of crustal deformation is one of the great mysteries of science and can be discussed only in a speculative way" (as cited in Felt, 2012, p. 40). Indeed, Marie's biographer noted that in 1945, when Marie was getting her advanced degree in Geology, there were as many as 19 competing theories for how mountains were formed (Felt, 2012, p. 41). A faculty member in Marie's program was a proponent of what was called the contraction theory in which the earth was understood to be slowly shrinking, ever-so-gradually and the outer crust of the earth was thought to behave "like the skin of a shriveling apple" (Felt, 2012, p. 40) creating ridges, valleys and mountains. The contraction theory was rejected by other geologists because it seemed to account for some features of the earth's surface but not others. Some people might not have felt

a need to have one overarching theory to explain how geologic features like mountains and valleys came to be, but scientists continued to try to come up with a theory that would help them explain the world around them.

Alfred Wegener's Attempt at a Unifying Theory. As Marie Tharp's biographer explained, the year that Marie entered first grade—1926—a German scientist by the name of Alfred Wegener had created quite a stir in the scientific community when he attended the annual meeting of the American Association of Petroleum Geologists in New York City (Felt, 2012). There he presented a theory that he called *continental drift*, which he thought would finally resolve the uncertainty about how mountains, valleys, and other geologic features were created. He had published a paper explaining his ideas a decade earlier in his native language of German, but now he was bringing his ideas to American scientists for their consideration.

Alfred Wegener's theory was based on several observations about the surface of the earth. First, like many children who spend time playing with a globe or looking at a large world map, Wegener noticed that continents on either side of the Atlantic Ocean appear to fit together like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. Wegener suspected that this was not coincidental. To confirm this suspicion, Wegener gathered evidence from scientists who had taken rock samples from the opposite coasts—from the east coast of South America and from the west coast of Africa. What the rock samples showed was that the layers of rock and minerals—and the fossils found within— matched one another, just as though they shared the same geologic history. From this evidence, Wegener concluded that at some point in the history of the earth, the continents we now call South America and Africa were actually connected and that somehow they had drifted apart. In

Wegener's imagination, all land masses had at one point been part of one supercontinent called Pangaea, but that over billions of years, the land masses had drifted apart.

Alfred Wegener thought that his idea was brand new when he first published his theory in 1911. He made the all-too-common mistake of thinking that because the idea was new to him, and because he had not heard it from anyone else, that he was the first to discover it. Marie Tharp's biographer noted that there are records of others who had published similar ideas in 1596 and 1838 (see Felt, 2012, p. 23), but it's also easy to imagine that we don't have records of all the people who came up with this idea on their own without having published a book or paper about it.

If you've heard of the theory of continental drift before, you might be imaging that Alfred Wegener was celebrated for finally publishing his theory. Certainly, Marie Tharp's story would have been quite different if Alfred Wegener's ideas had been well received. But the response was almost the opposite. The other scientists attending the meeting of the American Association of Petroleum Geologists in New York in 1926 essentially laughed Alfred Wegener off the stage. The scholars, geologists, and petroleum industry leaders at the conference thought that Alfred Wegener's ideas were so absurd that they openly attacked his ideas and treated him as a fanciful dreamer. Although one conference leader spoke in his favor and another supported a wait-and-see approach, all the other speakers who took the stage hurled insults and criticism, and most of the criticism felt more personal than substantive (see Felt, 2012, p. 25). It didn't feel like a simple disagreement. It felt like bullying. At the close of the conference, Alfred Wegner had been utterly discredited by the other scientists present. Before I take the story back to Marie Tharp, I will only observe that the one criticism from the conference that would continue to hold the most weight in the decades that followed was that Alfred Wegener could not explain how and why the continents

would drift apart. Certainly, the continents would not just move around the globe randomly for no reason at all, the scientists assumed. Without that explanation, all the other evidence was dismissed.

Decades later, Marie recalled that Wegener's theory of continental drift was presented in her graduate level Geology courses at the University of Michigan "but not in a way that suggested that it was a realistic possibility" (Felt, 2012, p. 40). Continental drift was one of many different theories, some hotly defended by her own professors, that were interesting but failed to answer basic questions about the earth's surface. Marie finished all the required courses for her master's degree, and then stayed in school a little longer to take more math and science courses, but in the summer of 1945 she graduated and took a job with an oil company in Tulsa, Oklahoma where she would work for the next three years.

Marie's Path to Lamont Laboratory. Three years was all Marie could stand. Bored with her work for an oil company, Marie headed to New York to see if she could find work with other geologists. Thanks to the drafting course that Dr. Dow had recommended that Marie take years earlier, Marie was able to get a clerical position supporting a group of scientists doing oceanographic research for Lamont Laboratory, part of Columbia University. The sign over the door to the office said "geophysical lab" but for Marie, this would end up leading to a drafting job that changed her life.

A Drafting Job that Changed Marie's Life. I have chosen to leave out many details from Marie Tharp's early years at Lamont Laboratory, which was then renamed Lamont Geological Observatory when they moved their offices to a big old house overlooking the Hudson River. I can recommend Hali Felt's (2012) biography of Tharp to anyone who wants to know more, but for now

I will skip forward to what must have been an interesting new work assignment. Imagine having a colleague show up one day with a big carboard box filled with paper printouts—the printouts actually came in rolls almost like scrolls. Each tightly wound printout was marked with a long squiggly line drawing that appeared to flutter up and down along the scroll. These drawings were created by a machine called a fathometer. The fathometer was a relatively new addition to Lamont Laboratory's research ships. As a ship sailed over the surface of the ocean, the fathometer was designed to send out a high pitched pinging sound, literally called a *ping* or *echo*. Then, the fathometer would measure how long it took for the sound to bounce off solid surfaces under the water. The longer it took for the ping to bounce off a solid surface, the deeper the ocean. If the ocean floor had been one vast flat plain, all the pings would have taken the same length of time. That was not the case.

Of course, back onboard the research ships, the fathometer was connected to a delicate stylus that left the feathery line drawings I mentioned before, so that each scroll of paper showed the changing rise and fall of the ocean floor. When the ping came back more and more quickly, the stylus would rise up on the scroll showing an incline along the bottom of the ocean. When the ping suddenly came back much more slowly and continued that way, then the stylus would mark a rapid decline as though the ship had crossed over an underwater cliff and the ocean floor was suddenly much deeper.

What Marie already knew was that by cross referencing these feathery line drawings made by the sonar readings with details of the ship's course, she could do two things: Marie could plot the depth of the ocean floor at a set of coordinates along the ship's path, and she could create a graphic representation of the rise and fall of the ocean floor along crisscrossing paths. When Bruce

Heezen arrived that first day with a box of scrolls, Marie Tharp's first reaction was that there was

not much evidence to go on with only that one box of sounding records, but her colleague

reassured Marie that there were boxes and boxes of sonar data for her to use. In fact, when all the

boxes of data were delivered and stacked up in and around her office there were five years of sonar

readings in all.

Marie's task was anything but simple. On big, oversized sheets of paper laid out on her

drafting table, Marie began making what would be a topographical map of the bottom of the

Atlantic Ocean. Each point she drew of the map was cross-referenced with the sonar readings and

the ship's course. It was time-consuming and painstaking work that required an immense amount

of patience. One point after another, carefully checked and re-checked. During World War II, when

Marie was still in college, German scientists had made a limited map of the south Atlantic from

data they collected, but Marie now had enough data to attempt a map of the north and south

Atlantic—slowly but surely point-by-point, narrow line-by-narrow line.

As weeks turned into months, Marie continued to process the data from the fathogram

scrolls, slowly filling in detail on the large piece of paper that was becoming a map of the Atlantic

Ocean floor. Some of the features she detailed had already been described by earlier researchers,

but Marie was able to provide more detail of the mountains, valleys, and even mountain ranges that

cover the ocean floor. And, as Marie added more and more detail to the map, Marie made what felt

like a new discovery. Along the range of underwater mountains that ran like a winding ridge down

the middle of the Atlantic Ocean from north to south, Marie noted that there was clear evidence of

a deep notch or rift that ran right down the center of the ridge.

A Discovery that Could End her Career. This might not seem like a controversial

discovery from our perspective, but this actually caused Marie and her colleague Bruce to get into

an ugly argument, which became so heated that Bruce and Marie ended up yelling at one another.

Bruce essentially accused Marie of sloppy work based on her "woman's intuition" while Marie

defended her technique and results. Their fight finally ended in a truce, with an agreement that

Marie would start over and do all her calculations again. It wasn't only Bruce who was

uncomfortable with the implications of a mid-Atlantic rift; Marie also felt a strong need to revisit

her results. The problem that Marie and Bruce both saw and kept to themselves was that an

underwater rift like the one Marie had mapped could be used to explain Alfred Wegener's

discredited theory of continental drift, and *no self-respecting geologist* in the United States at the

time wanted to be associated with a theory that was generally reviled and considered a sign of bad

science. Providing evidence that supported the theory of continental drift could literally end their

careers if they weren't careful.

And so Marie started from the beginning with a new piece of paper—actually several huge

sheets of blank paper—slowly plotting points and using her knowledge of geology to extrapolate

what the landscape looked like between those well-defined points. Days turned into weeks, and

weeks turned into months, but in the end Marie had again detailed a deep rift that cut down the

middle of the mid-Atlantic Ridge.

A Second Set of Data Stripped Away Any Doubt. Now, as it happened, at the same time

that Marie was completing her second map, Bruce had an assistant plotting the location of undersea

volcanic activity in the Atlantic. Once Marie and Bruce compared the location of Marie's

mid-Atlantic rift with the location of undersea volcanic activity, the die was cast, there was no

longer any doubt. Marie had uncovered the missing piece in Alfred Wegener's theory, the

mechanism, so to speak, that explained how and why continents might drift slowly apart over

billions of years. These two sets of data put together—the mid-Atlantic rift and the map of

underwater volcanoes—provided an explanation for why the floor of the Atlantic Ocean continues

to spread. Marie Tharp and Bruce Heezen no longer had any doubt but they also dreaded making

their findings public. Would they be personally attacked, even bullied, as Alfred Wegener had been

decades earlier? It was 1952 when Marie and Bruce finally accepted what she had revealed in her

map of the Atlantic, but news of her findings were not shared until 1956! Four years before they

dared to share the full extent of what they had found, four years in which Marie continued to work

on making more detailed maps and even painting her maps on papier mâché globes.

Bringing the Story to a Conclusion in the Classroom

When I present the biography of Marie Tharp to middle school students, I usually tell the

story over two morning lessons, but I always wish I could justify three. There is so much more to

share. I usually wrap up the story with a brief but dramatic account of the International

Oceanographic Congress that assembled in 1959 at the United Nations (see Felt, 2012, pp.

125–130). In the few years before, Bruce Heezen and a senior colleague had started giving

presentations based on Marie Tharp's findings. They sometimes even included images of her maps.

As top scientists gathered for the International Conference in 1959, the buzz was about "Dr.

Heezen's speculations" with no mention of Marie. In my telling of the story I try to capture the

dramatic moment when Jacques Cousteau, previously a skeptic who had openly rejected the maps

he credited to "Lamont"— again no mention of Marie—signals for the lights to be lowered and the

film projector to start rolling. There, in footage gathered by Cousteau and his crew as they crossed

the Atlantic to attend the Congress, dark shapes take form. The reason that Cousteau and his crew sent down their cameras in that precise location was that they intended to disprove the theory of continental drift that had begun circulating again. They used one of Marie's maps to figure out where to start filming. If they could show that there was no mid-Atlantic rift that aligned with volcanic activity, they figured, then the theory might be put to rest. Instead, there were shouts for an encore. The filmstrip was rewound so that everyone could watch again, and there in black and white were images of one small segment of the mid-Atlantic rift that Marie Tharp had been mapping for seven years (Felt, 2012, pp. 125–130).

As is typical of a Waldorf lesson, the students and I didn't discuss the story immediately after I told it. Instead, we always waited until the subsequent school day to review the story. It was always amazing to see what the student remembered after sleeping on the story, so to speak. Many students remembered the story in remarkable detail, even though they hadn't taken any notes as they had listened to the story. This particular story often struck students in different ways. Some sixth graders were incensed that Marie Tharp's research was initially shared under her male colleague's name. Others who were familiar with the theory of plate tectonics were incredulous that the theory had only been accepted by the Western scientific community in the early 1960s. It was typical of my more melancholic students to express empathy for the fear that Marie Tharpe and Bruce Heezen experienced as they realized the implications to their careers should they speak of a mid-Atlantic rift. Each time, I told the story to a different class, I never knew what lessons the students would take from it, but this is part of the beauty of teaching through story. The teacher brings a rich story that has much to offer, and the students are left in freedom to take from it what they will. That is not to say that I, as the teacher, did not choose the story with a pedagogical

motive. It was not a coincidence that the year that the students started taking more in-depth science classes, that I would bring a story about scientific exploration. I wanted my students to ponder a story about scientists arguing over competing theories. I wanted them to hear a story about scientists carefully observing the world around them and doing the painstaking work of processing data to see what it all meant. I wanted the students to identify with the various characters of the story—Marie Tharp and Alfred Wegener, in particular—and imagine what it would have been like to be in their shoes. It's all too easy, moreover, to accept theories as matters of fact, when they simply express our best attempts at any given time to make meaning of experience and observation.

Theory as Story, Story as Theory

When I was meeting with my dissertation committee to discuss my proposal, one of the poignant questions that arose was about the theoretical basis of my research. I may have written about multiple theories in my literature review, but it was not clear to at least one committee member what theoretical grounding I had chosen for my own research. More importantly, *whose* theory had I chosen. As I pondered this question over the weeks and months that followed, the question evolved in my mind, from *whose theory* to *whose story*.

I remember pausing one day and making a note to myself. I knew then that I wanted to tell the story of Marie Tharp in this chapter. It was helpful to me to reimagine that conference of petroleum geologists in 1926, and their inability to consider a new theory, a new explanation, a new story that would help them make meaning of the available data and their lived experience. Their response felt reactive, defensive, even petulant. I imagined them in the role of Plato's Meno, so confident in their own theoretical positions that they were unable to learn anything new.

It will become clear in the chapters that follow that I have adopted a clear theoretical foundation for my dissertation, but what I mean by this is that I have found an overarching story about coloniality that helps me make sense of the voices and lived experience of those with whom I have engaged. I have found a story that helps me understand not only that a colonial matrix of power exists but how that matrix is structured and reproduced. If the number of scholars who have referenced this same story is any indication, then the story I will share below has a remarkable following[37] in the English-speaking scholarly community. Thus, I round out this chapter with the invitation to feel the power of story as theory and theory as story. Theories, like stories, help me make meaning of the otherwise scattered elements of lived experience—my own and that of others. Even more, theories, like stories, help me see the larger relationships and connections that bind my experience with others, far and wide. It may also be that theories, like stories, enable the reader to live vicariously through multiple perspectives and roles. Like the best stories, theories create spaces for personal discovery and transformation.

A Theory/Story Through Which to Understand Coloniality

As I went back over the story of Marie Tharp and the theory of plate tectonics to examine my own choices as a storyteller, I realized that there were interesting—and disturbing—parallels between the choices I had made, perhaps consciously and unconsciously, and a certain complement of techniques that I first encountered in Santos (2014) just a few months before beginning my dissertation. I have not mentioned Santos since Chapter III, so I will remind my reader that I was

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[37] In the literature review, I used a feature of Google Scholar to measure the influence of different publications on the scholarly community. I noted that Tuck and Yang (2012), for example, had been cited 4,329 times at the time of my search in September 2021. In subsequent chapters, I will feature a book by Santos (2014) that has been cited 5,018 times (as of January 15, 2024) according to Google Scholar. As I observed in the literature review, these numbers indicate a high degree of influence within the English-speaking scholarly community.

introduced to Santos's *Epistemologies of the South: Justice Against Epistemicide* when working

with a mentor to clarify the methodology I would use for this dissertation. Santos' work will

feature significantly in the pages that follow, but let me start with an example that may reveal why

I think Santos (2014) spoke to my current research questions—an example from Santos' discussion

of scale and the "genius of omission" (Santos, 2014, p. 141). I proceed with caution, not only

because the parallels I detect are unsettling but also because I am striving to represent Santos'

complex ideas with an even hand. This will take some time.

The Epistemological Privilege of the Cartographer, as an Example

Santos (2014), himself, related a tale in which an emperor commissions an exact map of his

empire, with the smallest detail reproduced perfectly. As the story was told, cartographers were

employed to meet the emperor's demands and, in time, they produced a map that was a perfect

representation of the empire. "However, to their frustration, it was not a very practical map, since it

was of the same size as the empire" (Borges, 1974, as cited in Santos, 2014, p. 141). With this brief

story, Santos reminded us that the cartographer's job is not to include every detail, but rather to

choose just the right level of detail—a matter largely of scale—so that the map serves its purpose,

neither too unwieldy in its detail nor too spare. Citing Muehrcke, Santos went on to argue that

"what makes a map so useful is its genius of omission. It is reality uncluttered, pared down to its

essence, stripped of all but the essentials" (Muehrcke, 1986, as cited in Santos, 2014, p. 141).

My reader will certainly see the connections I am drawing to the craft of storytelling as

well. Using the same analogy, the *perfect* biography would be a life lived in full, but just as the

cartographer selects just the right scale and level of detail for a given map, considering how the

map will be used, so too does the storyteller/biographer choose from among the myriad details of a

life to create a story that suits the needs of the moment. The problem is that Santos (2014) was using examples from map making to explain how the cartographer exercises a measure of epistemic privilege that serves to reveal and even highlight some features while rendering other details invisible (p. 142).

Santos' (2014) objective in discussing scale was only peripherally about cartography and map making. Rather, Santos undertook a nuanced exploration of the ways in which hegemonic power, in this case colonial power, is exercised in practical and strategic terms. In other words, far beyond a simple assertion that colonial ways of thinking still exist, Santos actually explored the strategies and mechanisms (e.g., scale of focus) by which coloniality has maintained its hegemonic power whether or not material, land-based decolonization (i.e., political independence) has been achieved. Now my reader can see why I pause and proceed with care.

The deeper understanding that I take from Santos is that when I exercise choices as a storyteller, I am necessarily making some phenomena visible while rendering other phenomena invisible. Even more, my choice of scale serves to create phenomena—curating an experience through my choices that my students might never encounter otherwise. As such, the choices I make approximate the choices made by those whose purpose and objective are to exercise power and perpetuate coloniality:

> As in nuclear physics, the scale creates the phenomenon. Some of the fallacious correlations in geography derive from the superimposition of phenomena created and analyzed on different scales. The scale is "a coherent forgetting" (Racine 1982: 126) that must be carried out coherently. Mediating between intention and action, scale applies also to social action. Urban planners as well as military chiefs, administrators, business executives, legislators,

judges, and lawyers define strategies on a small scale and decide day-to-day tactics on a large scale. Power represents social and physical reality on a scale chosen for its capacity to create phenomena that maximize the conditions for the reproduction of power. The distortion and concealment of reality are thus presuppositions of the exercise of power. (Santos, 2014, p. 142)

Coming to see the epistemic privilege I am wielding even as I sit and plan my lessons for the coming day is an important aspect of overcoming the blindness that Santos interrogated. Indeed, Santos provided specific examples in the context of labor conflicts, labor laws and industrial relations (see Santos, 2014, pp. 143–144), but what speaks to me as an educator and storyteller are the implications for some of the most basic decisions I make in my lesson planning. What I realize upon reflection is that far from representing objective truth, the stories I curate have the potential to disguise my own sociological or political agenda as epistemological evidence. As I choose what to include in my lessons and what to exclude, after all, I assert what is relevant and what is not. This is precisely the technique employed in the "project of Western modernity," in general, and Western science, in particular, what Santos referred to as the "broader epistemological landscape" (Santos, 2014, pp. 138, 141).

Before spending more time with Santos's (2014) text, let me first acknowledge that I fully recognize the power I exercise—what Santos called epistemological privilege—when I decide which details reach my classroom and which details do not. In fact, one can make a persuasive argument that every lesson a teacher prepares in an exercise in epistemological privilege, with the degree of privilege directly proportional to the amount of autonomy I am granted in the

classroom.[38] I am instrumental in deciding which voices are heard in my classroom, which

perspectives are considered, which identities are seen. What Santos has me question, of course, is

what objectives and interests I represent, for while omission is part of the art of map making and

storytelling, intentional distortion and concealment should not be. As I will discuss further in this

chapter, I sense that this particular thread of Santos' (2014) argument struck a chord for me

precisely because *seeing*, *being seen*, *being rendered invisible*, and *being unable to see* are all

arising as powerful themes in my communication with those around me from varied walks of life.

Understanding how the genius of omission might stray all too easily into distortion and

concealment heightens my awareness that returning to the decisions I have made as a storyteller

may yet be fruitful. That said, Santos' example of the cartographer formed a small part of a larger

theoretical framework, a narrative of sorts, that was—and continues to be—instrumental in my

evolving understanding of coloniality.

A Parable that Starts with a Façade of Modernity and Progress

If I were to convey the next portion of my argument as a parable, I would start with the

portrait of a bustling, thriving metropolis surrounded by beautifully laid out suburbs that, in turn,

give way to well-managed forests, farms, and pasture land, crisscrossed here and there with

well-groomed public parks and trails for city dwellers and suburbanites seeking an easy getaway in

nature. I would craft the portrait in a way to suggest expertly managed resources, model urban

planning, and transportation systems perfectly aligned to transport workers, raw materials,

products, services and consumers in just the right patterns to support a thriving economy. If I were

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[38] In schools where teachers are afforded limited autonomy, the locus of power and epistemic privilege still exists but it exists outside the teachers' sphere of influence.

successful in painting a picture of this model community, there would be clear signs of efficient, high performing public schools and institutions of higher education with rigorous credentialing programs to fill the many professional roles needed in this model modern community.

To handle disagreements and cases of injustice, there would be a well-funded legal system and highly trained public safety officers. One would see signs of different charitable service organizations with varied interests, as well as churches—even a few temples and mosques—but outside the meeting halls and houses of worship, themselves, citizens would uphold an ecumenical if not secular commitment to good citizenship, preferring to focus on what they all share in common as responsible citizens, committed to a common good. Candidates for public office would choose between slogans supporting some combinations of clean water, wildlife protections, universal human rights, lower taxes, more affordable housing, more diversity in school curricula, limited government, better community policing, racial and gender equity, or fiscal responsibility and each political position would win the day, one election cycle or another—as though in turn. If we listened in to community leaders on the occasion of a civic holiday, we might hear admiration and gratitude for all the hard work and unwavering vision of previous generations that made such a model community possible.

Philanthropically-minded citizens might see references to community service opportunities in distant locations where members of the community could teach and share their scientific expertise with less fortunate people and less advanced societies. When these or other opportunities occasioned travel to distant lands, community members would return with accounts of high crime, poor education, dysfunctional infrastructure, and struggling economies. The contrast would reassure community members—those of our model community, anyway—that their own

community was far more advanced than the backwards regions they had visited. And for those who didn't ask too many questions or notice what was happening on the margins—in the contact zones between our model community and the rest of the world—the façade of superiority, modernity, and progress would be quite convincing.

In the interest of foreshadowing and making my parable more engaging, I would begin leaving hints—breadcrumbs of sorts—that all was not as it seemed. Perhaps on the occasion of a public holiday honoring a famous civil rights activist and leader, the protagonists in my parable would take part in a racial healing circle, meeting with a small collection of community members to affirm their commitment to equity and anti-racism, underscoring the progressive ideals of this model community, but when the members prepare to depart at the end of the healing circle practice, one protagonist is keenly aware that another is quietly distressed. What was designed to be a deeply affirming activity is clearly but inexplicably unsettling and disappointing for one member of the group. I imagine the narrative being advanced by the relationship between protagonists, the act of deep listening that took place in a healing circle being the catalyst that made it possible for something that would otherwise be hidden to be noticed. Having forged a connection, however briefly, one protagonist can't help reaching out to ask about the experience of the other, and of course once rose-tinted glasses get scratched, other signs and symptoms come into focus as well—signs and symptoms that prompt questions—strong questions for which the usual pat answers seem wholly inadequate.

As the parable unfolds, many of the assumptions on which the model community is organized come into question. What one protagonist *discovers*—a problematic word that I would employ with irony—in their interaction with the other is that there are members of the community whose deeply held beliefs are denigrated and ignored by the dominant culture in this model community. Different ways of thinking about education, health care, or justice are dismissed because they do not meet the evidence-based standards of the dominant scientific model. The dominant economic model typically portrayed as the hallmark of success,

opportunity, and prosperity is revealed to leave many community members stripped of their dignity. Subaltern beliefs and ideas about spiritual realms and the spiritual nature of the human being are dismissed as quaint and superstitious. As is the concept that so-called inanimate objects in nature are in fact spirit-filled beings worthy of respect. In this parable, broad statements of universality (i.e., human rights, social justice, etc.) would mask the variety of lived experience and serve to render much of that variation invisible. Where variety is acknowledged, these varied experiences, beliefs, and ideas would be seen as curiosities and local idiosyncrasies that do not impact the global scope of statements of universality.[39]

I can imagine a wide variety of responses to the parable sketched above. Depending on their lived experience, some readers might recognize aspects of the so-called model community but have questions about some of my choices as a storyteller. For others, my attempt at a parable might be an all-too-simplistic depiction of a disturbingly familiar world. Some will likely scoff at the altogether naïve narrative device by which the model community is unraveled: As questions lead one of the protagonists to a path of inquiry, marked by deep listening, witnessing, and critical self-reflection, the protagonist makes a troubling realization. Although glaringly obvious to many on the margins, the foundation of the model community's success becomes newly apparent to one protagonist. For example, they come to understand that an essential engine of the thriving economy in the model community is fueled by business models that are profitable only because they rely on unscrupulous business practices in distant locations: low-wage labor, unfair compensation for the extraction of raw materials, and cost-effective extraction practices that leave environmental devastation in their wake. In other words, the economy in the model community is thriving as a direct result of the unscrupulous business practices that result in economic instability and

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[39] The model community outlined here represents my interpretation of key elements of Santos, 2014, pp. 19–23.

environmental disaster in distant lands. That is, the prosperity enjoyed in the model community is actually dependent on instability and degradation in distant lands. Further, while democracy, civil society, and the rule of law are lauded as indicators of the success and progress of the model community, covert and direct military action supported if not sponsored in distant lands by the model community to ensure that access to the raw materials for economic production is uninterrupted has the consequence that basic human and civil rights (including access to democracy, civil society, and the rule of law) are denied those in distant war zones. As the parable comes to its natural end, there is the overwhelming observation that the benefits of the so-called model community are enjoyed at the peril of others, and this causal connection is intentionally obscured if not rendered invisible by the stories that model community members have historically told and continue to tell themselves.

I am keenly aware of the parable's focus on the naïve protagonist whose belated realizations are reminiscent of the worst kinds of White privilege—the belated realizations and *discoveries* of one whose very privilege and safety in the dominant culture have made it possible to ignore the overwhelming evidence available to anyone who is paying attention. I can easily imagine the eyerolls and expressions of utter disgust from some readers at the parable above, having had these directed my way in the past—surely in the present and future, as well. I know that my/our naivete is hard to swallow, but as I will argue further on, here and elsewhere, my aim is to reach those who do not yet see, not those who already see with ferocious clarity. Those who already see will have little use for my efforts.

Leaving the Parable Behind—The Foundation of Santos' Argument

In the sketch of a parable above, I have only captured one narrow thread of Santos' (2014) complex argument about the ways in which the privileges enjoyed in the West and Global North—Santos' terminology—are directly connected to the indignities, violences, and privations suffered by the global South. That said, I trust that the parable—even in this rudimentary form—may be an effective way to capture the foundations of what Santos calls *abyssal thinking*, in which a yawning chasm—both imaginary and very real—separates the lived experiences of what I grew up calling the *haves* and *have nots,* a yawning chasm that disguises causal relationships and the most heinous kinds of dependencies.

Abyssal Thinking. In this context, abyssal thinking works in multiple ways. Abyssal thinking not only creates the illusion of separate realities governed by separate logics, without a sense of causal connection. Abyssal thinking also creates a foundation for an epistemology of blindness (Santos, 2014, p. 156), in which entire realms of human experience are rendered invisible. Individuals living on different sides of the real and proverbial abyss experience vastly different realities. Those on what Santos (2014) calls *this side of the line*—those who represent the perspective and interests of the West and global North—experience the privilege of having their worldview adopted as the normative, hegemonic worldview. Those on the *other side of the line*—those who represent the global South, as Santos chooses to name them—experience their multiple ways of knowing as marginalized, invisibilized, or effectively erased as a possibility for consideration, thus Santos' use of the word *epistemicide*.

The division is such that "the other side of the line" vanishes as reality, becomes nonexistent, and is indeed produced as nonexistent. What most fundamentally characterizes

abyssal thinking is thus the impossibility of the copresence of the two sides of the line. To

the extent that it prevails, this side of the line only prevails by exhausting the field of

relevant reality. Beyond it, there is only nonexistence, invisibility, nondialectical absence.

(Santos, 2014, p. 118)

Placing Abyssal Thinking Geographically. To be clear, Santos (2014) admitted that

modern Western thinking is only one example of abyssal thinking. Though not the only form of

abyssal thinking, modern Western thinking comes under scrutiny here because, as Santos and

others contended, it sustains the dynamics and structures of coloniality. As I have come to

understand this term over the course of my dissertation journey, the word coloniality captures the

complex and interrelated web of hierarchical, hegemonic, and discriminatory relationships that

become entrenched in habitual patterns of thinking, feeling, and acting. These relationships likely

become entrenched during a period of physical, land-based colonization, as the stories that

perpetuate these relationships were used to justify colonization. The nature of deeply entrenched

habitual patterns, though—including telling the stories that perpetuate colonial ways of

thinking—is so powerful, so resistant to change, that even when political, land-based

decolonization occurs, these habitual patterns of thinking, feeling, and acting stubbornly remain.

The short-hand monikers *West*, *global North, global South*, and *non-Western* are just that,

short-hand monikers that stand in the place of complex distinctions between those who represent

hegemonic, colonial thinking and those who represent any one of a multitude of non-hegemonic,

counter-hegemonic, decolonial, and subaltern ways of thinking, feeling, and acting in the world.

One need not be from the global North to think or live according to the logics of coloniality. Nor

must one be from the global South to engage in subalterneity. As I understand Santos, it is possible

to identify elements of the global South in the geographical North and West, and possible to identify elements of the global North and West in the geographical South. Indeed, because there are actors—what Santos also called subjectivities—within the global South who perpetuate and enact colonial ways of thinking, as well, Santos frequently added the further qualification of: "*the nonimperial* [emphasis added] global South" (p. 134). But regardless of the difficulty in naming the multitude of epistemological positions that are extinguished by abyssal thinking, the acknowledgement that abyssal thinking persists is a critical starting point for thinking and acting beyond abyssal thinking:

> The recognition of the persistence of abyssal thinking is thus the *conditio sine qua non* to start thinking and acting beyond it. Without such recognition, critical thinking will remain a derivative thinking that will go on reproducing the abyssal lines, no matter how antiabyssal it proclaims itself. Postabyssal thinking, on the contrary, is a nonderivative thinking; it involves a radical break with modern Western ways of thinking and acting. In our time, to think in nonderivative terms means to think from the perspective of the other side of the line, precisely because the other side of the line has been the realm of the unthinkable in Western modernity. (Santos, 2014, p. 134)

The Epistemological Privilege of Perspective, as Another Example

Santos' treatment of the epistemological privilege of the cartographer was particularly helpful as I came to comprehend the epistemic privilege I exercise as a teacher, in general, and a storyteller, in particular. It also helped me understand one of many mechanisms by which Western science establishes the relevance—and visibility—of realms of lived experience, but as I prepared to teach a professional development course for 7th grade teachers in the summer of 2023, I was

again reminded of Santos' (2014) argument in which scale is only one of several mechanisms[40] that sustain colonial ways of thinking.

> It is therefore by denying or hiding the hierarchy of relevance among objectives that modern science establishes the hierarchy of relevance among objects. The distortion is thus imminent and indeed unavoidable. The established relevance is a sociological, or better, a political, economic fact disguised as epistemological evidence. The invisibility of the disguise is premised on the credibility of the distortion. The distortion is made credible by creating, in a systematic way, credible illusions of correspondence with whatever is to be analyzed. Two procedures are used to produce such illusions: scale and *perspective* [emphasis added]. (Santos, 2014, p. 141)

Perspective drawing is commonly included in the seventh grade curriculum in Waldorf schools (see Richter & Rawson, 2014; Stockmeyer, 2017), and I have enjoyed combining perspective drawing with the biographies of Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, and Rafael when I have taught this block, typically over three weeks. One year, on the first day of the perspective drawing block, I took my students out to an intersection near the school where they could look up and down the street and sketch what they saw in front of them. In keeping with my understanding of the Waldorf pedagogical approach, I gave as few instructions as possible. I wanted the students to find themselves drawing the lamp posts that are several blocks away just a fraction of the size of the lamp posts nearby, even though they knew, at some level, that the lamp posts were roughly the

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[40] Scale and perspective are just two of the procedures and strategies by which Western science exercises epistemicide, according to Santos (2014). See Santos' full argument for a discussion of the representation of limits (p. 140), the determination of relevance (p. 140), degrees of relevance (p. 144), identification (p. 146), the impossibility of duration (p. 148), and interpretation and evaluation (p. 152).

same size. I wanted the students to find themselves drawing the three-story multi-family houses down Church Street as tiny compared to the two-story single-family house nearby on the corner of South Lincoln Street, even though they knew, at some level, that the three story home was actually bigger. My pedagogical approach was reflective of my faith in inductive teaching and learning, where the students have an engaging learning experience before reducing that experience first to a series of concise observations, and then to concepts, rules, and procedures.

By the third day of the block, the students were excited to apply the rules of single-point perspective drawing, and within a few more days they were eager to take up two-point perspective drawings. Those who work with seventh graders will have noticed the verbs I used above to describe my students' attitude—the students actually demonstrated excitement and eagerness when facing their school assignments. I have been known to say that perspective drawing seems to me to be the perfect back-to-school subject for seventh grade. In my experience, the young teenagers who arrived feeling vulnerable, guarded, and with a *too-cool-for-school* attitude were quickly won over by the simple techniques that allowed them to create the *illusion* of perspective. My students eagerly took up the challenge of drawing their dream bedroom, a chess board, or a cityscape in perspective replete with signage and window displays.

As I think back upon the parent letters I have written as a seventh grade teacher, I am sure that I have used the word *illusion* to describe these exercises in perspective drawing, but I also remember wondering if that was the right word to capture our experience. It was true that we created drawings on a page that made it appear that we were standing in one point and peering out at the world in front of us. The pictures felt real in the sense that we were approximating what we might see if we used a camera to snap a picture at a certain spot.

The High Price Paid for A Single Point of Perspective. I have taken time to describe my experience of teaching perspective drawing in middle school because, as it turns out, the illusion of reality—and the reality of illusion—turn out to be another technique used by the project of Western modernity, in general, and Western science, in particular to exercise its hegemony (Santos, 2014, pp. 145–146). The process of creating increasingly complicated perspective drawings may be wonderfully satisfying, but Santos (2014) argued that the price paid is high:

> As E. B. Gilman says, "In the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries . . . perspective arises out of and gives expression to a sense of certainty about man's place in the world and his ability to understand that world" (1978: 29). The system of proportions between the objects to be painted and their images and between the distance of the observer's eye and the painting creates an intelligible world organized around the viewpoint of the spectator. The credibility of this "illusionistic" art (Gilman 1978: 23) lies in the mathematical precision of the individual's point of view. Renaissance perspective is both a show of confidence in human knowledge and the artistic counterpart of individualism. However, this precision and this confidence are obtained at a very high price: the absolute immobility of the eye. The illusion is real on the condition that the painting is seen from a predetermined and rigidly fixed point of view. If the spectator changes his place, the illusion of reality vanishes. Gilman is thus right when he says that "the very fullness and definition of perspective space implies the radical incompleteness of our vision, and the point of view becomes a drastic limitation, a set of blinders, as well as an epistemological privilege" (1978: 31). (Santos, 2014, p. 145)

A Measure of Transparency Often Lost in Western Science. As Santos (2014) observed, there is a measure of transparency in the art of perspective drawing where both the artist and the spectator understand that the illusion is based on gazing into the world from one particular point of view, as limited as that may be. The problem when an analogous approach is adopted by Western science, contended Santos, is that the transparency evident to artist and spectator, described above, is all too easily lost. As I understand Santos' argument, Western scientists gaze into the world from their perspective—their Western scientific worldview—and describe the phenomenon they observe—again, conditioned by their Western scientific worldview—but they do not qualify that their findings are dependent on a particular point of reference. Rather, Western scientists conflate their privileged point of view with a perfect, objective point of view (see Santos, 2014, p. 145). Santos further argued that in this conflation, an important distinction between creator and spectator is lost.

Monopolistic Appropriation—Implications for My Practice as a Teacher. I have returned to this discussion after much reflection, and I will take a moment here to explore Santos' point as I see powerful implications for my own practice as storyteller and teacher. As Santos (2014) observed, when the Western scientist fails to acknowledge their findings as arriving from a particular point of view, thus losing any distinction between creator (e.g., creator of knowledge) and spectator (e.g., recipient of knowledge), a range of assumptions are too easily unquestioned (p. 146). Santos chose to illustrate his point with examples from the social sciences (i.e., economics), but I cannot help but translate this into my own field of education. Santos (2014) expressed concern that there is a "monopolistic appropriation" of possible spectator perspectives by the capitalist entrepreneur's perspective (p. 146), while I wonder what is means when the perspective of the

teacher, the school, the educational system and culture in which teachers finds themselves is privileged over possible spectator perspectives. I take from Santos the caution that, given my own identities and subjectivities, I risk continuing to perpetuate colonial ways of thinking if I am not actively questioning the assumptions inherent in my teacher's perspective. That is, my efforts to serve my students' needs are hindered if I am not questioning the limits of the particular point of perspective from which I practice my craft.

The reduction of perspective to a single, idealized and conflated creator–spectator renders all other perspectives, and the knowledge that arises from those perspectives, invisible, out of reach, as though they do not exist. Santos (2014) described this as a creative act of destruction, effectively epistemicide:

> The single view, rather than being a natural phenomenon, is the ur-product of the creative destruction of modern science. The epistemological privilege that modern science grants to itself is thus the result of the destruction of all alternative knowledges that could eventually question such privilege. It is, in other words, a product of what I called in a previous chapter epistemicide. The destruction of knowledge is not an epistemological artifact without consequences. It involves the destruction of the social practices and the disqualification of the social agents that operate according to such knowledges. (Santos, 2014, pp. 152–153)

When I first encountered Santos' conclusion, it seemed overstated, even hyperbolic. It was only when I reflected on conversations with colleagues, friends, and new acquaintances who experience their knowledge as disqualified by the findings of Western science and the modern Western agenda that I realized that Santos' language is not actually overstated at all. The

experience that repeatedly comes up in these conversations is *erasure*. What is reflected back in these conversations is not merely epistemicide, but the conditions of genocide, the experience of being wiped from the face of the earth.

The Monoculture of Linear Time, as Another Example

Even after reading through to the end of Santos' (2014) argument as articulated in *Epistemologies of the South: Justice Against Epistemicide*, I found myself going back and rereading different sections, especially in Part Two of the text, as I deepened my understanding of coloniality, itself, and the implications for my practice as a teacher. For having explained the phenomena of abyssal thinking and the consequent epistemology of blindness, Santos went on to develop a picture of an alternative future in which an ecology of knowledges—a true pluriverse of wisdom traditions—are available to guide actions, and choices, including my own. Such a pluriverse would also provide a wealth of viable solutions to the issues all around. The pathways to recovering or accessing this pluriverse of potential solutions, so to speak, includes a rich practice that Santos refers to as a sociology of absences and a sociology of emergences—literally accessing what has been rendered invisible and nonexistent by coloniality and coming to understand the future as the outcome of specific choices and actions in the present. Santos' argument, ranging over 100 pages in this volume alone, is complex. Though I will not try to capture all of the nuances of Santos' train of thought, I feel compelled to follow several threads as they have contributed to my thinking about activism, diversity, relativism, and humility, in particular.

In order to share what I have found over the coming pages, I pick up Santos' explanation of the logics by which coloniality produces non-existence. Specifically, Santos (2014) argued that five monocultures serve as modes of production of non-existence: (1) the monoculture of knowledge,

(2) the monoculture of linear time, (3) the monoculture of the naturalization of differences, (4) the monoculture of logic of the dominant scale, (5) the monoculture of capitalist logic and productivity (see pp. 172–175). While all were critical to my understanding of coloniality, the second of these—the monoculture of linear time—has been particularly useful as I work through persistent challenges in my practice.

One evening when I was about to set aside my studies, I decided to leave the following quote up on my screen. I knew that I would be taking it into my sleep life, but I also wanted to read it again the next morning before turning my attention to other work:

The second logic, the logic of the monoculture of linear time, must be confronted with the idea that linear time is only one among many conceptions of time and that, if we take the world as our unit of analysis, it is not even the most commonly adopted. The predominance of linear time is the result not of its primacy as a temporal conception but of the primacy of Western modernity that embraced it as its own. Linear time was adopted by Western modernity through the secularization of Judeo-Christian eschatology, but it never erased, not even in the West, other conceptions of time such as circular time, cyclic time, glacial time, the doctrine of the eternal return, and still others that are not adequately grasped by the images of the arrow or circle. *That is why the subjectivity or identity of a given person or social group at a given moment is a temporal palimpsest. It is made up of a constellation of different times and temporalities, some modern, some not, some ancient, some recent, some slow, some fast, and they are all activated in different ways in different contexts or situations* [emphasis added]. More than any other, the social movements of the indigenous

and Afro-descendent peoples are witness to such temporal constellations. (Santos, 2014, p.

176)

The next morning, I was still not sure I understood all of what Santos was pointing to, but I sensed

in some deep corner of consciousness that I needed to spend more time on this. While I added

emphasis to highlight one section that has implications for how I think about diversity, which I

discuss below, I was also keenly aware of my own assumptions around linear time. For example, as

I wrote the early chapters of this dissertation, my initial impulse was to preserve as much as

possible the actual thought process through which I passed. Two different members of my

dissertation committee commented on my seeming devotion to linear time, but it took me some

time to really comprehend the degree to which this has been an automatic response. I will return to

this in Chapter VI.

The Monoculture of Linear Time Serves to Disqualify Identities. The consequence of

this particular monoculture, among the other monocultures that Santos outlined, is that social

experiences that cannot be understood as part of the dominant temporality of linear time are

"disqualified, suppressed, or rendered unintelligible for being ruled by temporalities that are not

included in the temporal canon of Western capitalist modernity" (Santos, 2014, p. 177). Entire

realms of human experience, entire ways of being, thinking, and doing are discarded as residual

and inconsequential because, as I understand Santos, to acknowledge their legitimacy would

undermine the monopolistic grasp of colonial thinking.

Here as elsewhere in the discussion of the monocultures that reinforce the hegemony of

colonial thinking, Santos (2014) recommended a sociology of absences and the cultivation of

vibrant ecologies; to resist the monoculture of time, in particular, Santos recommended an ecology

of temporalities (p. 176). On a human level, such an ecology of time, one that embraces the broadest experience of contemporaneity, means that personal experiences are not disregarded as anachronistic or primitive simply because they are nonsensical from the perspective of linear thinking common to coloniality. By way of example, Santos (2014) pointed out that in an ecology of temporalities, "the presence or relevance of the ancestors in one's life in different cultures ceases to be an anachronistic manifestation of primitive religion or magic to become another way of experiencing contemporaneity" (p. 177).

For each of the monocultures that Santos (2014) identified, above, he contended that recovering what had been rendered non-existent by the monoculture of coloniality could be accomplished by substituting ecologies for monocultures: "The sociology of absences operates by substituting ecologies for monocultures. By ecology I mean sustainable diversity based on complex relationality" (p. 175). Further on, Santos observed that the concept of ecology suggests "the idea of multiplicity and nondestructive relations" (p. 181). In other words, not only rich diversity and variety but a co-habitation that allows each to thrive. This does not mean that all knowledge is valued equally, but I will return to this when I share my emerging thoughts of relativism below.

The Monoculture of Linear Time Serves to Expand the Future. One of the consequences of linear temporality, as Santos (2014) argued, is that the future is rendered as a vast, unbounded, but largely featureless domain, "empty and homogenous" (p. 182). In this ill-defined state, contended Santos, the future cannot be an object of care in a meaningful way. Contracting the future, for Santos, means reconceiving the future as the result and consequence of specific events and choices in the present. The future, he reminded me, is populated by living beings whose lives—including reincarnated lives—are affected by everything that happens in the present:

The future has no other meaning or direction but what results from such care. To contract the future consists of eliminating, or at least diminishing, the discrepancy between the conceptions of the future of society and the future of individuals. Unlike the future of society, the future of individuals is limited by the duration of their lives—or reincarnated lives, in cultures where metempsychosis is a matter of faith. In either case, the limited character of the future and the fact that it depends on the management and care of individuals makes it possible for the future to be reckoned with as an intrinsic component of the present. In other words, the contraction of the future contributes to the expansion of the present. (Santos, 2014, p. 182)

I ponder this image and try to imagine how coloniality relies on an expansive, featureless future, alongside a present so narrowly defined that the features of individual experience can hardly be seen. I have a vague memory of hearing a riddle as a child in which I could never answer the question—to answer required pointing to the present moment but each time I tried I was told that the moment I had chosen was now the past. The trick made me feel a bit stupid so I laughed and pretended to understand. Now, decades later, I mourn the futility of conversations about sustainability, for example, with the present reduced to a Euclidian point—that which has no part— and the consequences of any present action all but invisible in the endless emptiness of an unknown future. In my mind's eye, I can also begin to imagine the solution that Santos proposed: the present expanding and the future contracting (see pp. 164–165, 175, 181–187, 234). I can see the features of specific possible futures begin to take shape as present choices and events come into focus, and the natural consequences of those events and choices begin to play out through the exercise of "sociological imagination" (pp. 181, 184).

I once had an 8-year-old student who would accidentally hurt his classmates on a regular basis. Wholly unaware of his surroundings, he would force his small shovel deep into the hardest ground he could find and heave up the largest piece of earth he could manage. He would then throw all his weight into his task and pitch the resulting shovel full of earth over his shoulder. When he became aware that a classmate who had been standing behind him was crying and rubbing their eyes, this 8-year-old student was absolutely baffled. Even after I gently pointed out that his shovel of dirt was responsible for his classmate's pain, this student seemed puzzled and disconnected from the results of his actions. Based on the student's age I was not overly concerned, and in fact this pattern resolved itself in the subsequent year, but I remember thinking at the time, that until he developed a capacity to feel, inwardly, a sense of regret and compassion for the consequences of his actions, he would not be able to act ethically. I didn't doubt that this particular student would gain that capacity if given time and compassion, himself, but I remember with startling clarity the visceral understanding of the connection between the ability to see and recognize likely consequences—in the future—and the capacity for ethical decision making—in the present.

A Sociology of Emergences to Contract the Future

Whereas Santos (2014) proposed a sociology of absences to counteract the tendency of colonial thinking to render realms of human experience invisible and irrelevant, he proposed a sociology of emergences to correct the tendency for colonial thinking to depict the future as an empty shell. Such phrases as *the sky is the limit* and *the possibilities are limitless* bounce around in my memory as I read Santos. I had thought such words of support were positive and hopeful; now I hear the hollow echo of a stone thrown haphazardly into a dark cave. But doesn't Santos mean for

me to realize that the cave is only dark because I haven't learned to see? And, when I can see, I find myself reluctant to throw the stone haphazardly because I am suddenly aware of what and whom I might hit with a carelessly tossed stone. A vague, empty future is then populated with very real possibilities. Not pie-in-the-sky possibilities that contribute to another kind of blindness, but concrete possibilities that I can cultivate through concrete action in the world. Elsewhere in the same chapter, Santos spoke of this in the context of correcting a discrepancy between current experience and future expectation. According to Santos, Western modernity thrives when individuals learn to expect fantastic possibilities no matter how abject their current circumstances might be. As Santos (2014) concluded,

> the sociology of emergences aims at a more balanced relation between experience and expectation, which, under the present circumstances, implies dilating the present and shrinking the future. The question is not to minimize expectations but rather to radicalize the expectations based on real possibilities and capacities, here and now. (p. 185)

Adding Definition to the Future—Not and Not Yet. Building on the thinking of Ernst Bloch, Santos (2014) rejected any simplistic notion that because the future is uncertain nothing can be said of it. Rather, to the dichotomy of all and nothing Bloch added *not* and *not yet* (Bloch, 1995, as cited in Santos, 2014, pp. 182–183). The first, *not*, expresses a lack which can stimulate the will. The second, *not yet*, expresses latency and potentiality, connecting present and future:

> The Not Yet is the more complex category because it expresses what exists as mere tendency, a movement that is latent in the very process of manifesting itself. The Not Yet is the way in which the future is inscribed in the present. It is not an indeterminate or infinite future but rather a concrete possibility and a capacity that neither exists in a vacuum nor is

completely predetermined. Indeed, it actively redetermines all it touches, thus questioning

the determinations that exist at a given moment. (Santos, 2014, p. 183)

I am struck by the implications for myself as an actor in the world. Surely, affirming the

connection between choices and actions in the present and very real possibilities that are *not* or *not*

yet commands a new commitment to thoughtfulness, a new reason to care. According to Santos

(2014),

> The Not Yet inscribes in the present a possibility that is uncertain but never neutral; it could
>
> be the possibility of utopia or salvation … or the possibility of catastrophe or damnation….
>
> Such uncertainty brings an element of chance or danger to every change. This uncertainty is
>
> what, to my mind, expands the present while at the same time contracting the future and
>
> rendering it the object of care. At every moment, there is a limited horizon of possibilities,
>
> and that is why it is important not to waste the unique opportunity of a specific change
>
> offered by the present: carpe diem (seize the day). (p. 183)

Adding a Specific Goal to the Future—An Axiology of Care. Santos' (2014) sociology

of emergences, then, resided in the acknowledgement, exploration, and striving toward real,

concrete possibilities. The fact that the actual outcome of my actions and choices might equally be

the wellbeing of the children in my care, in one scenario, or the worst kind of harm, in another, is

what motivates my will. If I had a tendency to complacency, this would wake me up. I think that is

exactly what Santos counted on. For success, moreover, Santos argued that I need to employ a kind

of sociological imagination. On the one hand, to be able to imagine what conditions are most likely

to result in my future success and, on the other hand, "to define principles of action to promote the

fulfillment of those conditions" (Santos, 2014, p. 184). I quote Santos directly, in this particular

case, because I am still trying to understand what Santos means by *principles of action*. I understand, from context, that the goal is to take actions in the present that are most likely to result in a post-abyssal world. Perhaps Santos uses the expression principles of action because he imagines an overarching logic for deciding on the most promising actions. Whatever Santos intends, I see the promise of a more grounded connection between my present choices and the likely consequences of those choices in a not-so-distant future.

There are times when Santos' argument stretches my powers of comprehension, and yet even in passages that perplex me, I see elements that speak to the larger argument about not limiting choices to those made readily available by colonial thinking, but rather expanding the realm of solutions to possible alternatives that would ordinarily by hidden behind hegemonic patterns of thinking:

> The sociology of emergences acts both on possibilities (potentiality) and on capacities (potency). The Not Yet has meaning (as possibility) but no direction for it can end either in hope or disaster. Therefore, the sociology of emergences replaces the idea of determination with the idea of care. The axiology of progress is likewise replaced by the axiology of care. Whereas in the sociology of absences the axiology of care is exerted vis-à-vis already available alternatives, in the sociology of emergences the axiology of care is exerted vis-à-vis possible alternatives. (Santos, 2014, p. 184)

Precisely because the *not yet* could be utopia or catastrophe, in Santos's words, and precisely because the *not yet* is integrally connected to choices and actions in the present moment, I find the fog of any remaining complacency, reluctance, or weariness slipping away. I feel what Santos (2014) means when he spoke of the *not* activating the will to make a difference in the world, but

only because Santos has enlivened this connection between present and future. I usually encounter the notion of stewardship with regard to the environment or the children in my care, but, looking through the lens that Santos polished for me, the notion of stewardship easily embraces Santos' proposal for "a constant ethical vigilance over the unfolding of possibilities, aided by such basic emotions as negative wonder provoking anxiety and positive wonder feeding hope" (p. 186).

Understanding One's Blindness is Not Yet Seeing

As I struggle to decipher Santos' (2014) meaning, I pause to take in one word of caution, namely that "an insight into the consequences of the epistemology of blindness is not, in itself, an insight into the epistemology of seeing" (Santos, 2014, p. 154). I may be able to understand the ways in which perspectives are rendered invisible, the ways in which the individuals and cultures represented by those perspectives suffer erasure, but understanding the mechanism that keeps me from seeing is not the same as seeing.

Overcoming a Certain Kind of Ignorance

I have chosen to highlight the work of Santos (2014), though, precisely because Santos did not stop by naming or even diagnosing the patterns associated with coloniality. Instead, Santos engaged his reader in an exploration not only of the process of moving from a position of blindness to seeing, but of the criteria for charting a pathway beyond coloniality. It is an ambitious goal, to be sure, but the comprehensive nature of the theory—the story—that Santos related actually offered sufficient substance upon which to judge its worthiness. The story is sufficiently developed that I have come to understand its narrative arc, its protagonists and antagonists, and its meaning in the lives of even the least visible characters. From Santos' story, I have come to understand that I am overcoming not ignorance, in general, but a certain kind of ignorance. I have come to understand

that I am not seeking a single universal knowledge—as though all knowledges could be contained in one all-encompassing way of knowing—but rather ways of knowing, plural, finite and specific, especially those knowledges that have been rendered invisible by the hegemonic forces of coloniality. What catches me by surprise is the revelation that I will recognize the knowledges I seek by their capacity to create solidarity[41] while still acknowledging difference wherever solidarity would serve to demean or denigrate the individual subjectivity:

> An epistemology of seeing is one that inquires into the validity of a form of knowledge whose point of ignorance is colonialism and whose point of knowing is solidarity. Whereas in the hegemonic form of knowledge we know by creating order, the epistemology of seeing poses the question of whether it is possible to know by creating solidarity. Solidarity as a form of knowledge is the recognition of the other both as an equal, whenever difference makes her or him inferior, and as different, whenever equality jeopardizes his or her identity. (Santos, 2014, p. 156)

> Nor did Santos depict the process as anything other than ambitious, complicated, and filled with difficulties. Among these difficulties is the fact that those of us steeped in colonial ways thinking and knowing have been "oversocialized" by a hegemonic knowledge that privileges order over solidarity, making it all the more difficult for individuals like myself to imagine a way of knowing that is capable of creating solidarity in nature and society (Santos, 2014, p. 156).

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[41] I welcome the reminder from Rivers (2023) that solidarity can take on toxic forms when moral indignation at injustices is coupled with the "willful refusal to recognize the cause" of those injustices (pp. 60–61).

Engaging Knowledges That Do Not Exist

What does it mean for me to interact with others under the assumption that I am only able to see from a narrow set of perspectives? My colleagues who guide me in an exploration of intersectionality help me understand the value of identifying the perspectives that I can authentically claim as my own, while acknowledging the value of other perspectives as well. That is not to say that my perspective is more or less valuable than another's. Following Santos' formulation, I am knowledgeable in specific realms of knowledge and ignorant in specific realms of ignorance, just as others are. But if I am striving to see what is rendered invisible not only to me but to others around me, it may mean cultivating the ability to unmask, unearth, perspectives that are actively suppressed to myself and others. In Santos (2014) words,

> In order to identify what is missing and why, we must rely on a form of knowledge that does not reduce reality to what exists. I mean a form of knowledge that aspires to an expanded conception of realism that includes suppressed, silenced, or marginalized realities, as well as emergent and imagined realities. (p. 157)

I find myself having to read one phrase in particular again: *a form of knowledge that does not reduce reality to what exists.* As a Waldorf educator, my natural tendency is to interpret this to mean, a form of knowledge that does not reduce reality to what exists *in the material world (as opposed to the spiritual).* While Santos might not reject my more familiar interpretation as a Waldorf educator, I know that he is pointing to something that is happening in the material world, in the world of embodied experience. I pause and actively imagine the perspectives that have been obliterated, wiped off both the proverbial and literal map. If the very perspectives that I am seeking have been rendered nonexistent, then simply adding more voices *from among those available* may

not be enough. In an ecology of knowledges, moreover, diversity serves the purpose of generating

a "wider the field of credible clues and possible, concrete futures. The greater the multiplicity and

diversity of the available and possible experiences (knowledges and agents), the more expanded the

present and the more contracted the future" (Santos, 2014, p. 186).

Implications for Diversity Work.[42] As I read, and reread, of course, I consider Santos

argument through the lens of my practice, in which a concern for including diverse voices is

already influencing syllabi, classroom activities, recommended sources, guest speakers, and my

own outreach to different communities.[43] There are many ways in which Santos' work has shaped

my thinking about diversity work, from questions of representation to scales of relevance when

identifying differences. For example, when Santos (2014) wrote about the epistemological

privilege of the cartographer, as described above, he made a compelling case that depending on my

purpose and objectives, large scale maps and small scale maps are both valuable. From the large

scale map, I can determine the relative position of distant locations (e.g., the path traveled by

Mansa Musa and his entourage on their journey across northern Africa to Mecca in the fourteenth

century); from the small scale map, I can determine the relative size and position of destinations

nearby (e.g., features of the Kaaba and its location within the Islamic holy site Masjid al-Haram in

Mecca). Each has its value and use, even if they each also serve to reveal some phenomena while

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[42] In the professional communities where I work, this work takes the shape of sustained anti-racism efforts, initiatives, and policies, DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion) work, DEIJB+ (diversity, equity, inclusion, justice, belonging, plus) work, and the "big IDEA" (inclusion, diversity, equity, access).

[43] I am particularly grateful to members of the Squaxin Island community in Washington, and the Elnu Abenaki community on the banks of the Connecticut River between Vermont and New Hampshire for opportunities to learn. The extensive and engaging "Indian Country 101" resources created by the Whitener Group, a native-owned consulting group, were instrumental in my recent efforts to learn more about the history of Indigenous peoples in what is now called the United States and Washington State. See https://www.whitenergroup.biz/services.

distorting or hiding other phenomena (Santos, 2014, p. 142). So, too, it is with storytelling, I conclude. Overview lessons about the middle passage (see Hannah-Jones, 2021) play the role of the large-scale map, allowing the student to see hundreds of years of history, possibly even in a single lesson. The story of the enslaved Africans who were sold on the shores of the English colony of Virginia in 1619, though, or the autobiographies of Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass, and Sojourner Truth, or even the story of La Amistad in 1839 all serve the role of small-scale maps on a more human scale.

Adding More Diverse Stories is Insufficient. All these stories, representing different scales of focus and even the possibility of varied points of perspective do not, however, in and of themselves, counteract the erasure experienced by those on the other side of the line. Overcoming the monopolistic appropriation of possible spectator perspectives is not merely a matter of adding more diverse perspectives to my classroom or replacing streamlined or shallow versions of stories and biographies with more detailed versions. As I tried to capture in my parable, above, this side of the line strategically allows for a certain amount of diversity and difference of opinion in order to achieve the illusion of an inclusive universality. I am not sure that I have captured the complexity I am beginning to see. Consider stories that normalize differing experiences of gender, gender identity and gender expression, for example. Each is a significant aspect of my identity in many of the settings in which I find myself. They are each at times the source of privilege or lack thereof, but—and here I struggle to find the words to express myself—considerations of identity, equity, and inclusion all too often happen on this side of the proverbial line. They occur within the constraints of colonial logics, within the *either-or's* of dichotomous thinking, within the fundamental fallacies of linear time and progress. This is not to question the value of considering

how gender, gender identity and gender expression (among other identities) are privileged, or not. Rather, in the larger context of defining what I mean by diversity, I feel shadows at the edges of my vision hinting at the ways of knowing that are actually further negated when I pretend that the conventional conversation about diversity and equity in which I find myself engaged is actually representative of a true multiplicity of worldviews.

    Common Traps When Discussing Diversity. I find myself falling into an all-too-common trap in my use of the word *diversity*. I should not assume that it is clear what I mean, and I find it more difficult than I expected to explain. It is interesting to pause and grapple with these words we use frequently as a short hand way to talk about incredibly complex notions. After some reflection, let me start with the obvious and move from there to what seems problematic. Let me start by saying that in every human context I have experienced—perhaps every human context I can imagine—it is possible to talk about the ways in which a group of people is/are unified, homogenous, diverse, eclectic, or a kind of whole in itself/themselves. As my students often hear me say, *both–and.* I have taught in a variety of contexts on two continents, in small towns and big cities, and I have found each and every classroom to be filled with utterly distinct individuals, with a wide variety of perspectives, temperaments, assumptions, gifts, capacities, and challenges. Even so, some of those classrooms have been in relatively homogenous communities where the range of life experience is relatively narrow. When I ask myself whether these were diverse communities, I am thrown back to Santos' consideration of resolution and detection. Every community, every classroom, could be considered *both* diverse *and* homogenous, depending on how I look. Have I chosen fine-grain resolution or course-grain, small scale or large?

My intention in starting with the obvious is not to get stuck in circular argumentation, or in a relativistic quagmire. Indeed, Santos (2014) actually offered the rationale and direction I needed to step out of the position of *both–and*. What I realize is that Santos asked that I choose between fine-grain and course-grain, between small scale and large scale, based on the consequences in the lived experience of the community members, themselves, and especially in the lives of community members who would be diminished by the experience of being assumed part of a homogenous whole. In other words, differences matter when their recognition serves to dignify the individuals and communities who claim those difference as their own. I am reminded of Pollock's (2008) similar argument in the context of antiracism in the classroom. Santos would have me decide whether to describe a given setting as diverse or homogenous based on the actual impact of my choice in terms of lived experience, and whether the depiction and knowledge of that setting as diverse or homogenous would serve the interests of the dignity of individuals and creating solidarity in a larger sense.

In 2012, I was honored to represent my school at an international conference of Waldorf educators in Dornach, Switzerland. I was especially excited to attend because the stated theme of the conference focused on what human beings have in common across cultures. I don't know what I expected, but I will admit to being surprised at how many of the sessions and presentations had to do with the rhythms of daily life needed for optimal human health. While I remember being fascinated to learn about the health risks encountered by those whose work prevented them from keeping a circadian sleep cycle, and it is true that all of the conference participants, who represented cultures from around the world, could relate to the topic of healthy sleep cycles and daily rhythms, I left the conference feeling deeply disappointed, even discouraged. Now, as I

reflect on the focus of that conference, I realize that the scale and resolution used to signify

relevance did not seem meaningful, even at the time. That is not to say that I do not value the

tremendous importance of healthy daily rhythms, but one or two presentations on the topic would

have sufficed. I do remember that there was one highlight of the conference when I found myself in

a workshop with fellow 4th grade teachers from Kenya and Finland where we talked about what we

observed in our students, all roughly the same age but growing up in very different parts of the

world. For that brief afternoon session, the scale and resolution felt meaningful in our lives as

teachers, meaningful for the children in our care. Elsewhere in the conference, the persistent focus

on the importance of rhythm for good health seemed to distract us from more relevant

considerations.

When Discussions About Diversity Center Whiteness and Coloniality. Santos (2014)

further challenged me to unmask the assumptions I am making when I talk about a diversity of

ideas and beliefs. If by *non-diversity* I mean white, settler-colonist, or Eurocentric ideas and

beliefs, then I am still fixed firmly in colonial ways of thinking, what Santos called "hegemonic

globalization" in this context (p. 198). In other words, as long as adding diversity means adding

subaltern, Indigenous, Black, Latinx, or other non-dominant voices to an otherwise white,

Eurocentric framework, then I am still centering white, settler-colonist, or Eurocentric ideas and

beliefs—they are the norm to which I am adding diversity. While this framing may seem to make

sense to someone acting from a white, settler-colonist or European perspective—at least one who

aspires to be more inclusive—one of the hallmarks of colonial thinking is the habit of centering the

white, Eurocentric experience. Santos challenged me to imagine a very different future where an

ecology of knowledges, a pluriverse is actualized. The path toward that pluriverse cannot be based

on adding diverse elements to one particular world perspective—especially one (e.g., modern Western worldview) that fundamentally rejects the value of alternative ways of knowing. In a similar vein, calls for diversity are not necessarily counterhegemonic. Santos (2014) pointed out that within the framework of capitalist, colonial structures there is a tolerance for a certain amount of diversity, which, based on my understanding of Santos, I imagine as somewhat illusory, something of a distraction as it might be misconstrued as evidence of a true plurality of perspectives. Santos did observe that there are places in the world where plural systems of knowledge are genuinely being considered, especially in the global south (p. 199).

I pause as I ponder the language that I commonly encounter when speaking about diversity and antiracism. Which terms continue to center modern, white, colonial culture? *Alternative* (as opposed to normative)? *Diverse* (as opposed to White)? *Traditional* (as opposed to modern)? *Innovative* (as opposed to accepted)? *Rebellious* (as opposed to dominant)? Here and elsewhere, Santos cast doubt on the efficacy of conventional calls for diversity *on this side of the line*. If, as Santos (2014) argued, the goal is a world undivided by abyssal thinking, then the starting point must be post-abyssal. Here I really understand what Santos means when he says that the Global North (and West) have much to learn from the Global South. The solution is not merely to add stories, beliefs, and ideas from the Global South into classrooms in the Global North, but to find a fresh vantage point from which to entertain a plurality of knowledges *without any one way of knowing being a starting point or default position*, and without the assumption that any one of those ways of knowing is better than the others based on where it was derived, North or South. Rather, argued Santos, in a true plurality of nonhegemonic knowledges, we are able to judge and

choose among knowledges based on a thoughtful calculus of which knowledges seem most likely to lead to more equitable human experiences.

Patterns of Coloniality that Haunt My Assessment of Difference. In speaking of an ecology of recognition, though, Santos (2014) reminded me that "the coloniality of modern Western capitalist power consists of collapsing difference and inequality while claiming the privilege to ascertain who is equal or different" (p. 177). In the same way that I recognized the patterns of coloniality in my choices as a storyteller, I must confront the patterns of coloniality that haunt my assessment of diversity, or lack thereof, in the world around me. I welcome Santos's suggested remedy in the form of the sociology of absences, in this case confronting "coloniality by looking for a new articulation between the principles of equality and difference, thus allowing for the possibility of equal differences—an ecology of differences comprised of mutual recognition" (pp. 177–178). But as Santos (2014) observed, individual identities—subjectivities—cannot simply be reduced to a series of short-hand code words that have meaning in contemporary culture and identity politics, what one might see in abbreviated attempts at a positionality statement. To the degree that such attempts are perfunctory and are not based on a critical reflexivity that accesses other-than-Colonial ways of thinking, they only reinforce the dichotomous thinking on which Coloniality is partially based. More specifically, Santos argued, this kind of practice falls prey to one of the Colonial logics that render other ways of knowing invisible, in this case what Santos called the "monoculture of linear time" (p. 173), as discussed above.

Ignorance as a Point of Arrival—The Outcome of Learning to See. As a Waldorf teacher, I put great faith in the role of sleep in the learning process. I know that this connection is also well-documented by modern science (Hershner, 2020; Payne, 2011), but I don't need empirical

studies to tell me that either *letting* new ideas sleep or *taking* ideas into my sleep life is critical to my learning process. I bring this very ordinary process into focus because it contributes to my emerging understanding on the process of writing and the method of autoethnography. On a cold winter's day, I returned to my work only to realize something I had missed about the notion of diversity in the context of this dissertation. When I use the word diversity, I suddenly realized, I am referring to identities or a multiplicity of identities in such realms as gender identity, sexual orientation, race, class, ethnicity, culture/subculture, spiritual or religious affiliation or belief system, neurodiversity, physical abilities, indigeneity, geographic or ecological identity, etc. Influenced by my reading of Santos (2014), I now see each identity as a concrete expression of social experience, that is a concrete expression of knowledge. In more than one chapter, Santos returned to the idea that it is misleading to talk about knowledge and ignorance in general terms, since *ignorance* is the ignorance of a certain kind of knowledge and all *knowledge* is overcoming a certain kind of ignorance.

> The central idea of the sociology of absences in this regard is that there is no ignorance or knowledge in general. All ignorance is ignorant of a certain kind of knowledge, and all knowledge is the overcoming of a particular ignorance. Learning a certain kind of knowledge may imply forgetting other kinds or indeed ignoring them. In other words, from the standpoint of the ecology of knowledges, *ignorance is not necessarily an earlier stage or starting point. It may well be a point of arrival, the outcome of the forgetfulness or unlearning implied in a learning process* [emphasis added]. (Santos, 2014, p. 188)
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> For Santos (2014), the stakes were high because, "Ultimately, social injustice is based on

cognitive injustice" (p. 189). In other words, if only one form of knowledge (e.g., modern scientific

knowledge) is granted the status of true knowledge, and that knowledge is not shared equitably—which Santos argued it cannot be—then there are no grounds on which to locate social justice. Santos (2014) called out the hegemony of modern scientific knowledge because it sustains the structures of coloniality, but Santos is also clear that "finding credibility for nonscientific knowledges does not entail discrediting scientific knowledge" (p. 189; see also p. 191). This echoes what Rich Holschuh of the Elnu Abenaki community shared in his guided talk on the banks of the West River north of Brattleboro (R. Holschuh, personal communication, October 25, 2023). For both Holschuh and Santos, the answer would seem to lie in a deeper dialogue between different ways of knowing.

Western Scientific Knowledge as One of Many in an Ecology of Knowledges

These words and their meaning tumble together, taking new unexpected shapes as I gaze out at the towering Douglas Fir trees beyond my window. Modern Western science has affirmed the ways in which trees interact and support one another below the surface of the earth, in part through the medium of fungi (see Simard, 2018; Wohlleben, 2016). As such, Western science is responsible for deepening the admiration and awe I feel, the responsibility I feel toward these living beings. There are other realms, however, where Western science limits my legitimate experience to that which I can know empirically, through the narrow realm of conventional senses, effectively denying the legitimacy of large parts of my lived experience. As I understand Santos, the solution is in recognizing the contexts and applications where modern Western science, in dialogue with other ways of knowing, contributes to a broader applied knowledge, one that contributes to overcoming the ignorance that limits the realization of wellbeing broadly conceived (see Santos, 2014, pp. 189–190).

Given the vitriol directed toward Western science in the literature I reviewed for this dissertation, it seems significant that Santos did not reject Western science entirely. Indeed Santos (2014) admitted that "in many areas of social life, modern science has demonstrated an unquestionable superiority in relation to other forms of knowledge" (p. 201). The objection is not to specific contributions of Western science, but to the a priori assumption that the knowledge arriving out of Western science is superior to other forms of knowledge simply because it was conceived by Western science. By way of example, Santos pointed to the "interventions… in which modern science has played no part… [such as] the preservation of biodiversity made possible by rural and indigenous forms of knowledge, which, paradoxically, are under threat because of increasing science-ridden interventions" (p. 201).

In a true plurality of knowledges, an ecology of knowledges, making choices in the present means determining which knowledge or knowledges are relevant to a particular context, issue, or goal based on a pragmatic assessment of real and likely consequences (see Santos, 2014, p. 205). In other words lived experience is the measure by which knowledges prove more or less valued in a given context. In particular, the lived experience of inclusion and wellbeing: "preference must be given," argued Santos, "to the form of knowledge that guarantees the greatest level of participation to the social groups involved in its design, execution, and control and in the benefits of the intervention" (Santos, 2014, p. 205). As further example, Santos (2014) shared an account of the blind application of Western science based on false assumptions and misunderstanding of the existing indigenous practices:

In the 1960s, the millennia-old irrigation systems in the rice fields in several Asian countries were replaced by scientific irrigation systems as promoted by the prophets of the

green revolution. In Bali, Indonesia, the traditional irrigation systems were based on ancestral religious, agrarian, and hydrological knowledges that were supervised by the priests of Dewi-Danu, the Hindu goddess of water (Callicott 2001: 89–90). They were replaced because they were deemed superstitious, being derived from what anthropologists have named the "rice cult." As it happens, the replacement had disastrous consequences for the rice culture, so disastrous indeed that the scientific systems had to be discarded and the traditional ones retrieved. The real tragedy, however, was that the alleged incompatibility between the two knowledge systems designed to perform the same intervention—the irrigation of the rice fields—resulted from an incorrect assessment of the situation caused precisely by abstract judgments (based on the universal validity of modern science) about the relative value of different knowledges. Years later, computational models—one of the fields of complexity sciences—demonstrated that the water sequences managed by the priests of Dewi-Danu were far more efficacious than those traced by scientific irrigation systems (Callicott 2001: 94). (Santos, 2014, pp. 205–206)

But even though there are examples where the application of Western science was ill-conceived and had to be abandoned in favor of non-scientific or other-than-Western scientific knowledge, Santos went on to clarify that what might be called non-scientific knowledge can be valued without necessarily denigrating scientific knowledge:

In the ecology of knowledges, crediting nonscientific knowledges does not entail discrediting scientific knowledge. It merely implies the counterhegemonic use of the latter. It consists, on the one hand, of exploring alternative scientific practices made visible by the

plural epistemologies of scientific practices and, on the other, of valorizing the

interdependence between scientific and nonscientific knowledges. (Santos, 2014, p. 207)

The Prospect of Relativism

At many times during the process of writing, I have been in conversation with a colleague,

friend, or acquaintance and I have tried to share some of what I am finding in my studies. It is not

surprising to me that claims such as *all knowledges have limits* and *all knowledge is knowledge of a*

particular kind of knowing have felt to some as a resounding call for relativism. In these

conversations, I have not always been successful in allaying my conversation partner's concerns,

but Santos (2014) was quite clear that "the ecology of knowledges does not entail accepting

relativism," which he considers an untenable position (p. 190). Indeed, if there was equal footing

for different ways of knowing in Santos' vision, it was equal footing to offer pragmatic solutions

for correcting the injustices and violences being experienced on both sides of the line. Whereas

under coloniality only modern Western science is considered a legitimate source of knowledge for

addressing the issues that were visible, primarily—and by design—on this side of the line, Santos

proposed a pragmatic dialogue among diverse, alternative ways of knowing, including modern

Western science, with primacy not automatically granted based on the geographical or ideological

source of the knowledge but on a concrete and practical calculus—guided by an ethics of care—to

determine what alternatives are most likely to generate the best possible futures, crossing over and

in defiance of any abyssal line.

> The ecology of knowledges aims to create a new kind of relation, a pragmatic relation,
>
> between scientific knowledge and other kinds of knowledge. It consists of granting
>
> "equality of opportunity" to the different kinds of knowledge involved in ever broader

epistemological arguments with a view to maximizing their respective contributions toward

building "another possible world," that is to say, a more just and democratic society, as well

as one more balanced in its relations with nature. The point is not to ascribe the same

validity to every kind of knowledge but rather to allow for a pragmatic discussion among

alternative, valid criteria without immediately disqualifying whatever does not fit the

epistemological canon of modern science. (Santos, 2014, p. 190)

This does not mean that all ideas are welcome. Indeed, as I understand Santo's argument,

cultivating the indifference characteristic of a relativist stance is a tool of hegemonic forces that

would make it more difficult to identify friends and foes. But, as Santos claimed, "There is nothing

authoritarian or antidemocratic in the dichotomy of friends and enemies, as long as the dichotomy

is established by nonauthoritarian democratic means" (p. 160). Santos continued:

Probably the most dilemmatic difficulty confronting critical theory today lies in the blurring

of the distinction between friend and enemy. Critical theory has always presupposed a

question—which side are we on?—and has been elaborated to provide answers to it. It is

not surprising that assorted kinds of neopositivists have managed to delegitimize this

question by trashing the normative claims that underlie it. Their hegemony in society at

large targets the youth in particular, for whom it has become more and more difficult to

identify alternative positions in relation to which it would be imperative to take sides. There

is an increasing opacity to the enemy. Without enemies there is no need for friends. If there

are no friends, there is no purpose in exercising solidarity. (Santos, 2014, p. 160)

I am caught off guard by the realization that Santos did not intend that we do away with

normative claims behind the question "Which side are we on?" Nor did he intend that we blurr

lines between friends and enemies. I can only imagine that I was momentarily blinded by the allure

of some imaginary and instant transition to an idealized future where, after all, we are all friends

and world peace has been miraculously achieved. Instead, difficult discussions and concrete

decisions in the real world need to be based on all our powers of discernment, a commitment to

solidarity despite the many difficulties and, of course, the exercise of a sociological imagination. I

am reminded of Tuck and Yang (2012) denouncing the settler colonist who wants to pre-maturely

jump to a place of harmony and reconciliation without, as I imagine it, doing the real, messy,

unsettling work. The pathway to solidarity may not be as simple as simply visualizing world peace,

but I am actually reassured to see the features of practical negotiation and a process, however

complex, toward mutual recognition. As I turn away from simplistic aphorisms and embrace the

complex and messy process ahead, it occurs to me that I finally understand why Santos (2014)

would say that this process is based on a "new common sense" (see pp. 152, 157–160, 181).[44]

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[44] Santos (2014) argued further that not only are all social practices tantamount to knowledge practices, but that no single form of knowledge can guarantee success in reaching the stated goal: solidarity. Since no single knowledge tradition will suffice, Santos reasoned, constellations of knowledges offer a more reliable foundation for a new common sense: "The epistemology of absent knowledges starts from the premise that social practices are knowledge practices. The practices not based on science, rather than being ignorant practices, are practices of alternative, rival knowledges. There is no *a priori* reason to favor one form of knowledge against another. Moreover, none of them in isolation can guarantee the emergence and flourishing of solidarity. The objective will be rather the formation of constellations of knowledges geared to create surplus solidarity. This we may call a new common sense" (p. 157).

CHAPTER V: WORKING WITH NARRATIVES FOR THE CLASSROOM

As I mentioned in Chapter III, once I determined the focus of my dissertation I assumed that I would engage in participatory action research with Waldorf classroom teachers. To complement the work that many of my students and colleagues are doing in the interest of antiracism, diversity, equity, inclusion and related efforts, I saw the need to bring special attention to the ways in which the narratives that teachers *bring* into the classroom have the potential to harm or heal. I pause to note how difficult it was to settle on the verb *bring* in the last sentence—the narratives that teachers *bring* into the classroom. Of course this includes the stories and lessons that we choose, craft, and learn by heart with conscious intention, but I also include here the stories that teachers carry deep within themselves, the stories that help mold their identities, the stories that

they enact every day from a place of deep inner conviction and belief. These stories are also brought to the classroom.

So many of these stories are heart-achingly beautiful, in my experience, and witnessing such stories—conscious or unconscious, intentional or otherwise—has nourished my faith in the power of story, in general, and in teaching through story, in particular. At the same time, I am increasingly aware of the shadows that might have once have been the source of anxiety or even fear. These shadows that tease apart the fabric of my assumptions, revealing so much of light and dark, what is visible and invisible, seen and unseen. For a teacher deeply committed to the wellbeing of the children in my care, it has been heart-rendingly painful to imagine—much less know—that I have done—or might continue to be doing—harm. My instinctive response is to find another way to think about my actions, a work-around, an explanation in which my good intentions and the students' natural resilience absolve me of complicity or blame. I feel defensive, even defiant, until I just feel shame.

Or, simply, humble.

Working with Teachers on Narratives—As I Imagined

As I imagined—and initially planned for—a version of this dissertation journey that focused on participatory action research, I imagined a year-long process involving Waldorf class teachers from many different grades. I imagined working with teachers who were in the middle of their careers, well-established, and even leaders in their own schools. These mid-career teachers, I knew, having taught for many years would have the experience and understanding to re-map the curriculum, so to speak. I intended to recruit sufficient teachers that each teacher would find others in the room who were teaching the same grade. I also hoped to have at least two or three teachers

from each school represented. This would allow us to work together in various ways: we would be able to gather (1) as one large group to discuss overarching topics (e.g., the flow of the geography curriculum from year to year, or festivals and rites of passage), (2) as small grade-specific groups to discuss the needs of children in a particular grade, and (3) as small school-specific groups to discuss the needs of a particular school and community. Importantly, all the participating teachers would still be actively teaching and therefore in deep relationship with students and families in a school community.

In those initial plans, I thought we would meet for a week in the first summer at a retreat-like setting to build relationships and lay a foundation for the year of collaboration ahead. Ideally we would meet four times in person, spread out over the year. When we gathered together, we would enjoy opportunities for singing, artistic expression, and time in natural settings, of course. Our time together would also include activities designed to promote deep discussion, personal reflection, and detailed planning for specific blocks. At the end of a year of collaboration, all participants would have access to the specific work related to a specific grade, but also all the other grades represented in the room. Consistent with my understanding of Waldorf education, my goal would be to create the conditions for inspired, responsive, place-based curriculum building.

As I discussed my aspirations with my mentor, I had already begun to imagine the resources that I would want to compile for each grade-specific working group—favorite anthologies, examples of main lesson work, guiding questions to inspire fresh perspectives. I could imagine teachers in the grade-specific groups going over block plans and discussing the needs of the children they would be returning to at the end of each collaborative session. I could imagine

them curating and annotating stories that they had selected, collectively building a rich, enlivened database of teaching materials for their schools.

Although this image of participatory action research did not end up being the right choice for my dissertation journey, I continue to hold this picture as an inspiration for future work. The experienced teachers I talk to are eager to do this very kind of collaborative curriculum design, but they are looking for support from their schools so that they are not carrying the weight of this work on their own. All too often, professional development funds are insufficient—or non-existent—and busy teachers are expected to relegate this work to evenings, weekends, and holiday breaks. If teachers are expected to do this all-important work without direct support from their schools, then these same schools cannot claim to support the ongoing renewal of the curriculum as it was designed to be (von Heydebrand, 2021; Rawson, 2021).

My Experience of Choosing Stories for the Grade School Classroom

Throughout this dissertation, I have shared my thoughts on the power, efficacy, and purpose of storytelling. I have included several examples of my own efforts at curating and crafting a story from the resources at hand. In Appendix B, moreover, I have shared a heavily annotated version of the biography of Marie Tharp to share my reflections on the decisions I had to make as a storyteller even when the story was *mostly* taken from a single resource. What follows below is somewhat different. As I reflected on what I had already included, and what more I wanted to share, I realized that I had not done enough to answer two of the most common questions I receive from my students: *Where do you find stories? How do you choose stories?*

In one sense, the answer is quite simple: I have spent hours and hours at my local library, and the librarians in the children's section are always open to conversation. Beyond that rather

vague answer, it is difficult for me to generalize. Remarkably, whether or not a story strikes a chord seems to have little relation to whether it is relegated to the non-fiction or fiction sections of the library. When I am in search for story material for my classroom, I note who the author is, where the story comes from, and how it might fit into the academic blocks I am teaching, but I usually decide whether to bring story to my classroom just by reading the first few pages. I rely upon some ill-defined but oft-used sense for what might speak to my students. And, as I sit on the floor between the stacks, perusing the books around me, I may not even be able to articulate why I think a story will be nourishing. It either speaks to me or it doesn't. In some cases I decide that I can bring a version of story if I modify it to suit the developmental stage of the children in my class. In other cases, I make note of when I want to bring the story in the future because I see how it might fit with a theme or lesson I know I will be teaching at another time.

Nourishing stories come from so many sources. Stories may come from my students' families as I get to know each, welcome their suggestions, and strive to ensure that they feel seen and affirmed. This can take the form of cultural stories that are dear to one or more students. It may also mean attending to world events that are particularly meaningful to the families of my students. It may be stories I find when I am researching lesson content and thinking about the relevance of content for individual students. When I was preparing to teach European Renaissance history to seventh graders one year, for example, the presence of two Jewish students in my class led to lessons—in the form of stories, of course—that I had never taught before in that context. I remember, for example, coming across the Decree of Alhambra of 1492 as I researched lesson material for that history unit, and an account of the decree and its impact proved to be an excellent addition to a short biography of Catherine of Aragon; when we reviewed the content of the story

the following day, we discussed the fact that Jewish families had lived peacefully for generations under Islamic rule only to be expelled by the Catholic monarchs of Spain. The stories prompted a conversation about religious tolerance and intolerance that was rich and nuanced. If it is not obvious to my reader, it is the richness of the conversations that the students and I have when we review a story the following day that show me whether I was effective in my teaching—and whether the story hit its mark. Importantly, I am not looking to see whether the students come to a pre-determined interpretation of the lesson or *moral* of the story. Indeed, even if I think there is such a moral, I am cautious not to impose my interpretation on the students. Rather, the review of the story on the following day is structured to be open-ended and give the students a chance to share their version or versions of the story and what it means to them. The goal is to cultivate a space for reflection and sharing, while leaving the children in freedom to form their own conclusions—possibly days, weeks, months, or years later.

At times, stories arise from larger events in the cultural life of a community, region, nation. In the months after Barack Obama's 2021 inauguration, for example, many teachers were moved to learn more about Amanda Gorman and feature her biography and poetry in their classrooms. In a more place-based example, I have found that the biography of Ruby Sales is particularly poignant to children growing up in and around Keene, New Hampshire, because Ruby credits a narrow escape from death when she was a young woman in the South to the sacrifice of a young Episcopal minister and civil rights activist Jonathan Daniels, who grew up there in Keene. Likewise, the short stories and youth novels written by Joseph Bruchac seem all the more valuable a resource for teachers in New England because Bruchac is a Nulhegan Abenaki citizen and the settings of many of his stories reveal much about the mountains, valleys, and forests in that part of the world.

Sometimes, the spark of deep interest that enlivens a story comes from the teacher themselves; It may be that I am drawn to the biography of Manjiro (see Blumberg, 2003) because of my deep interest in Japanese culture, but I also appreciate all the threads that are woven in one story—albeit a story that usually takes three days of morning lesson to tell. It may be that the power of this story derives depth from my personal interest and would not be the best choice for another teacher. Each teacher must sense this for themselves by engaging with a story, at least briefly, and considering their students' needs.

Other stories live in the culture of a school as teachers exchange resources and share what they found beneficial and beloved. The epic Finnish tale *Kalevala* (see Synge, 1977) would probably have not caught my eye had I encountered it on a bookshelf, but a trusted colleague spoke of her students' connection to the story and I set about learning the story for a language arts block with my fourth graders, with the story spread out over a week of morning lessons. The choice was fortuitous as it inspired yet another class play that I wrote for my students—I will never forget watching students as they enacted the crying boat.

Another year, a colleague shared McKissack and McKissack's (1994) *The Royal Kingdoms of Ghana, Mali, and Songhay: Life in Medieval Africa* which continues to serve as a primary resource when I get a chance to discuss west African histories and cultures in the classroom. Like many of the resources that I return to over and over again, McKissack and McKissack wrote for youth readers in the United States, and the authors gave careful consideration to what level of detail and approach best serve the students for whom they wrote while also being faithful to the histories and cultures on which they focused. Reading thoughtful content designed for youth readers in the United States has helped me hone my ability to work with sources that are not written with the

youth reader in mind, guiding me as I determine the scope and themes I will curate into a more developmentally appropriate version. In other words, years and years of selecting, learning, telling, and discussing nourishing stories for, to, and with my students has been an invaluable source of insight into the value of stories and craft of storytelling in the classroom.

When Ready-Made Stories are Unavailable

Though I refer to modifying stories above, as when my source material is not written with a young audience in mind, I have not fully captured here the editorial and creative aspects of preparing stories for the classroom. In the younger grades, in particular, preparing to tell a story may be as simple as opening a trusted collection (e.g., anthologies of fairytales or folktales from a wide range of cultures, or the collected works of an author like Joseph Bruchac) and learning a story by heart, but that relatively simple path proves inadequate over time for reasons that relate both to the ways story are employed as a pedagogical tool to deliver specific content, and for reasons of representation and social justice—more on this below.

Stories as Effective Pedagogical Tools

Before saying more about the use of stories as pedagogical tools, let me observe how powerful narrative can be in the learning process. Whether short and pithy, or spread out over multiple morning lessons, stories, on the most basic level, are the perfect mnemonic device, making it possible for students to absorb a remarkable breadth and depth of content in a way that feels engaging and even—dare I say it—entertaining. While I certainly do not consider the teacher's task to include entertaining their students, I welcome a situation in which my most effective teaching tool is one that the students look forward to each day.

At one extreme, I consider the short, simple verses that I and many other teachers use to help students remember learning content, perhaps the steps they take as they learn to knit (e.g., *In through the front door / Run around the back / Out through the window / and off pops Jack)*. It is not uncommon in a Waldorf first grade classroom, moreover, for students to move around the room in coordinated steps to a delightful image-filled verse that is effectively teaching them one of the multiplication tables; the teacher is employing an effective teaching tool while the children experience joyful movement to an engaging verse. Importantly, if the child were asked over the dinner table that evening "What did you learn today?" the six- or seven-year old student would not report that they had been practicing their 3's table. An explicit presentation of the times table might not come for weeks or months, but the teacher knows that when the class is ready to write the 3's times table in their lesson book, they will experience it as deeply held knowledge that is suddenly made conscious. The use of stories—even in the form of pithy verses—makes for effective teaching and joyful, relatively stress-free learning.

Longer stories also prove to be invaluable mnemonic devices when teachers want to bring academic content in a way that engages the children's natural inclination and capacity to absorb engaging narratives. In second grade, for example, many Waldorf teacher's use what we call an umbrella story to help teach place value. Whether the teacher creates their own umbrella story, or uses a story created by someone else, the story serves as a vehicle to convey otherwise abstract concepts and algorithms in a deeply meaningful and engaging way. I will suggest that the story is all the more effective if teacher draws upon personal experience and interests to deepen their own connection to the story. For that reason, drawing on my experience living in Japan for more than five years in my twenties, I created an overarching—thus *umbrella*—story about a boy named

Ichiro who lived in a fishing village in Japan. I based my story on accounts I had heard of life in mid-19th century Japan to imagine the life of a boy and his friends in a small fishing village.

Each day, I crafted adventures for the characters in my story, but all with a purpose: at the end of the second day of the umbrella story, Ichiro had stumbled upon a previously hidden oyster bed where he and his friends discovered more pearls than they could carry in their hands. Here, the course of the narrative was carefully developed. Ichiro found that he could only hold nine pearls in his hand without dropping one, so his grandmother made him little draw string pouches that he could attach to his belt, with each pouch able to hold exactly 10 pearls. In time, Ichiro and his friends needed baskets to hold all the pouches, and each basket help exactly 10 pouches. For a day or two, I embedded math problems into the story, as when the characters added up their different pouches, baskets, and individual pearls at the end of the day, and got excited about how many more pearls they would find the next day—and what they could do with the pearls, of course. One morning in the middle of the week, I brought in small glass gems—as opposed to round pearls which would have rolled every which way—and drawstring pouches and baskets so that we could recreate the details of the story from the day before right there on our classroom desks. Some days the events of the story required that we empty out a pouch and use the gems individually. Every day the students were delighted that we needed more and more pouches. Only at the end of the week, did I finally write up a two column addition problem that reflected the narrative from the previous day. As students compared the numbers on the chalkboard with the glass jewels, pouches and baskets in front of them, student after student could see that numbers in the column on the far right worked just like hands in the story—they could hold only nine pearls/gems. The next column to the left, however, seemed to work just like the pouches in the story. What I observed as a teacher

was that different students relied on different aspects of the overall lesson as they made sense of our first lessons in place value. Some students were very ready to jump to the numbers on the board, or on their practice paper, while other students continued to make sense of the math through the manipulatives or through their imagination of the narrative.

This is only one example of what Waldorf teachers mean by an umbrella story, and teachers often create similar stories for such lessons as telling time, long division, and decimal fractions. While this is a more common practice with students under the age of 12, there are stories which can serve a similar purpose in middle school—I found an account of Thales of Miletus' visit to the great pyramids of Egypt (see Diggins, 1965/2012) to be a very effective way to set up our discovery of problem solving with ratio and proportion in sixth grade. While Waldorf teachers can certainly make use of stories that have been created by others, there is still considerable work to bring the details to life in a way that illuminates the pedagogical content being featured.

More Reasons to Curate Stories from Multiple Sources

The second reason that simply opening an anthology of ready-to-tell stories ends up being inadequate for teachers is that relying on readily available print resources written for a youth audience is too limiting from the perspective of representation and intersectional social justice. Though public libraries and other community groups are often striving to make more perspectives and histories available, the teacher who relies only on published anthologies that are readily available is unlikely to bring as broad a range of perspectives as the teacher who learns to craft engaging stories from scattered sources. I am grateful, for example, to have read a brief account in Hakim's (2007) compendium of U.S. History of the events of August 1619 and the arrival of the English privateer ship The White Lion in the English colony of Virginia with a cargo of enslaved

men, women, and children from Africa. That brief account sent me on a search for more detail so that I could add the story to our study of early U.S. history. This was in 2008, more than a decade before the New York Times and Pulitzer Prize winner Nikole Hannah-Jones provided a more robust account (see Hannah-Jones, 2021) of that fateful docking. My intention here is not to congratulate myself on teaching the events of 1619 as early as I did, but rather to stress that if I had relied on ready-to-tell narratives for my eight grade classroom in 2008, this content would have been out of reach.

If I think of other examples from my own classroom, I recall bringing the biography of John Urschel when I was guest teaching a 7th grade algebra block knowing that Urschel's decision to leave his position as an NFL football player with the Baltimore Ravens to complete his doctoral degree in mathematics at MIT would intrigue more than one student in the class. One athlete in the classroom forgot his too-cool-for-school attitude when we reviewed the story, and he expressed deep wonder that Urschel had the energy to work on advanced math homework at the end of a long day of football practice. In the same block, which happened to overlap with the final days of Hanukkah that year, I featured German mathematician Emmy Noether, whose biography not only highlighted her achievements in mathematics and mathematical physics, her family's cultural traditions, but the dire threat to the Jewish community in Germany under Nazi rule illustrated when Emmy fled Germany and relocated in the United States. Both stories required that I look at multiple sources and piece together the details that would be most meaningful to the students in my class. In each case, I was inspired by a desire to bring a more diverse perspectives, including stories that were not ready made for my purposes. I was exercising considerable editorial and creative

license in choosing what biographical details to include, but after reading so many well-crafted biographies written for youth, I felt as though I had excellent models to guide me.

Considering Stories in the Dichotomy of Passive and Active Learning

Stories are remarkable pedagogical tools not only because of their effectiveness as mnemonic devices, but also because of their capacity to create learning experiences that have similar qualities to lived experience. It may be a cliché to speak of exploring the world through reading, but the power of stories defies simple distinctions between active and passive learning. When I was studying to become a Waldorf teacher, I was particularly intrigued by Steiner's (2000) injunction that teachers tell stories in a way that move the children inwardly. Indeed, the students may be absolutely still—even slack jawed—as they listen to a story, but the story is effective if it moves the children in profound ways, evoking feelings with the power to inspire both thinking and action.

Multi-Sensory, Experiential Learning While Absolutely Still

There are several idiomatic expressions in the English language that give us a hint about the kind of movement that Steiner (2000) invoked. When I report that I was *moved* by someone's words, when I recall a *moving* experience, or admit that I was even *moved* to tears, I am acknowledging the possibility that I can have deeply moving experiences even when my body is otherwise inactive. Further, anyone who has gotten lost in a good book, losing all track of time, will also acknowledge that a good story has the power to transport the reader (or listener) into an inner realm of experience which, though not the same as lived experience, is still a valuable space of exploration and reflection, with possibilities for deep learning.

In the classroom, then, carefully chosen stories create rich spaces of learning, where students participate in a kind of active learning that feels multi-sensory and experiential. This is in no way to diminish the value of projects, field trips, or other nature-based and outdoor learning activities, especially those that take students into nature. My intention is simply to add a needed layer of complexity to distinctions between active and passive learning. A casual visitor to my classroom during story time might simply conclude that telling stories is a good classroom management technique—look how quiet and well-behaved the students are, after all—but I see something quite different. When, a few minutes into telling a story, I notice that many of the otherwise fidgety students are almost motionless, I can tell that the students have been drawn into the story in such a way that they are experiencing the character's trials and challenges themselves. They are there with me, identifying first with one character and then another, exploring new worlds and new ideas.

Stories as a Pedagogical Tool That Leaves the Students in Freedom

Precisely because they engage students in deeply felt experience, stories prove to be one of the most effective tools for inductive teaching and learning. Before discussing concepts and drawing conclusions, the students have a rich learning experience that heightens their curiosity and stimulates wonder. They travel inwardly to a place of personal experience before they are asked to bring their learning to consciousness and reflection. The further advantage of this approach—complemented, of course, by other forms of experiential learning—is that stories lend themselves to teaching in a way that leaves children in freedom to draw their own conclusions. Indeed it is not uncommon for the students to interpret a story in ways that feel surprising to the teacher. I was genuinely stunned, one spring, by the response of my fifth grade students to the story of Alexander

the Great and the Gordian knot. As the story is told, Alexander's army reached Phrygia, in what we would now call north central Turkey. In the middle of the capital, there was an ox cart that had long since been tied off to a stone post with an incredibly complex knot—the Gordian knot. Upon his arrival, Alexander learned of an ancient prophesy that whoever untied a knot would become the ruler of all Asia. As I told the students in my class, Alexander studied the knot only briefly before pulling out his sword and slicing down through all the intertwined layers of the knot, effectively releasing the ancient cart from the post where it had been bound for years upon years.

Even as I told the story, I had in mind an interpretation that I had heard several times: that Alexander's actions represented a novel, out-of-the-box solution for an otherwise intractable problem, but that was not at all how my classroom of 20 ten- and eleven-year old students experienced the story. Instead of expressing any degree of admiration for Alexander's bold solution, my students were absolutely incensed. In their estimation, Alexander had cheated, and not having followed the rules, he should not be celebrated at all. One student was actually red in the face as he asserted that Alexander didn't deserve to rule Asia since he cheated! I share this particular story from my classroom for several reasons, but among them I hope my reader will note the way in which the students were not limited to my preconceived interpretation. The nature of the story, itself, allowed the students to experience that moment in the center of Phrygia and come to their own conclusion about what it all meant. So, while I certainly had my own ideas about the value of the stories I chose, using story as a teaching tool both enabled and preserved the students' power to co-create meanings and interpretations of their own quite independent of mine. I will only add that one of the reasons that a Waldorf teacher avoids discussing a story the same day that it is

told is that every child deserves the opportunity to sleep on the story and digest it in their own way, even before they are influenced by their classmates, much less the teacher.

Tailoring Stories to Meet the Age and Developmental Stages of the Students

My reader will have noticed that I often specify the age and grade level of the students for whom I am curating stories. This arises from my understanding of age- and developmentally appropriate practice. Importantly, this is not to say that certain topics are off limits or inappropriate at certain ages or stages of development, but rather that the language I would use and my approach would be tailored to the grade-level I am teaching. When I was preparing to tell the Legend of the Bluebonnet based on a Comanche legend, for example, I prepared what I considered age-appropriate notes about the fact that many Comanche were forced from their homes when settlers arrived and claimed Comanche territory as their own:

> *The land that our school is built on, the land that we play on every day at recess, the land that all our homes are built on is the land of the Comanche people. For generations before the settlers arrived, the Comanche hunted for deer among the mesquite trees, and picked berries under the hot summer sun. They planted corn and beans and squash near the banks of creeks, just like the one below our playing field. Their teepees towered above the cedars and sagebrush—just as our school building towers above the shrubs and small trees that grow right in front of our school. Members of the Comanche nation still live in Texas today, but about 200 years ago, many Comanche were forced off their land when settlers moved in, started building fences and began to claim this land for their own.*
>
> *Some of you are lucky enough to hear your grandparents tell stories about their childhood. If you think about all the time from when your grandparents were little, all the*

time it took your parents to grow up plus how long you will live, that would be three generations—your grandparents, your parents, and you. Those three generations could stretch for 100 years. If you want to know when many of the Comanche were forced to leave this land, you would need to count back twice that far, to six generations. About 200 years ago.

In my lesson plans, this small segment was part of a lively informational lesson I gave on the next day, after the story had been shared the day before. This was only a portion of a lesson that went on to talk about the way that bluebonnet plants grow all through the winter months, hardly caring at all when there is a coating of ice and snow, but my comments about the appropriation of indigenous lands would either introduce or return to a theme that would be revisited again and again in different parts of the curriculum at different ages—when studying local geography in fourth grade, when studying North American Geography in fifth grade, when studying the European and U.S. History in middle school.

What I have shared above may suggest to some that age- and developmental-appropriateness is somehow fixed and prescribed, grade by grade, but that is not what I intend to convey. While I have a vague sense of what I will encounter when I walk into, for example, a second grade classroom, any specific determination I will make about what is age-appropriate for that second grade comes from my familiarity with a specific constellation of 8-year olds. Getting to know the students in a class is all-important to knowing what will serve them, and I have always been grateful to have the autonomy to tailor my lessons, my stories, to serve the children in my care. When I know the students well, I can touch upon topics as complex and painful as racism, slavery, genocide, suicide, hate speech and other forms of discrimination. It

is hard to imagine that I could not broach almost any topic if I sensed that it would serve my students. The art would be in choosing the right approach, the right story and questions, so that I am creating a space for personal discovery and growing understanding, and not simply imposing my convictions on my students. I have failed if I am socializing or training students to simply believe what I believe.

Finding Stories That I Need to Hear

Understanding how much more effectively I can convey information and ideas when they are embedded in narrative, I am often on the look-out for stories, but it is also my experience that stories seem to find me. I can't count the number times that in looking for stories that will serve my students, I have found a story that I needed to hear myself.

Those familiar with Waldorf curriculum will not be surprised to hear that one weekend, now many years hence, found me at my local library looking for different versions of Hebrew stories for my classroom—origin stories and faith stories from a diverse range of cultures are commonly featured in the Waldorf curriculum. The picture book section was always a favorite source, as I appreciated seeing what illustrations had been chosen to complement each story. I also appreciated the fact that the book jacket of most picture books would tell me a little about the author and their connection to the story and its cultural context.

On this particular day I stumbled across Sasso's (2002) story of Naamah, a variation of the story of Noah from the Hebrew bible. In Sasso's story, while Noah and his sons work to save the animal kingdom from an impending flood that is expected to devastate any living thing left behind, Naamah and her daughters work tirelessly to collect seeds, bulbs, sprouts, and spores so that they can rescue the plant world from devastation. I remember being taken aback. It had not occurred to

me that such liberties could be taken with stories from sacred texts, and I remember noting that the author, Sandy Eisenberg Sasso, was a Rabbi.

Inside the cover of Sasso's (2002) story was a note to parents and teachers about the Hebrew practice of creating *midrash*. Sasso wrote:

Many stories in the bible are well known, like those of Abraham and Isaac, Moses on Mount Sinai, and Joseph in Egypt. But other stories are only brief sketches and seem incomplete. We often wonder about what has been left out. When we read the bible, we imagine what else the women and men in a story might have thought, said, or done.

Suppose you are reading the biblical story about Noah and the ark. You wonder who was Noah's wife. What was her name, her story? Suppose you give Noah's wife a name, Naamah, and tell that she gathered two of every kind of seed, every living plant, and created a garden on the ark. When the flood receded she replanted the earth's garden. In imagining this explanation, you would be creating a type of story that in Hebrew is called *midrash*. Many such stories were told by our ancestors to enrich the Bible. In time, some of these were written down, and then they were read again and again until they began to feel very old, as if they were always part of tradition.

This story of Noah's wife is a modern *midrash*. You may use it to talk about the wisdom and courage of a woman and her role in saving the world from destruction. You may want to focus on the dandelions and the importance of caring for *all* living things, even those we might wish to ignore. The story may be a starting point for a conversation about our responsibility for caring for the earth. Most of all the story of Naamah helps us to pause and take delight in the beauty of the natural world. (Sasso, 2002, author's note)

I remember being struck by Sasso's tale, keenly aware that I had made an important personal discovery. When the time came to return the book to the library, I ordered a used copy for myself. As it turned out, I chose not tell Sasso's story of Naamah along with the story of Noah in the weeks that followed, but only because I had started writing a play based on Sasso's tale for my third graders to perform later in the year. The 19 students in my class that year were so proud of their performance and—as I would learn in later years—proud that their teacher had written a play just for them.

The insight I took from Sasso's (2002) midrash was not just about how to expand an exising tale to make it feel more inclusive or create a learning context in which to discuss environmental stewardship or some other pre-determined learning goal. Sasso also spoke to me as an elder in my students' lives. She awakened in me a keen sense of my responsibility to watch and listen for the stories that were yet to be told. Indeed, stories that were clamering to be told if only I would listen.

Finding Lessons About Stories in the Ordinary Activities of Life

The reader who engages this dissertation in one sitting, or at least over a short period of time, may imagine that the thoughts here came together in a similarly condensed period of time. It is important to me that I correct this misconception. One of the advantages—and disadvantages—of working on a dissertation while also teaching full time over a number of years is that I have had to set aside my dissertation for lengthy stretches to attend to teaching, and perhaps more importantly the activities of living. Teaching and being in relationship with family, friends, colleagues, and new acquaintances is the true practice of which this dissertation is only peripheral. My interest in continuing work on my dissertation has arisen in large part because the reflexivity

inherent in my process offers fresh insights to both my practice as a teacher and the larger activities of living. Indeed, I find insight and inspiration flowing in both directions. Ordinary comments in ordinary situations are rich with opportunities to share, explore, and learn.

On a late December day after I had submitted student assessments and cleaned up from holiday gatherings, I was just about to sit down to work on my dissertation when my son arrived with his sleepy 11-month old to invite me out for a walk. As I pulled on layers for the damp chill of December in the Pacific Northwest, I thought that I would be taking a short break from my studies. That was my intention, anyway.

My son pushed a stroller, and I walked to one side, occasionally speeding up a bit so that I could see my grandson, then falling back to walk alongside my son. As usual, our conversation flowed in various directions, until something he said reminded me of Santos' (2014) argument that our tendency to center the capitalist, entrepreneurial perspective should be considered a historical accident, as opposed, for example, to the result of progress or modern life (see Santos, 2014, p. 139). I felt free to bring Santos into a conversation with my son for various reasons. He has been tremendously supportive of my doctoral studies, even when it means that I am less available for babysitting. He and I have also enjoyed talking about ideas since he was in middle school—maybe even earlier. We do not always agree, but we have always appreciated the opportunity to dive deep. On this particular walk through the neighborhood where we both live, it helped that my son, a police officer in a large city, had long been a fan of history podcasts. My son listened as I tried to translate Santos' rather complicated argument, and then my son shared the connections he had made.

"It has been awhile," he shared, "but I vividly remember one of Dan Carlin's podcasts called King of Kings[45] in which Carlin talked about how different cultures would tell the story of the Battle of Thermopylae." My son looked my way to make sure that we were recalling the same story. We clearly were, so he went on, "We always tell that tale from the Greek perspective, as a tale of heroism and tremendous sacrifice. A small band of 300 Spartans take on the hopeless task of defending the narrow pass through the mountains at Thermopylae so that the other Greeks can flee south and take up defensive positions against the invading Persians." I nodded, remembering having told that version to my fifth grade students years before.

"Carlin" my son continued, "talked about how that story would have been told from different perspectives *at the time*. [According to Carlin (n.d.)] the Babylonians would have given a straightforward account of the precise date, numbers of soldiers on each side, the casualties, etc. The Hebrews would have pointed to the hubris of the Spartan leader Leonidas and used it as a parable, a cautionary tale. The Assyrians would have told the story in a dramatic, first-person account: 'Blessed by the Gods, sword held aloft, I strode through the mountains of Greece and crushed the skulls of my enemies…'"

I listened to my son's recollection and interpretations, picturing each imagined storyteller—the Babylonian, the Hebrew, the Assyrian. I couldn't help but imagine the cultural values and beliefs that would have led each storyteller to their approach. Our conversation wandered before I asked that we go back and revisit what he had shared from Carlin's podcast. "What did it mean," I fumbled, "What does it mean that Hebrew children heard the Hebrew version

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[45] See Carlin, D. (Host). King of Kings II (No. 57) [Audio podcast episode]. In *Hardcore History*. https://www.dancarlin.com/hardcore-history-57-kings-kings-ii/

of the story, and Assyrian children heard the Assyrian version? Do we simply see stories as serving to reproduce existing cultural perspective?"

Later, I would marvel at the fact that our walk through the neighborhood reflected the nature of our conversation. We were spending time together on familiar streets without the intention of arriving anywhere new. Indeed, our intention was to simply be together and enjoy some fresh air and the exchange of ideas, but those were the conditions that helped me draw connections that were tenuous at best before our walk. As the conversation progressed, we added several key observations: As my son portrayed each story, he was describing the dominant cultural story. I recalled the observations made by Kagitcibasi (2000b) about the ever changing nature of cultures and the observations made by Azuma (2000) about personal culture and the impact of individuals on culture. Not only do cultures shift and change over time, I had already come to understand, but at any given point there are dominant voices and non-dominant voices within any culture.

Now on a meandering walk to placate a sleepy but otherwise restless toddler, my son and I pondered the possibility of other narratives that coexisted with the dominant one in any given context. I recalled many occasions on which my students reminded me that they enact agency, themselves, when they interpret stories and lessons from the teacher. Far from being passive vessels to be filled at the teacher's whim, the students in my experience demonstrated—when I was paying attention—that they were integrating everything I brought to them through multiple lenses shaped and honed, I imagine, by personal experience, family and community, and the larger culture in which they were growing up. From my own classroom experience, I recalled how the larger *#Me Too* movement impacted the kinds of questions that some of my middle school students were

asking in my classroom; influenced by the conversations they were hearing at home and through the media, a few of my middle school students were quick to ask whether we could admire the contributions of an historic figure if we were confident that they had committed heinous acts during their lives. Apart from the specific position that these students advocated, these small but powerful examples of agency seemed to point to the mechanism, so to speak, by which non-dominant, counter-cultural viewpoints come to be expressed. As we walked, my son and I appreciated the budding agency that my students had employed, and we were in agreement that it would be narrow-sighted to view story telling as simple cultural reproduction.

On another day, with a cold rain tapping out its soothing beat on the roof above me, I returned to wonder what those Babylonian children that my son and I imagined would think, feel, or be inspired to do if they also heard the Hebrew and Assyrian versions of the story. Is this, I wonder, an example of the ecology of knowledges of which Santos spoke? Is this what Santos meant when he observed that different knowledges "privilege different scales of phenomena" (Santos, 2014, p. 161), each story allowing the spectator, the audience, the student to see some new aspect of the phenomena? Is this what happens in a Waldorf school when, over several years, the students hear, for example, creation stories from many different cultures and religious traditions (e.g., Abrahamic, Norse, Hindu, Potawatomi, Abenaki, Aztec, Persian, Yoruba, Greek, etc.)? And if not, how is this attempt at representation and multiculturalism insufficient to realize the promise of an ecology of knowledges? These are the kinds of questions that I will take with me into my practice as teacher and storyteller, even as I look with the intention of seeing and listen with the intention of hearing.

In my befuddlement, two sources of inspiration speak clearly to me: On one hand, Plato's Meno who had to be stripped of his overconfident bluster in order to learn something new; and, on the other hand, one remarkable line from Santos which keeps demanding a place in my thoughts: *ignorance is not necessarily an earlier stage or starting point. It may well be a point of arrival, the outcome of the forgetfulness or unlearning implied in a learning process* [emphasis added] (Santos, 2014, p. 188). I think I have arrived.

CHAPTER VI: LEADERSHIP AND CHANGE

The idea that developing the ability to see injustices is a necessary precondition of addressing those injustices is commonsensical, enough, but knowing that I need to learn to see is still vastly different from the act of seeing, itself. And so, as seasons and semesters came and went, as I helped to welcome new cohorts of graduate students to our teacher education program and revised my syllabi yet again, I looked with the intention of seeing. I looked for opportunities to learn from new voices, and I marveled at how the ordinary activities of living gifted me with fresh insights.

The Art of Shahzia Sikander and My Daughter's Insight

About the time that my daughter was thinking about her post high school plans, she, my husband and I found ourselves in Providence, Rhode Island with time to spare on a particularly frigid day, even by New England standards. An initial idea that we might walk around the campus of RISD (Rhode Island School of Design) was quickly abandoned in favor of finding a warm place to stretch our legs. Fortunately, the campus art museum was open and we took refuge from the cold, not knowing what we would find inside.

I still remember coming around the corner into one of the main galleries that morning and facing a large scroll unfurled horizontally along an inner wall. My eyes took in the whole, indefinite but infinitely detailed at first glance, the suggestion of magnificent buildings populated with tiny human figures in muted shades and in the finest brush strokes. I tried to focus and take in what was there in front of me and soon found myself looking around for the ubiquitous plaque on the wall to help me make sense of what was right there in my field of vision. Off to one side, I found not just a helpful plaque with a brief description of traditional Mughal miniature manuscript painting but a collection of handheld magnifying glasses for museum patrons to use when looking at the early work of Pakistani artist—and RISD graduate—Shahzia Sikander. My daughter, husband and I soon took up magnifying glasses and began to grasp the scope and scale of Sikander's creation. Later we would read that the large scroll-like manuscript we admired that day when we first arrived was a final graduation project, of sorts, not for Sikander's later graduate work at RISD, but for her earlier training in a classical form of Mughal miniature manuscript painting in Lahore, Pakistan (see Karmel, 2021). But Sikander's early work was only one part of the show on display that day.

As we rounded yet another corner, we were treated to work that Sikander completed after she finished her graduate work at RISD and moved to Texas in 1995 for a fellowship at the Museum of Fine Arts Houston's Glassell School of Art (Karmel, 2021). While my husband, daughter, and I still saw some of the same drawing techniques in these later works, now each canvas showed evidence of multiple revisions, additions, reworkings and overlays as if Sikander had gone back over and over to rethink, reconsider, re-member what she intended to convey. There was still evidence of traditional Mughal miniature manuscript painting techniques, but there were new images and patterns that would have seemed out of place in her earlier work—a Hindu goddess, the face of a Black man, tiny row houses side-by-side, Western-style heraldic shields.[46] My daughter and I would read later that, over an eight-year period, Sikander had returned over and over to this one particular canvas, "violating [her] own work in an attempt to unlearn and learn simultaneously" (Karmel, 2021). I did not have the language to describe what I was seeing, in artistic terms, but my daughter explained that what we were looking at might be described as allegorical since it included unlikely images juxtaposed and overlaid in curious and unfamiliar patterns. Before we left the museum that day and stepped back into the blustery winter weather, we splurged by purchasing the catalogue for Sikander's show (see Abbas & Howard, 2020). I think we sensed that we would be referring to it again.

As it happened, my daughter had been working on a project for her English teacher at the time and had not made much progress despite a looming deadline. Suspecting that the lack of

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[46] The painting by Shahzia Sikander described here, entitled "Eye-I-ing Those Armorial Bearings," caught my daughter's particular attention and became the focus of her argument for the special role of allegorical artwork in generating creative thinking in the paper that she submitted to her 11th grade English teacher.

progress might be connected to dwindling interest in her topic, I asked my daughter whether it would be worth shifting her topic a little and including some of her experiences of viewing Sikander work. My daughter was excited by the suggestion and soon had permission from her teacher. Consistent with my daughter's IEP accommodations, this was a collaborative project with my daughter sharing her questions and my helping her find sources at an appropriate [Lexile] level. She had already decided to write about creativity and the creative process in art, and I managed to dig up another article on the role of convergent and divergent thinking that seemed to fit the bill (see Botella et al., 2018). My daughter also dug through various art books that she had collected over the years and found a definition of allegorical painting, while I took up the task of reading the museum catalog we had purchased to see if there was helpful information she might reference.

Our collaboration that long weekend was not always easy. Despite having a healthy relationship with my daughter, I was reminded more than once that there is a reason that my husband and I never really considered home-schooling—nor would my daughter have agreed to it. Even so, with a deadline looming, I was trying to help as best I could. At one point, though, it felt as though I were pulling teeth. I was happy to help, but the ideas in my daughter's final paper had to be hers, after all. It didn't help that I was getting distracted by references to decolonization in the museum catalog (see Abbas & Howard, 2020), and I would have been happy to follow my own train of thought that weekend. And then, all of a sudden, my daughter spoke through the muddle of ideas as the solution became clear to her. As she explained to me, the allegorical painting created more opportunity for creative thinking—divergent and convergent thinking—as the juxtaposition of unlikely subject matter, typical of allegorical painting, forced the viewer to ask questions about why the artist had chosen such unlikely or unfamiliar combinations (Henry, 2022). This my

daughter contrasted with viewing simple representational art, which she thought would prompt admiration for beauty or skill, but which would be less likely to spark a more complex set of questions in the viewer's mind. What my daughter could not have realized was that I needed to hear just that. I needed to hear her ideas about the difference between artwork that prompts simple appreciation and artwork that engages the viewer in a creative and open-ended thought process. One more piece of the puzzle seemed to snap into place even if I could not yet make out the features of the whole. Weeks passed before I was able to sit down again to work on my dissertation, but I found myself pondering my daughter's conclusions on several occasions.

What finally came to mind is that in describing allegorical painting, my daughter was also describing the literary device of the metaphor: that is, two things that are not alike are portrayed as if they are connected or similar for literary effect (e.g., *all the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players*). In this sense, a metaphor acts to disrupt our habitual associations and create a space for new connections—and insights—to emerge. Metaphors may be rejected by some in the literature because they are deemed to take the place of what is real and substantial (Rivers, 2023; Tuck & Yang, 2012), but, in this context, I am loathe to turn my back on any technique that might be effective in disrupting assumptions and patterns of perception. I will keep the metaphors for now.

A Different Experience for Those Who See and Those Who Do Not

My practice as a teacher and storyteller demands that I expand my ability to see and hear, but as a teacher of teachers I am also interested in what learning experiences might help my students expand their ability to see and hear. I am interested in what will stimulate the kinds of complex thought process that my daughter pointed to. I want to cultivate the critical reflexivity that

may, in time, unravel assumptions and expose fallacies. As I interact with those colleagues, friends, and new acquaintances who easily see through my parable of the model community (see Chapter IV) to the abyssal thinking that sustains it, however, they reflect back to me that they find my goal frustratingly meager. In other words, for those who already see the features of coloniality, the preponderance of evidence is so overwhelming that it is hard to accept that others do not see what these colleagues, friends, and new acquaintances see with absolute clarity. Not just frustrating but even infuriating. How is it, they demand, that I / you / s/he / we / they do not see what is so obvious? Surely, they seem to bemoan, we are past the point of simply *seeing*.

Of course, some of my students do see the features of coloniality and abyssal thinking already, and they don't need any lessons from me on that particular topic. During a recent weekend session, for example, there was a question about the racism in a story sometimes told in third grade. When one participant asked about how and whether to address the racism directly, I didn't have to say much because another participant spoke eloquently about the privilege that some children enjoy that allows them to remain ignorant of racism when other children, often but not always in the same room, already know too much about racism from their own lived experience. I was there to provide affirmation, in case there was any doubt about my position on the topic, but this was an ideal example of a rich learning community model in which my students learn as much from one another as they learn from an authority figure in the room.

As I reflected on the nuanced discussion that took place in that class—much more nuanced than might be evident from my cursory account—I was reminded of the critical reflexivity called for in the literature (Denzin, 2014; Greer, 2016; Harvey & Russell-Mundine, 2018; Leigh et al., 2022; Le Roux, 2017; Root et al., 2019; Wu et al., 2018). The rich discussions that emerge in the

classroom are intended to create opportunities for critical reflexivity for my students, even as I am engaged in the practice myself. I ponder what must happen in this process for critical reflexivity to actually lead to seeing what has been rendered non-existent. I wonder, and then recalling a distinction between beliefs and ideas, I pull out my copy of Santos to find the passage in question. Sure enough, there I found the distinction that Santos (2014) attributed to José Ortega y Gasset:

> The distinction lies in the fact that beliefs are an integral part of our identity and subjectivity, whereas ideas are exterior to us. While our ideas originate from uncertainties and remain associated with them, beliefs originate in the absence of doubt. Essentially, it is a distinction between being and having: we are what we believe, but we have ideas. (as cited in Santos, 2014, p. 192)

As I ponder what might be accomplished through the activity, the discipline, the practice of critical reflexivity, I appreciate the magnitude of the task. Is there a way, I wonder, as I interrogate assumptions and try to gain perspective, *for beliefs to become ideas*—transformed from something I am to something I have—ideas that I might choose, in time, to reject because I finally see through them. For surely some—many—of the beliefs that comprise my identity are beliefs engrained in me by coloniality. Through bed time stories, classroom stories, histories, even award-winning movies that continue to perpetuate the myth of the model community, the myth of a noble, dying race, the myth of inevitability and the-way-things-are. The weight and complexity of what I imagine threatens to overwhelm me, and yet if not this, what?

Decomposing the Colonial Gaze

I turn to River's (2023) *Decomposing the Colonial Gaze: To Be Nsala's Daughter* as I grapple with what I am taking into my practice from this dissertation journey, for Rivers' approach,

like Santos' (2014), provided not only a scathing diagnosis of lives and communities torn

asunder—quite literally—by abyssal thinking, but also a generously articulated pathway for

recovering what has been lost. Interestingly, Rivers eschewed the term *decolonizing* when

describing her approach. Instead, in her quest to think, feel, and act beyond the colonial logics that

delimit the *colonial gaze* Rivers (2023) adopted the curious metaphor of decomposition:

> Like other modes of reconfiguring power, decomposing is a liberatory practice. The
>
> antithesis of composing, it is a process of learning to look for the disremembered, the
>
> unaccounted for, and, by looking for them, of offering them the dignity of being lost. And it
>
> is a matter of meditated decay, of studied and cathartic necrosis that incubates possibility in
>
> its wake. (pp. 13–14)

Even before I read further on in the text that the process of "decomposing the colonial gaze unfolds

in stages" (p. 16), I am already appreciating a smelly bouquet of words that reinforce the natural,

organic processes that I can expect: *mediated decay* then *cathartic necrosis* followed by

incubation. This will take time. This will be messy.

Enticed by the Lure of Critique

To be clear, Rivers' (2023) stated goal reaches well beyond simply recognizing abyssal

thinking and perceiving the colonial logics that delimit the colonial gaze. As I understand Rivers'

approach, learning to see the shape and boundaries of the colonial gaze allows one to see beyond

those boundaries to possibilities that were otherwise rendered invisible (p. xii). The goal of seeing

is to be moved to action. In the process of learning to see those boundaries, though, there is a risk,

argued Rivers, of being enticed and distracted by the allure of critique—of focusing all one's

energy on naming the injustices one can see. As I read, I imagine any number of the middle school

students I have taught, who, intoxicated by the heady experience of *being the cynic in the room*, cannot seem to stop, even when their sarcasm and scathing criticism shut down dialogue, collaboration, and experimentation that they, themselves, would have enjoyed. In Rivers' argument I hear echoes of Santos' (2014) assessment that "a sense of exhaustion haunts the Western, Eurocentric critical tradition" manifesting in such symptoms as "irrelevance, inadequacy, impotence, stagnation, [and] paralysis" (p. 19). Whether Rivers intends that I see this connection or not, I am persuaded that simply learning to see is not quite enough. For, learning to see, is never simply for its own sake but rather for the possibility of sustained *action* in the world—sustained, sustainable, and ultimately sustaining *action*. As Rivers (2023) explained:

> As a Black woman with the privilege of sharing my perspective, my priority for this book is to aid and abet those who counterbalance the tradition of critique with equally robust emphasis on processes that enable—indeed demand—radical shifts of perception and thus of *action* [emphasis added]. (p. xiii)

Criticism as an Early Stage in the Process. While I had already come to understand from Santos (2014) that a certain kind of formulaic and reactive criticism is actually reflective of colonial ways of thinking *on this side of the line*, Rivers (2023) helped me understand that that adolescent phase—my depiction—of criticism is just the beginning of a process—well almost the beginning. As I understand Rivers, there are two companion stages that mark the beginning of a process, stages that Rivers calls *replicate* and *contradict* which, together, mark the all-important process of facing off against the true enemy: deeply engrained patterns of perception.

> As anyone who has unraveled knows, the process begins not from without but from within. It is a matter, first and foremost, of knowing one's enemies. To be clear, in the practice of

decomposing the colonial gaze, enemies are not nouns—not people, places, or things, not even moments or laws—but habits of perception. Those conditionings that lurk behind our eyes and discipline our vision. (Rivers, 2023, p. 16)

To help the reader grasp the process, Rivers (2023) included a wealth of photographs and images, showing how workshop participants had first grappled with replicating the colonial gaze and then followed the natural impulse to contradict it. Not having experienced the full workshop, myself, I stare at these images—disarming, painful, poignant—and try to imagine the inner process each represented. I see self-expression and a measure of creativity, but only the limited creativity inherent in moving puzzle pieces around into slightly different configurations. That is, I think, what Rivers would have me see—that even though participants were making choices as they took up the gesture of contradict, the range of choices was almost meaningless as participants were only using the components made available by colonial logics. What I understand from Rivers, moreover, was that participant after participant, after initially reveling in the seeming-freedom to contradict, emboldened by the illusion of having a voice, faced a sudden crumbing façade, "seeing, for the first time, that they are collateral in the irreconcilable collision between the notion and the fact of" [fill-in-the-blank *ideal*]. Here is, after all, another set of bars—albeit gilded bars (Rivers, 2023, pp. 22–23).

This is an important place for me to pause because my reader would never guess it from what I have written here, but Rivers (2023) filled her book with stories—histories, stories of her own experience, parables, metaphors—yes, metaphors—and accounts of heated arguments. Stories complemented by images to tease, provoke, and mourn. In saying so, I realize that I still feel myself as a spectator and observer, not quite fully embodied, not quite fully present. I have also

paused because I struggle to move beyond this immature, knee-jerk tendency embodied in the gesture of contradict. Even as I bring my dissertation to a close, I feel as though I am still grappling with evidence that I am stuck at times—guilty, for example, of the righteous indignation that could not imagine for Yira land any solution other than nationhood (see Rivers, 2023).

Yet I also understand what Rivers (2023) meant when she observed that the gesture of contradict that arises from that righteous indignation is lethally impotent. Like the missionaries who were outraged at the atrocities committed in King Léopold's Congo, I often feel "a familiar reflex, an urge to redress injustice, to flex rage and ride the indignant tide of change" (p. 60) and yet I also understand that when I focus my efforts on these visible violences and campaign for reforms as though such reforms will correct an otherwise just and laudable system, then I have contributed to further cementing that system in place. That is, as long as the fundamental beneficence of the system is assumed, I am not interrogating the assumption of beneficence. I am not unearthing the causal relationship between the structures of the system and the visible violences against which I protest. Lethally impotent. Impotent because the causality behind the problem remains hidden and therefore cannot be addressed. Lethal because systems of violence continue when the causes remain unaddressed.

As Rivers (2023) reminded me, though, "to actually inhabit a world outside the gravitational forcefield of replication and contradiction requires more than analysis or rage" (p. 66). It requires the willingness to accept the system not as "the-way-things-are but rather as the predictable outcome of wretched choices" (p. 66). It is helpful to me, in this context, to consider Santos' (2014) sociology of absences and emergences. That is, retrospectively, to imagine the present as the future that resulted from specific choices in the past. A complex series of choices, to

be sure, but choices nonetheless. Rivers' point may be slightly different: that accepting the current system as the-way-things-are necessarily disguises its etiology, an awareness of which would make all the difference if we wish to avoiding making similarly wretched choices in our present.

    Moving from the Gesture of Contradict to that of Create. Here again, it is difficult to reference River's ideas without referencing the vibrant images interspersed throughout her text. To move beyond the gilded bars of replicate and contradict, Rivers (2023) announced her intention to "turn to language because it is one custodian of the capacity to imagine… the meanings [she mines] from language [being] maps of possibility" (Rivers, 2023, pp. 66–67), but for me, it is equally the images—photographs and original works of art produced by workshop leaders and participants—that give me a sense for the next stage in the process: create. Certainly, language enabled Rivers to name that which could not be seen—literally—thus giving it existence. I feel here the weight and substance of the critical nouns Rivers invoked. Ontological substance. But the art pieces have a similar weight—could they be described as allegorical, as palimpsest?

    And then I come to River's (2023) explanation of the expression *ejo lobi*, and I finally understand why Rivers invested so much confidence in the power of language to help her transgress the lines of colonial logics. From the endnotes to the chapter on *create*, I understand that the expression ejo lobi was,

> coined during a workshop on Decomposing the Colonial Gaze in Goma, DRC, when Lingala- and Kinyarwanda-speaking participants realized the similarities in their cultures' conceptions of time, which are suppressed by the imposition of European languages and laws that put neighboring groups in conflict. In defiance of these languages and laws, the term *ejo lobi* is a gesture of re-membering indigenous conceptions that pre-date (and to

some extent survived) the big jagged lines that tether people and languages to

nations-at-odds. (Rivers, 2023, p. 98 [Endnote])

I imagine the participants of that workshop explaining to one another the special nuance of

their own word for time, listening and hearing both aspects of commonality and aspects of

uniqueness. I imagine the genuine solidarity that arose from choosing to combine the two

expressions into one. As the workshop participants surely celebrated, and what I can even see, is

that the conception of time held in ejo lobi gives me a glimpse into a worldview that does not

follow colonial logics, in this case the colonial logic of linear time and progress.

Given the precarious fate of that which exists outside the lines of progress, I cling

ferociously to *ejo lobi*. The meaning I extract may well surpass its colloquial, even poetic

jurisdiction. But I turn to language not to confine but to imagine, to create. Mining *ejo lobi*

has taught me that to see—much less to create—a world in which dismemberment is not

inevitable has everything to do with how we choose to understand and occupy time. Like so

many unwilling prisoners of colonial logic, I have long understood that time measured in

terms of output inevitably yields extinction. The consecrated sacrilege of *ejo lobi* is the

reminder that there are other ways to measure time; that the line so urgently in need of

transgression is the one created by gluttonous delusions of the dictums of progress. (Rivers,

2023, pp. 70–71)

The notion of time contained in ejo lobi, moreover, strikes me as exactly the kind of device that

Wu et al. (2018) used in their practice of provincialization (as discussed in Chapter II), and I can

only imagine whether Rivers might see the parallel as well. Like ejo lobi, Taoism and Ubuntu

provided that window into a worldview that does not conform to colonial logics. It is less clear

whether Rivers would join Wu et al. in their assessment that provincializing the Western worldview is sufficient to disrupt hegemonic relationships. Somehow, I doubt it.

Getting Stuck Before the Final Stage: Love

There is one final stage in Rivers' process of decomposing the colonial gaze: after *replicate*, *contradict*, and *create* comes *love*. The difficulty for me is that Rivers' (2023) monograph is also a ghost story, and I have not developed the ability to see the dead. Yet. I read and reread words on a page and, while I read with fluency and am able to define all the words I have read, I know that I simply do not fully understand. I both understand and don't understand *the door of no return*. I both understand and don't understand *every last scrap of illusion*. I think I understand what it means to transgress, but I don't know what it would look like to "decompose the cardinal pillars on which colonial logic stands" (p. 75). I think I understand the hostages of colonial logic, but I am haunted by the notion that seeing the dead leaves orphans in its wake, including wonder. And, yet I do not simply walk away. I cannot walk away because I, too, have questions like: "What are the cardinal pillars of a worldview that actually sustains life?" (Rivers, 2023, p. 78). I, too, have questions like: "If to see is not to believe but rather to create, then how and who and where and what and why do I choose to see?" (Rivers, 2023, p. 79). I wonder.[47]

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[47] As reflected in the body of this section, I felt insecure about my understanding of Rivers' (2023) chapter on love. While I leave the text above as an authentic reflection of the insecurity and humility I felt when I was writing Chapter VI, I have made a breakthrough in my understanding in subsequent weeks. In conversation, Rivers pointed to the definition she offers of love in the context of decomposing the colonial gaze (namely, "to love is to dismember every last trace of the colonial gaze…to create infinite ways, big and small, to exist outside the fortress of [colonial] lines" (pp. 85-86). She hinted, too, where she sees glimpses of such love in my actions, when, for example, I chose to bring my whole self (e.g., fully embracing my spirituality as an integral part of my entire being (thinking, feeling, and willing)) to this academic project even when to do so could easily leave me vulnerable to ridicule and criticism, or, as another example, when I chose—and continue to choose—to challenge the conventional conversation about diversity that I encounter in my professional life even though to do so flies in the face of well-meaning DEIJB+ efforts sponsored by respected colleagues (C. Rivers, personal communication, March 5, 2024). If this is what Rivers means when she describes love as "fierce" as marked by "feral-willed allegiance" (p. 84) then I think I understand. And what I

Admitting That I Still Do Not Know

I have known for some time that I would end my dissertation—the culminations of many years of work—with some version of *I still do not know*. Years have passed since I arrived at set of burning questions about the role of narratives in perpetuating coloniality:

1. *How do teachers, including myself, take up both the deep inner work and outwardly visible work of identifying the narratives, implicit and explicit, in our classrooms and curricula that perpetuate patterns of coloniality?*

2. *How do we come to understand the ways that we can disrupt the narratives that perpetuate coloniality and then do so in creative and generative ways?*

3. *How do we reveal, curate, and enact the narratives that have the power to heal and transform our classrooms, communities, and culture[48] in the wake of centuries of coloniality, while leaving the children we teach in freedom to come to their own understandings and meet a future yet to unfold?*

Over almost four years, these questions have inspired and shaped classroom presentations, faculty workshops, professional development offerings, a keynote address, outreach to various community groups, and countless advising sessions with students who are working on their master's projects. I still think these are the questions I should be asking, but not because I anticipate coming to tidy answers—I do not. Rather, I think these are still the questions I should be asking because the last

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understand is that love of this nature comes with a sense that there is no other choice, not because one lacks free will but because choosing not to act is choosing to be knowingly complicit in colonial violence. Put in the positive, love, in the logic of decomposing, is "a matter of re-membering … a worldview that can actually sustain life" (p. 85). It is Infinite. Unwaivering. Ready to take on any obstacle. I understand.

[48] When I first formulated these research questions, I did not notice that I had carelessly made reference to "culture" as though culture were something singular and monolithic. When I share versions of this question in future projects, I will be sure to use the plural form.

few years have demonstrated that these questions ignite conversation, they probe tender feelings,

and they leave lingering doubts in their wake. I have come to understand that they are too

simplistic, too tidy, too transactional, and too linear in their formulation, but in their

simplistic-tidy-transactional-linearity, they land with certain clarity. They have proven to capture

the imagination and prompt deep questions even for those teachers who *do not yet see*.

As I modelled in Chapter II with Teresi (2002) and the Greek miracle hypothesis, I have

been examining stories that I have used in the classroom for patterns of colonial thinking. While I

find this practice helpful, I also recognize that the task at hand is far more complex than identifying

the *problematic* language or the elements of coloniality in this story or that. Nor does it help for me

to denounce the stories that I have found to be problematic, as though eliminating these stories

from our classrooms will somehow counteract the hegemonic relationships inherent in

coloniality—it will not. The pathway, and process, that Santos (2014) and Rivers (2023)

illuminated requires a messy, creative process and the application of what Santos called a

sociological imagination. A simple list of stories to avoid casts us into the very pitfall of which

Rivers (2023) warned, when, giddy with the illusion of efficacy and social justice, I get caught up

in the impotent gesture of contradict.

I should clarify that I think teachers working together and with guidance can *approach*

answers to all three of these questions on a practical level, though always with the sense that the

answers are emergent, becoming clearer upon reflection, sometimes needing to be brought back to

the proverbial table for a fresh examination, and always in the larger context of both critical

reflexivity and an effort to transgress the boundaries of colonial ways of thinking. When, in

Chapter V, I shared my aspirations for working alongside mid-career teachers to re-map the

curriculum for their classrooms and their schools, I had every confidence that teachers who have been carefully observing and striving to meet the deep soul-spiritual needs of the children in their care for years, will have the insight and inner resources to work with narratives in fresh and meaningful ways once they are engaged in the creative, imaginative endeavor of learning how to see. Especially given the prospect of collaboration with other experienced teachers, the teachers with whom I have shared my aspirations are excited about moving from theory to practice. They express enthusiasm for what this would mean for the schools and the children in their communities. I may not have arrived at the kind of answers that one gathers into a conclusion, but practical solutions to all three questions are already being hammered out, case-by-case, as conscientious teachers strive to meet the needs of their students. I applaud the work that is already taking place, here and there, and I also envision a way for this work to both include more teachers and school communities, on the one hand, and not happen at the expense of teachers' well-being, on the other.

There is a measure of vulnerability and humility that goes with the admission that I don't have clear answers for the questions that I set out to explore, but I am discovering that arriving at tidy answers does not necessarily make me a better teacher. As I have already observed, those who already see beyond the illusions created by colonial ways of thinking will not have much use for my work. I do hope, however, that my work will reach those, like myself, who have struggled—perhaps continue to struggle—to recognize abyssal thinking and patterns of coloniality in every aspect of our lives. Those, like myself, who sometimes fail to see what is right in front of us because we have been conditioned not to see. Those, like myself, who get caught up in the heady illusion of efficacy when we protest, petition, and critique. Those, like myself, who need to be

reminded that the solidarity to which Santos (2014) aspired turns toxic when, in my fiery resolve, I fail to acknowledge, even ignore, the etiology of the injustices I protest (see Rivers, 2023).

Looking for Evidence of Leadership

Perhaps I should be concerned that the faculty of a graduate program dedicated to leadership and change will not be able to sign off on a dissertation that does not attempt to provide clear answers for the research questions set out in the beginning. While I have spoken often of change in this dissertation, is there sufficient evidence of leadership? It is interesting to reflect back on the models of leadership I have been asked to consider as part of my doctoral studies. I also recall that the very first assignment I wrote for the faculty was a reflective leadership essay in which I explored the experience of leadership and change that I brought with me into the program.

Humility in Leadership, Humility as Leadership

When I wrote my reflective leadership essay (RLE) for the PHDLC program, I explored the intertwining narratives that I can trace in my life, narratives of both unqualified success and stunning failure. I concluded that to trace these as separate narratives is to miss the fact that they are inextricably connected, that they inform one another and contribute in equal measure to who I am. In the end, my RLE was about humility. I explored humility as the natural and honest response to the reality that my life will continue to be marked by both successes and failures. Sometimes I will get it right. At other times, I will look back with wonder at previously held convictions and marvel at how mistaken I was. Following this line of thought in my RLE, I looked at the ways in which a certain kind of humility is a precondition for learning—just imagine the difference between the student who is convinced that she already has it all figured out and one who wonders

what she may be missing. And, to the extent that humility may be an essential aspect of having a learning orientation, humility may also be essential to effective leadership and change.

Here, at the end of my dissertation journey, I find myself recalling yet another assignment that I completed as a PHDLC student. Two years into the program, I was asked to write on my understanding of the nature of leadership. With permission from the faculty, I chose to look at how the virtue of humility is reflected in influential leadership theories and related research over the past half century. As I will comment on below, as well, going back to those earlier assignments is eye-opening in a number of ways. Not only do I notice assumptions of which I was completely unaware at the time, but the strict formality of the language I used reminds me of how much I was trying to conform to the expectations of the program—more on this later.[49]

It turned out that the timing of my project on humility was fortuitous because the John Templeton Foundation (JTF) had awarded almost $4 million in grants in 2011 to support research on intellectual humility, and by the time of my inquiry the JTF's investment had already begun "to pay off in books, chapters, and refereed journal articles" (Barrett, 2017, p. 2). I was able to take advantage of that wave of fresh research even as I looked back to trace evidence of humility in the literature on Servant Leadership (Greenleaf, 1977), Level 5 Leadership (Collins, 2001), Authentic Leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005), and Humble Leadership (Owens & Hekman, 2012).

Even as I was unaware of a range of unspoken assumptions, I still appreciated the opportunity to see what scholars thought of a concept that had long intrigued me. Barrett (2017)

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[49] At the time I did not qualify the scope of my inquiry, but all the literature I considered was produced within the Western research academy, and entirely in the English language. Nor did I specify that the scope of my inquiry was limited to leadership models accepted in what I grew up calling Corporate America, and the schools of business that support that same worldview.

noted a range of competing definitions of humility, in general,[50] but my attention was caught by

Wright et al.'s (2017) two-part definition of humility with both an epistemic and an ethical

dimension. On the one hand, they described humility as a "state of existential awareness" in which

one is aware of one's modest place in relation to an infinitely larger whole. On the other hand, they

described humility as a "state of extended compassion" in which one places herself as only one of

many equally worthy beings, with no more claim than others to distinction and value (pp. 4–5). To

support their definition, Wright et al. referenced not only their research on commonly held

conceptions of humility but a "new, and recently validated, humility scale" (p. 5), both of which

correlated to earlier 2015 research that resulted in their operationalizing humility as being

distinguished by (1) low self-focus, and (2) high other-focus. It's interesting to look back and

realize what I didn't see then—the non-hegemonic relationships between worldviews and lived

experience. When I think about what might be required for one to embrace Santos' (2014)

conception of an ecology of knowledges, I feel the value of humility keenly.

Servant Leadership Theory. I think about what may be relevant here, as I consider

whether my dissertation reflects qualities of leadership—as it has been defined in the literature of

the Western academy—and I find myself drawn to the leadership behaviors that were documented

in the literature on each of those theories of leadership, especially with regard to humility. In the

case of Servant Leadership theory,[51] van Dierendonck et al. (2014) observed that Greenleaf

characterized the Servant leader as one who prioritizes the well-being and development of his [*sic*]

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[50] While it may be true that intellectual humility is a construct distinct from humility, in general (Krumrei-Mancuso & Rouse, 2016, p. 209), maintaining the distinction has limited value in a review of the literature when earlier scholars conflated the two constructs in ways that are not always easy to discern.

[51] See Eicher-Catt (2005) for a scathing critique of Greenleaf's Servant Leadership model, including the description of the theory as "insidiously religious, patriarchal, and oppressive" (p. 18).

followers (p. 547) and the litmus test for whether a Servant leader was successful could be found by answering the fundamental question: "Do those served grow as persons?" (Greenleaf as cited in van Dierendonck et al., 2014, p. 547). It was Chughtai (2016) who commended van Dierendonck for reducing a list of forty-four possible attributes that define the Servant leader down to the six characteristics: "Specifically, servant leaders: empower and develop their followers; demonstrate humility; are authentic; accept people for who they are; provide guidance and direction; and are stewards who work for the betterment of the whole society" (Chughtai, 2016, pp. 867–868; see also van Dierendonck, 2011, p. 1232). While I see shadows of the monopolistic appropriation of possible spectator perspectives (see Santos, 2014, pp. 145, 150) in the authors' extrapolation from business settings to the "whole society," I am still curious to see a full account of what was imagined to be the contribution of so-called Servant Leaders.

In his review of the literature van Dierendonck (2011) found that the characteristic of humility encompassed in Servant Leadership theory had several dimensions:

> [Humility] refers to the ability to put one's own accomplishments and talents in a proper perspective (Patterson, 2003). Servant-leaders dare to admit that they can benefit from the expertise of others. They actively seek the contributions of others. Humility shows in the extent to which a leader puts the interest of others first, facilitates their performance, and provides them with essential support. It includes a sense of responsibility (Greenleaf, 1996) for persons in one's charge. Humility is also about modesty; a servant-leader retreats into the background when a task has been successfully accomplished. (van Dierendonck, 2011, p. 1233)

Among the other five characteristics noted by van Dierendonck (2011), interpersonal acceptance is also worthy of note because its operationalization bears a striking resemblance to that of intellectual humility:

> Interpersonal acceptance includes the perspective-taking element of empathy that focuses on being able to cognitively adopt the psychological perspectives of other people and experience feelings of warmth, compassion, and forgiveness in terms of concern for others even when confronted with offences, arguments, and mistakes. For servant-leaders it is important to create an atmosphere of trust where people feel accepted, are free to make mistakes, and know that they will not be rejected (Ferch, 2005). (van Dierendonck, 2011, p. 1234)

Level 5 Leadership Theory. I went back to see what I had written about each of these leadership theories in that earlier assignment, but now I find myself pausing—gasping—at all the assumptions that I left unchallenged. How is it that I didn't comment on the fact that every theory I wrote about, not to mention the empirical research used to support those theories, is placed in the setting of corporate America. Nowhere was this more evident than my first paragraph on Level 5 Leadership. I wrote: When Jim Collins (2005) coined the term Level 5 Leadership almost two decades ago, humility was a central factor in the success of those whom Collins identified as great leaders. Along with fierce resolve,[52] humility emerged as a clear antecedent to the leadership that allowed the CEO's of 11 Fortune 500 companies to outperform their counterparts in a sustained and dramatic way (Caldwell et al., 2017; Collins, 2005). Collins (2005) reminded us that when he

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[52] Caldwell et al. (2017) credited Angela Duckworth's 2016 book, *GRIT*, with providing insight into the *fierce resolve* that Collins identifies as a key element in Level 5 Leadership.

first published his findings in 2001, a wave of corporate scandals had not yet risen to the surface and "almost everyone believed that CEOs should be charismatic, larger-than-life figures. Collins was the first to blow that belief out of the water" (p. 2). Instead of focusing on headline-grabbing, celebrity-like leaders, he championed the leadership records of lesser known CEOs who combined the "paradoxical combination of deep personal humility with intense professional will" (Collins, 2005, p. 1).

In that earlier assignment, I was so focused on the qualities assigned to various theories of leadership, and the evidence of humility among them, that I failed to notice the narrow worldview, the narrow range of lived experience, in which these theories are inscribed. And, yet, Collins is credited not with a theory of leadership *in Corporate America*, but a theory of leadership *in general*. I sigh and wonder at myself. Instead of questioning this fundamental assumption at the time, however, I dutifully noted the qualities of the Level 5 Leader attributable to or connected with humility:

Collins (2005) described leaders who were "shy, unpretentious, even awkward"; others were both gracious and stoic in the face of setbacks (p. 3). They may not have been flashy enough to capture headlines, but they demonstrated the "hedgehog-like" determination not to be distracted from their company's goal (p. 6):

> [The Level 5 leader] demonstrates a compelling modesty, shunning public adulation; never boastful. Acts with quiet, calm determination; relies principally on inspired standards, not inspiring charisma, to motivate. Channels ambition into the company, not the self; sets up successors for even more greatness in the next generation. (Collins, 2005, p. 7)

As Collins documented the remarkable sustainability of Level 5 Leadership, one consequence warranted special note: the success of companies led by Level 5 Leaders consistently survived the departure of a Level 5 Leader precisely because Level 5 leaders were particularly successful at picking their own successors. This was in stark contrast to Level 4 Leaders whose egotism got in the way of their ability to usher in a successor with the capacity to take the company to the next level:

> Because Level 5 leaders have ambition not for themselves but for their companies, they routinely select superb successors. Level 5 leaders want to see their companies become even more successful in the next generation and are comfortable with the idea that most people won't even know that the roots of that success trace back to them… By contrast, Level 4 leaders often fail to set up the company for enduring success. After all, what better testament to your own personal greatness than that the place falls apart after you leave? (pp. 8–9)

I include this evidence of my earlier exploration, but I am not sure what I make of it now. My intention is not to disregard places of business as a valid arena in which leadership is exercised, but I am also not quick to assume that the leadership styles that serve the success of Fortune 500 companies tell me much about the style of leadership to which I aspire. For now, I continue to share what I wrote in that early assignment.

Authentic Leadership Theory. As I wrote for my paper on humility in leadership theories, Northouse (2013) traced the roots of Authentic Leadership theory to the social upheaval of the preceding two decades—fear and uncertainty created by the 9/11 attacks, corporate scandals and a global financial crisis. Like proponents of Servant Leadership, then, proponents of Authentic

Leadership seek ethical leadership in the wake of dysfunction and failure in existing structures. As Luthans and Avolio (2003) explained, organizations seeking a reason for renewed optimism and confidence in the face such fear and uncertainty turn to leaders who can allay their concerns. According to Avolio and Gardner (2005), times of crisis renew interest in "genuine leadership" (p. 316). In this context, the construct of Authentic Leadership took shape.

As described in the narrow range of literature I considered, the Authentic leader meets the demand of organizations in times of turmoil by answering the need for ethical leadership (Luthans & Avolio, 2003; Northouse, 2013). "The authentic leader is confident, hopeful, optimistic, resilient, transparent, moral/ethical, future-oriented, and gives priority to developing associates to be leaders" (Luthans & Avolio, 2003, p. 241). Unlike Servant Leadership, Authentic Leadership theory does not make any obvious mention of humility. That said, a careful reading of Luthans and Avolio's (2003) components of Authentic Leadership reveals many of the same elements of humility that will be fleshed out when, a decade later, Humble Leadership was developed as a theory of leadership in its own right. What seems consistent throughout, though, is the interest in ethical leadership when crisis and uncertainty impact the world of corporate business. In such a climate, stakeholders at all levels desire "a renewed focus on restoring confidence, hope, and optimism; being able to rapidly bounce back from catastrophic events and display resiliency; [and] helping people in their search for meaning and connection by fostering a new self-awareness" (Avolio & Gardner, 2005, p. 316), all of which are central to the mission of the Authentic leader. According to Schedlitzki and Edwards (2014), Authentic Leadership developed out of the Transformational Leadership paradigm as an alternative response to the need for ethics in leadership. Luthans and Avolio (2003) cited multiple sources to document the various leadership

and behavioral constructs, including Transformational Leadership, that converge in Authentic Leadership:

> authentic leadership best represents the confluence of positive organizational behavior (POB) (Luthans, 2002a, 2002b), transformational/full-range leadership (FRL), or the high-end of FRL (Avolio, 1999, 2002), and work on ethical and moral perspective-taking capacity and development (Schulman, 2002), which is at the core of what drives transformational leadership (Avolio & Gibbons, 1988; Kegan, 1982; Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987). (p. 243)

But while Authentic Leadership is clearly related to Transformational Leadership, there are also clear distinctions to be made. Luthans and Avolio (2003) cited the work of Burns (1978) and Bass (1985) to argue that igniting change through charismatic leadership is fundamental to the theory of Transformational Leadership, while neither charisma nor change is a requirement of successful Authentic Leadership (p. 246). The successful Authentic leader may or may not be charismatic; the successful Authentic leader's tenure may or may not be marked by transformative change. Further, Authentic Leadership goes well beyond Transformational Leadership in cultivating positive organizational behaviors and all the strategic advantages of POBs (Luthans & Avolio, 2003, p. 246).

Servant Leadership and Authentic Leadership not only share common cultural antecedents, as noted above, they also overlap in their operationalization. Van Dierendonck (2011) noted that while Authentic Leadership presupposes transparency and consistency between a leader's inner thoughts and their outer presentation (see Luthans & Avolio, 2003, p. 248), there is also the presumption that the Authentic leader is highly ethical, has an open mind and is willing to change,

themselves (p. 1236). Here again one can note that even though the word humility is not expressly used in this context, both open-mindedness and willingness to change are central to the concept of intellectual humility as it has been developed in the past decade. Van Dierendonck (2011) certainly had no compunction about placing humility squarely as a part of the Authentic Leadership construct, and it is there that he found the overlap between Authentic Leadership and Servant Leadership (p. 1236). He went further in saying that humility, authenticity and open-mindedness are critical to the success of leaders who seek to create a safe psychological climate in which employees—followers—can learn and grow (p. 1247). This strategic advantage would be shared by Servant leaders and Authentic leaders.

Nevertheless, although both Servant Leadership and Authentic Leadership share a strong moral component, Authentic leaders do not necessarily share the Servant leader's preoccupation with promoting the growth of followers for the follower's own sake, irrespective of the impact on the larger organization. Chughtai (2016) cited multiple sources when he concluded that despite the overlap between Servant Leadership and Authentic Leadership, Authentic Leadership does not share the same concern about the needs of individual stakeholders (p. 868). Luthans and Avolio (2003) characterized the focus of Authentic leaders as including ethical action and a respect for the contribution of each individual (p. 248), but a respect for individuals, however laudable, is not the same as putting the growth and needs of individuals first. So, even though the Authentic leaders may be transparent about their own shortcomings and deeply interested in the development of their followers, they are also unapologetic about leading "from the front" (Luthans & Avolio, 2003, pp. 248–249) and prioritizing the good of the whole. Given what will later be developed in Humble Leadership theory, the most interesting aspect of Authentic Leadership is the expectation that

leaders not only exhibit an accurate self-awareness of their strengths and weaknesses but that they also practice relational transparency (e.g., they reveal their accurate self-appraisal to others).

I pause again and reflect on how I interpret the literature from my current perspective. I am reminded of the parable of the model community, shared in Chapter IV, and wonder to what degree the ethical behavior of the Authentic leader, for example, exists only on this side of the proverbial line. To what extent, I wonder, is the "good of the whole" synonymous with the conditions that reproduce a certain complement of hegemonic relationships governed by River's (2023) cardinal pillars of colonial logic: "faith, commerce, law, and science" (p. 45)? If the standard of ethical behavior touted in the literature leads me to participate in the status quo without examining what normalized violences are contained in that status quo, am I not further perpetuating those violences?

As I combed over the paper I wrote for that earlier assignment, I also noticed that in each of the subheadings instead of writing "Servant Leadership Theory," "Level 5 Leadership Theory," "Authentic Leadership Theory," etc. I left out the word theory altogether. So that instead of being clear that I was writing about the theories of each kind of leadership, my headings suggest that I was writing more directly about leadership, itself, unmediated by theory. While it is true that the JTL funding resulted in numerous empirical studies in which actual behaviors were documented, it also seems to me that the omission was an oversight worth noting. As I ponder the significance, I think of Rivers' (2023) disavowal of the distance required—even only the distance of an arm's length—to contemplate theory when there are human bodies, human lives to be considered. I think of Santos' (2014) assessment of the inadequacy and irrelevance of [critical] theory which contributes to what he calls "the ghostly relationship between theory and practice" (see p. 34). I

have made my own argument, of course, for thinking of theory as the story I tell myself to make sense of it all. For now, though, I look back to what I presented as "Humble Leadership."

Humble Leadership Theory. For Humble Leadership, as a theory of leadership in and of itself, the scholarship is newest of all. Indeed, scholarship in the field of humility and Humble Leadership even in the past 10 years is still grappling with contradictory definitions and a gap between common notions of humble behavior and a notion of humility as a virtue (Walters & Diab, 2016). But, as Owens and Hekman (2012) pointed out, although there remain conflicting pictures of what Humble Leadership looks like in practice, there is increasing agreement about the benefits in how leaders view themselves, others, and new ideas; the humble leader views themselves more objectively, others more appreciatively, and new ideas more openly (p. 789). The lived experience of humble leader behavior, moreover, includes "catalyzing and reinforcing mutual leader-follower development by eagerly and publicly… engaging in the messy process of learning and growing" (p. 801). In other words, humble leaders demonstrate and normalize the process of striving, occasionally making errors and learning and growing from experience. Even from my current perspective, here at the end of my dissertation journey, I appreciate this notion of normalizing the process of striving, sometimes failing but continuing nonetheless. This still rings true for me, and seems less constrained by the pillars of colonial logics. While it is certainly possible to get caught up in a narrow range of striving entirely on this side of the line, the normalization of striving, failing, learning, and trying yet again also serves the pathways and processes that Santos (2014) and Rivers (2023) illuminated. In other words, although leadership according to this definition of humble leadership does not necessarily lead to decomposing of the pillars of colonial logics or engagement in the sociology of absences and emergences, it is also not inconsistent with those

pathways and processes. I can even imagine how this kind of humility might lead to the process of letting deeply engrained beliefs become mere ideas—as I pondered above—ideas one can eventually discard when one begins to see. As such, I look back with some interest at the advantages that I had already attached to leader humility.

Benefits of Leader Humility Across All Four Theories. Looking beyond the limits of any one theory of leadership, I imagined that it would be helpful to outline the benefits that would seem to follow directly from leader humility. Drawing from what had been articulated in the literature I reviewed for that earlier project, I identified several distinct but interrelated benefits:

- positive organizational behavior on the part of employees and leaders

- safe psychological spaces for employees conducive to high level of trust

- normalizing a learning environment for leaders and employees

- broad set of ethical behaviors on the part of the leader

- openness to new ideas on the part of leaders

Recent empirical research on intellectual humility, moreover, suggested even farther reaching benefits. Krumrei-Mancuso (2017) pointed to research that revealed that "intellectual humility was associated with higher levels of empathy, gratitude, altruism, benevolence, and universalism,[53] and lower levels of power [seeking]" (pp. 18–19). Indeed, research found strong correlations between

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[53] While the literature I reviewed problematized usage of the terms *universalizing* and *universality* as ways that modern Western colonialism silences alternative worldviews, the term *universalism* is used quite differently within the literature on positive psychology, in general, and intellectual humility, in particular. In that context, Krumrei-Mancuso (2017) listed universalism along with altruism, benevolence, and less-power-seeking as positive social atitudes and values to which intellectual humility is theoretically relevant. Krumrei-Mancuso further cited Schwartz (1992) to argue that "benevolence and universalism involve placing value on the welfare of others, with … universalism involving a broader focus on the welfare of all people and even nature" (Schwartz, as cited in Krumrei-Mancuso, 2017, p. 14). Regardless, the literature I reviewed would place Krumrei-Mancuso and Schwartz's usage as examples of the colonial enterprise (see also de Oliveira, 2021).

intellectual humility and a broad range of prosocial behaviors including "greater open-mindedness, tolerance, and reparation of damaged social bonds" (Krumrei-Mancuso, 2017, p. 25). On a practical level—clearly focused on corporate business settings—these prosocial behaviors generated specific strategic advantages. Caldwell et al. (2017) found that the followers of leaders who exhibited these prosocial behaviors were "much more likely to achieve their highest potential, serve their organizations more effectively, and demonstrate the extra-mile customer service and innovative commitment *so badly need in today's globally competitive world* [emphasis added]" (p. 731). They noted that Vera and Rodriguez-Lopez came to a similar conclusion in 2004: that humility constituted a "*competitive advantage* [emphasis added] by enabling individuals to earn the trust of others" (Caldwell et al., 2017, p. 726). To paint the picture more broadly, Krumrei-Mancuso (2017) made the case that the prosocial behaviors associated with humility are, fundamentally, "relevant to interpersonal functioning and crucial to the health of societies" (p. 13). The ease with which these authors move from business advantages to larger societal advantages should perhaps be unsurprising. I will admit a measure of skepticism but, I trust, the healthy skepticism of one who is aware of too many assumptions unquestioned in the past.

Even having accepted evidence of a correlation between humility and prosocial outcomes in that earlier project, I was aware of important questions left unanswered. Krumrei-Mancuso (2017) explored two possible mediation models to explain the causal relationship, if any, between humility and a range of prosocial behaviors. They considered both a "unity of virtue theory" in which humility and other prosocial virtues co-exist without any specific causal relationship, and also a "broaden-and-build theory" in which these virtues attract and build upon one another. Significantly, both *perspective-taking empathy* and *gratitude* "mediated links between intellectual

humility and greater altruism, benevolence, and universalism" (Krumrei-Mancuso, 2017, p. 25).

That said, the findings were consistent with both of the mediation models under review (p. 26), and

no clear causality could be determined. Another possibility suggested by the research, however,

was that "intellectual humility may be an explanatory variable in understanding prosociality" (p.

25). If so, then leaders who are inclined toward humility are motivated by their natural tendency

toward empathy and gratitude to adopt a broad range of prosocial behaviors. Wright et al. (2017)

took their conclusions in the same direction when they observed that "humility should be

considered a 'foundational' virtue, necessary (though not sufficient) for the full development of

other virtues, and of virtuous character more generally" (p. 8).

    In that earlier assignment, I concluded that the close connection between humility and

empathy deserved further exploration, moreover, because of the implications for building the

capacity for inclusion. Importantly, Krumrei-Mancuso (2017) found ample evidence to suggest that

"being humble with regard to one's own perspective may be a precursor to being willing and able

to understand the perspective of another, thereby promoting empathetic concern" (p. 15). As such,

humility creates the conditions for inclusion and tolerance (Ferdman & Deane, 2014, p. 30).

Krumrei-Mancuso (2017) developed this line of thought even further:

> Krumrei-Mancuso and Rouse (2016) found that intellectual humility predicted open-minded
>
> thinking and tolerance toward diverse people and ideas, even after controlling [for] social
>
> desirability tendencies and demographic factors. Thus, by promoting open-mindedness and
>
> tolerance, intellectual humility is likely to positively influence social interactions,
>
> particularly in pluralistic societies. (pp. 15–16)

As I concluded in my earlier paper, the implications for contemporary society could not be more profound or timely. Far from being a dry academic concept, humility may well be the missing ingredient in contexts where inclusion and cultural competence are elusive. Ferdman (2013) described this essential ingredient in the context of helping physicians develop cultural competence, noting that humility is what spurs "individuals [to] continually engage in self-reflection and self-critique as lifelong learners and reflective practitioners" (p. 118). It is humility, therefore, that fuels the reflective practice that results in cultural competence and an attitude of inclusion.

The mechanism by which humility results in inclusive behavior has equally profound implications. As Krumrei-Mancuso (2017) explained, "qualities of intellectual humility, such as having a non-defensive stance toward one's beliefs, openness to revising one's viewpoint, and respect for others' viewpoints, are qualities that are likely to promote genuine curiosity about and acceptance of others" (p. 15). The empathy and curiosity that naturally results from intellectual humility, moreover, "should result in people not merely tolerating others, but valuing them for their otherness, leading to greater gratitude for them" (p. 15). This is particularly poignant in light of research that demonstrates that empathy and perspective taking are critical in reducing prejudice and creating the foundation for cultural inclusion (Ferdman, 2013, p. 190). Indeed, however counterintuitive it may seem, Ferdman (2013) found that empathy and perspective taking are more effective in counteracting biases and reducing prejudice than intergroup contact or learning about other cultures (p. 190). Again, the implications for business and education alone are profound. The most effective path to inclusive workspaces and classrooms may be to foster intellectual humility, and thereby the empathy, curiosity, and perspective taking required to approach the unfamiliar with

an open mind. Guskin (1991) went on to define *cultural humility* as "respecting the validity of other peoples' cultures, questioning the primacy of our own perspective, and recognizing that we may not know what is really going on!" (as cited in Ferdman, 2013). Even now, I cannot help but think that this form of humility is essential to the pathways and processes that Santos (2014) and Rivers (2023) illuminated, even if the exercise of humility begins on this side of the line.

  Humility as a Teachable Quality. Given the fact that scholars have debated whether humility is a state of being or a character trait, I thought it germane at this juncture to ask whether humility can be taught at all. If humility is simply a character trait that one is born with, or not, there may be little hope for educators and business leaders who want to foster inclusion through cultural humility. Krumrei-Mancuso (2017) cited reassuring evidence that specific interventions can, indeed, develop intellectual humility. Kross and Grossmann (2012) explained that "intellectual humility can be induced by asking individuals to reason about personally meaningful issues from a psychologically distanced perspective, meaning that participants were asked to imagine events unfolding as if they were a distant observer" (as cited in Krumrei-Mancuso, 2017, p. 15). There are also promising applications for writing therapy tools that would guide participants to greater perspective taking and humility (Wright et al., 2017, p. 9). The most significant take-away from this research has less to do with specific techniques, and more to do with resolving the question of whether humility can be taught. Clearly more work is needed to flesh out the possibilities for teaching / developing humility. What is clear, though, is that there is a precedent to show that humility is a teachable quality. To these techniques, I am compelled to add the kind of engagement with non-Western, non-colonial concepts like ejo lobi (see Rivers, 2023)*,* Taoism, and Ubuntu (see Wu et al., 2018). In providing a window into a worldview that does not conform to colonial logics,

these concepts serve the all-important purpose of disrupting habitual patterns in thinking. They serve the purpose of adding fresh insight to perturb possibilities and allow for creative and imaginative engagement. Without humility, I contend, there is no hope of the kind of leadership or change that undermines, decomposes, defies, or sees beyond the architecture of abyssal thinking and coloniality.

The Humility Needed for Rearguard Theorizing

As a form of introduction to his monograph, Santos (2014) included both a manifesto for good living—*buen vivir*[54]—and a minifesto for intellectuals and activists. This part of the book tripped me up for some time as my eye did not pick up on the font change that distinguished the manifesto—printed on the even numbered pages—from the minifesto—printed on the odd numbered pages. The manifesto is written in the first person plural, and is situated firmly on the other side of the line, informed as it is by Santos' deep involvement in the "World Social Forum [WSF] and … the struggles of the indigenous peoples of Latin America" (p. 7) and other representatives of the global South (p. 2). The minifesto, by contrast, is written in both the first person and the third person perspective and is clearly directed at scholars and intellectuals based in the West—Santos can identify with both sides of the line, after all. My mentor was kind enough to recommend this early section of the book only after I had read through Santos' account of abyssal thinking, his case for a sociology of absences and a sociology of emergences, his argument for ecologies of knowledges, and even the process of intercultural translation—not explored in this

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[54] According to Santos (2014) "the concept of good living/buen vivir derives from the Quechua word *sumac kawsay* and is central to the conception of social emancipation whose epistemological foundations are laid out in [his] book" (p. 2). As I understand the connections Santos drew, good living can be summarized as living with dignity (see p. 6).

dissertation. I do not know what I would have made of the minifesto, directed so precisely at me, had I not followed Santos' argument to its end. Now, as I ponder the role of humility in leadership and decoloniality, however, I know just how the minifesto speaks to me. While Santos (2014) wrote about the ghostly relationship between theory of practice in the body of his monograph, it is here in the minifesto that Santos revealed—to me, anyway—a new way to approach theory and its relationship to effective advocacy and genuine change that defies abyssal thinking.

Santos' (2014) argument for a new engagement with theory is situated within an understanding of the hostile conditions that make genuine change—and genuine leadership by extension—all but impossible on this side of the line. Those who are truly radical, Santos argued, are either misunderstood, silenced, or otherwise rendered ineffectual on this side of the line. In pointing to theory, moreover, Santos was also capturing the sense in which dominant theories produced within the positivism—and post-positivism—of the Western academy are uninformed by the embodied epistemologies of the global South. As a result, those activists and intellectuals who arm themselves with dominant theories are effectively blind when trying to address the needs of the global South (see Santos, 2014, p. 5). But, as Santos argued later in the body of his monograph, the blindness of theory all too easily renders the liberatory practice already happening on the other side of the line either invisible to those who need to learn to see or, alternatively, ineffectual in leading to any change on this side of the line (see Santos, 2014, pp. 34–36). From Santos' (2014) perspective, the ghostly relationship between theory and practice leads to a kind of double blindness, with practice suffering from blindness "vis-à-vis theory and …theory [suffering from blindness] vis-à-vis practice" (Santos, 2014, pp. 34–35). While Santos (2014) observed the

understandable[55] "scorn shown by the large majority of WSF activists, by the indigenous leaders, and most recently by the indignados for the rich theoretical tradition of the Eurocentric Left," he also observed the unfortunate consequences when actors are not able to look to theory to make sense of their own efforts in relation to the activism of others, historically and in the present (p. 36). When done well, this sensemaking is the purview of theory, I think Santos was saying, a role I have also claimed for a certain kind of story.

In the midst of a more complex argument, Santos (2014) drew a distinction between theory—as a noun—and theorizing—as a verb. Though not as fully developed as I would have liked, Santos' argument seemed to be pointing to the formative activity contained in the verb theorizing, perhaps as something with a greater potential to generate genuine and effective change: "The point is not so much to imagine new theories, new practices, and new relations among them. The point is mainly to imagine *new ways of theorizing* [emphasis added] and of generating transformative collective action" (p. 5).

Before I continue this train of thought, though, let me start with Santos' (2014) description of the conditions at the World Social Forum in which theory and theorizing took on a new significance:

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[55] According to Santos (2014), "While Eurocentric critical theory and left politics were historically developed in the global North, indeed in only five or six countries of the global North (Germany, England, France, Russia, Italy, and, to a smaller extent, the United States), the most innovative and effective transformative left practices of recent decades, as I mentioned above, have been occurring in the global South. The Western critical tradition developed in light of the perceived needs and aspirations of European oppressed classes, not in light of those of the oppressed classes of the world at large. Both from a cultural and a political economy point of view, the "European universalism" that this tradition embodied and that the Frankfurt School celebrated was indeed a particular reading of a particular reality that, for instance, did not include colonialism as a system of oppression, even though the majority of the world population was subjected to it.20" (p. 40).

The WSF originated in the global South based on cultural and political premises that defied

all the hegemonic traditions of the Eurocentric Left. Its novelty, which was strengthened as

the WSF moved from Porto Alegre to Mumbai and later to Nairobi and more recently to

Dakar, lay in inviting these left traditions to be present but not as the sole legitimate

traditions. They were invited along with many other traditions of critical knowledge,

transformative practices, and conceptions of a better society. Movements and organizations

could interact over the course of several days and plan for collaborative actions even though

they came from disparate critical traditions and were united only by a very broadly defined

purpose to fight against neoliberal globalization and for another possible world. This had a

profound impact on the relationship between theory and practice. (p. 41)

In rejecting the *a priori* primacy of Western theoretical frameworks, the NSF—as I

understand Santos' argument—no longer had to dispense with theory altogether in order to contend

with the hegemony of the Eurocentric left. Reduced—provincialized—to one of many traditions of

critical knowledge, theory arising from the Eurocentric left ended up disqualifying itself as a viable

consideration to the extent that it was blind to the epistemologies of the global South, leaving other

theoretical models available for the important sense-making role of theory.

To be clear, by epistemologies of the South, what Santos meant are the ways of knowing

that arise from the fully embodied, lived experience of those living on the other side of the line. As

such, Santos (2014) articulated a challenge from ralliers for good living/buen vivir in the global

South to intellectuals on this side of the line: "[You] must untrain and reinvent [yourself], or [you]

will continue to be what [you] already are—irrelevant" (p. 9). Santos doesn't stop there, though, for

while there is a role for theory in sense-making and solidarity, the very nature of vanguard theory

and vanguard theorizing prevents it being a genuine reflection of embodied, lived experience and the activism that arises from the epistemology of that embodied experience (see p. 11). Santos makes it clear that the task of untraining and reinventing themselves/ourselves is moving from the vanguard to the rearguard. Instead of standing in front and trying to guess what is most relevant, most meaningful, most reflective of those doing the actual work of dismantling coloniality, Santos called for rearguard theorizing—and theories—based on careful observation of what is happening right before our eyes.

Santos (2014) was careful to note the fact that "the political theories of Western modernity, including Marxism and liberalism" failed to anticipate the activism of indigenous peoples in Latin America, and I gather from Santos that this was not only a failure of imagination but a case of actively ignoring the efforts that were actually happening in that part of the world (p. 11). As I read Santos' argument, I imagine learned intellectuals in the West determined to show the way toward a renewal of society through their vanguard theories while failing to take notice of the actual, concrete, grass-roots renewal taking place right there on the ground, so to speak. For Santos, the solution is in a change of position—from vanguard to rearguard—that enables the one theorizing to actually take in the knowledge generated by fully-embodied lived experience. The rearguard position, argued Santos, is also the position from which the one theorizing can experience the transformative effects of being taken by surprise and feeling wonder (p. 11).

This is where I see the intersection of humility and decoloniality. The leadership called for on the part of intellectuals on this side of the line is a humble leadership—a leadership that is comfortable being firmly rooted in the rearguard. It is characterized by critical reflexivity and openness to change as the activity of theorizing shifts and responds to what is observed. It is

characterized by humility to the extent that the theorizing that emerges is not self-evidently of value because it arises from this or that prestigious university. Rather its value is judged, along with the contributions of others, based on its practical capacity to dignify the lives of others and serve the genuine solidarity of a world devoid of abyssal thinking.

This is the kind of leadership that seemed called for when I visited the new community center of the Elnu Abenaki community on the banks of the Connecticut River (see Mays, 2023). This is the kind of leadership that seemed called for when I visited the Squaxin Island Tribal center in Shelton, WA, and engaged the remarkable resources put together by the Whitener Group (based in Olympia, WA). This is the kind of leadership that seems called for whenever I sense that I have engaged with others who already see beyond the limits of colonial logics and have something to show me. It defies so many conventional notions of leadership, and may not be recognized as leadership at all by some. Yet this is the leadership that I am called to enact. On one hand, I witness and support the work that is already underway, work most often being led by those who did not need to learn to see. And, on the other hand, I strive to model and encourage the messy process that many of us on this side of the line must navigate in order to learn to see beyond the confines of gilded bars. And, always, listening for the stories that need to be told for the sake of seeing, for the sake of disrupting, for the sake of healing.

A Decision for my Dissertation Committee

As I neared the end of the writing process, I followed a suggestion from my advisor and dissertation committee Chair to revisit the PHDLC program's dissertation handbook. In addition to answering questions about formatting and the defense process, I came across descriptions of what might be expected in each section of the dissertation. Let me just admit that I have stretched any

number of boundaries in the chapters above. That said, I have not done so for the purpose of being uncooperative or defiant. As I read over *earlier work* that I submitted to PHDLC faculty, I see evidence that I was trying to follow all the rules: APA 7th edition, academic voice, headings and content specifically aligned with the assignment guidelines, the right number of pages, the right number of citations. In those earlier assignments, I tried very hard to prove that I could follow the rules, and yet as I read over my earlier work—some of which I share above in relation to humility and leadership theories—I don't see evidence of myself in those pages. Somewhere along the way I decided to write a dissertation in which I am completely present—and completely exposed, I write with a bemused grin on my face—but only because I cannot imagine doing anything else.

These final pages on humility and leadership theories serve several purposes. First, I noted in the Dissertation Handbook that there are certain expectations for the concluding paragraphs: "Given the nature of our program, this chapter includes implications for *leadership and change*" [emphasis added]. Given this expectation, I looked back at my work on leadership theories to see what might be pertinent. Including this section also has served as an opportunity to reflect on my experience as a student in the PHDLC program, both trying my best to follow all the rules on earlier assignments and then finally deciding to write in a way that is more authentic to who I am. In the end, it will be up to my dissertation committee to decide whether too many rules have been transgressed.

The Discipline of Being a Student

Bound up in my sense of humility, though, is the need to move through the world as a student even when I am a teacher. This is more easily said than done, especially when my students are looking for a voice of authority. In the summer of 2023, with the final stages of my dissertation

journey in sight, I signed up to take a one week workshop on stories and storytelling. Apart from my doctoral studies, it was the first time that I had been a student in the classroom—rather than the teacher—in well over a decade. There was a certain discipline to being a student and not letting my teacher-self take up too much space in the room.

The woman who taught the class was a Waldorf teacher, herself, and she taught from a space of deep reflection and rich experience. In addition to lectures, she brought art supplies and activities to engage us in dynamic ways. One of the many exercises she brought was the practice of drawing mandalas, as inspired by many ancient wisdom traditions and recommended by Carl Jung, she shared with us, as a practice for psychological and spiritual health.[56]

When the time came, our teacher had us use a compass to draw a circle and then, using the compass only, divide the circumference of the circle into six equal segments. We were encouraged to make a few concentric circles inside the first and then a few light pencil lines to organize the space like pieces of pie. When this was done, we set aside all tools other than a pencil—in my case, a colored pencil—and started to draw freely in the space (See Figure 6.2).

To say that we were drawing *freely* may seem like a stretch, but without specific rules for what to put where, I had to ask myself at each stage of the process,

"What comes next?"

"What creates balance, but also adds something

unique—something wished for,

perhaps something sacred…"

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[56] See https://jungutah.org/blog/mandalas-symbols-of-the-self-2/

Figure 6.2

Starting With a Basic Circle

And words always trailed off, just like that, as colors called to me, and lines followed

pathways, curved and straight, always with care for what had come before,

but never to merely duplicate a familiar pattern.

At first, all my drawings were based on a single circle, each a solitary wholeness. Upon the

completion of each, I turned to a fresh page in my sketch pad. As dynamic as they were, they never

spoke to one another, never collaborated, never shared space.

And then, somehow,

I know not from where—but that is

the point—something new sprang forth (see Figure 6.3).

Figure 6.3

Reaching Beyond the Simple Circle

From me,

through me,

but not limited to who I am

at this time,

in this space.

And as soon as one transgression was complete, another shortly followed (see Figure 6.4). But not

in haste, each form, each bend and line taking the time needed to come to fruition.

Figure 6.4

Welcoming Complexity: Sharing Space, in Collaboration

No longer solitary on a field of white, but surrounded by the words by which I made meaning of all

that happened in that space: notes as I listened with the intent of hearing.

And in the end, there were rules and no rules, (see Figure 6.5)

a sense of freedom that was also

responsive, thoughtful, engaged,

strong-willed

and full of wonder.

Figure 6.5

Transgressing Boundaries

We shall not cease from exploration

And the end of all our exploring

Will be to arrive where we started

And know the place for the first time

— T. S. Eliot, *Four Quartets*

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APPENDIX A: FIGURES

Figure 0.1

Early Exploration of Mandalas: Conforming to the Logics of Symmetry
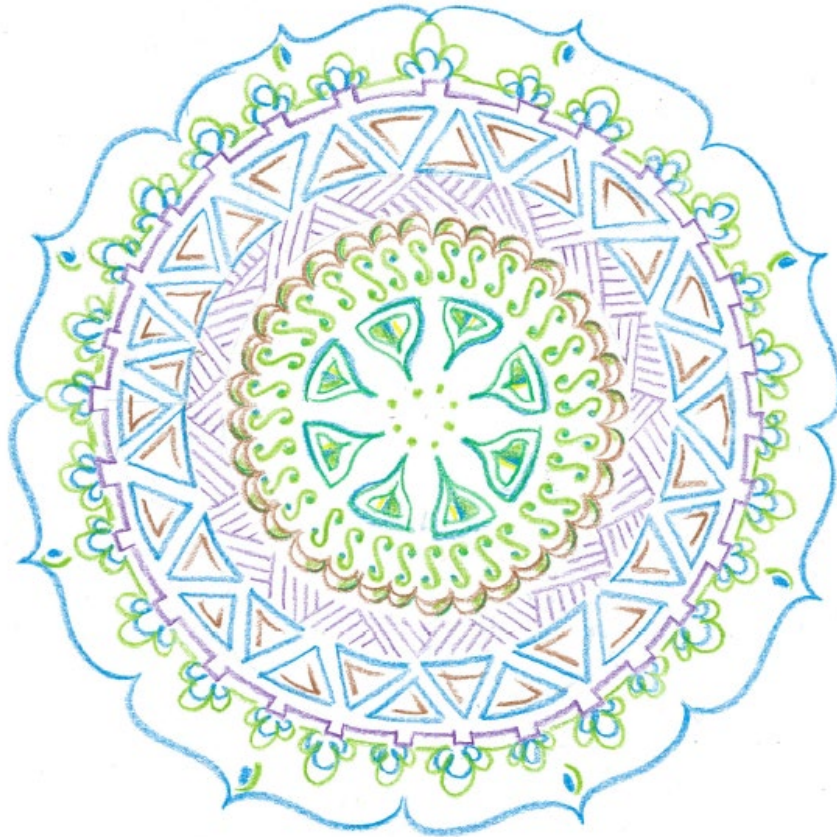
NOTE: Mandala created with compass, straightedge, and colored pencils. Copyright 2024 by Alison Packwood Henry. This figure also appears on p. xv.

Figure 1.1

The Six-Division of a Circle: Familiar Landscape of Color and Form
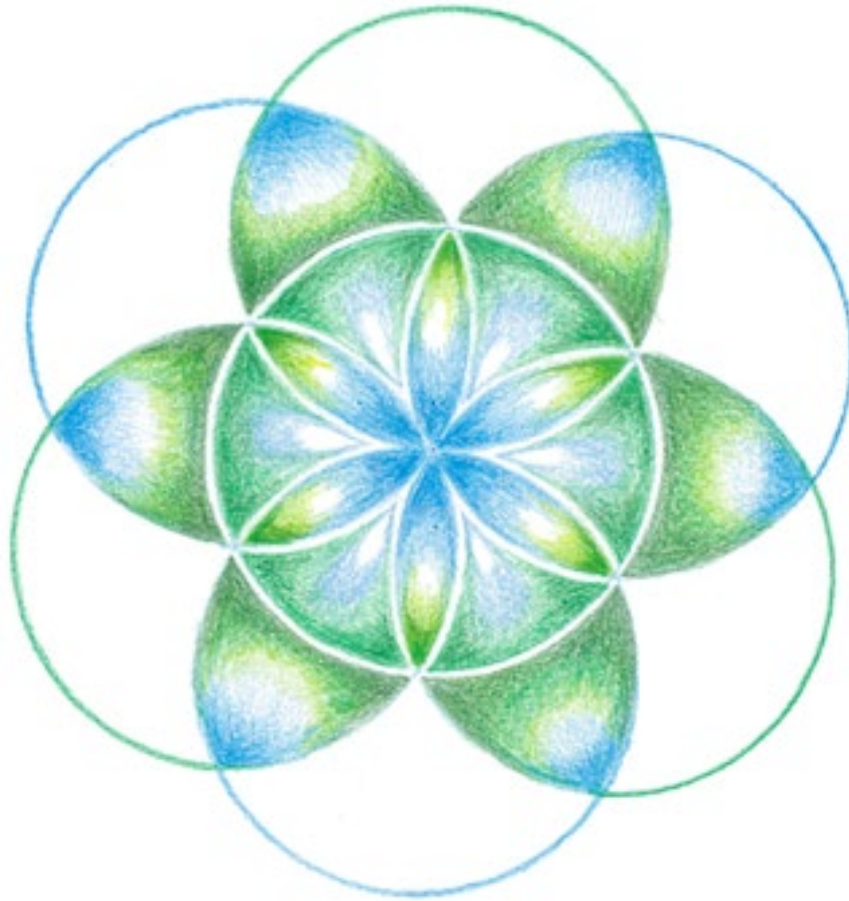
NOTE: Mandala created with compass, straightedge, and colored pencils. Copyright 2024 by Alison Packwood Henry. This figure also appears on p. 1.

Figure 2.1

Breaking Through the Outer Appearance of Order

NOTE: Mandala created with compass, straightedge, and colored pencils. Copyright 2024 by Alison

Packwood Henry. This figure also appears on p. 32.

Figure 3.1

Organic Matter: Balance Without Symmetry

NOTE: Mandala created with compass, straightedge, and colored pencils. Copyright 2024 by Alison Packwood Henry. This figure also appears on p. 108.

Figure 4.1

Some Other Color: Not-Golden Rectangles, Not-Golden Spirals

NOTE: Mandala created with compass, straightedge, and colored pencils. Copyright 2024 by Alison Packwood Henry. This figure also appears on p. 145.

Figure 5.1

Pure Joy as a Transitive Verb: The Goal is Action

NOTE: Mandala created with compass, straightedge, and colored pencils. Copyright 2024 by Alison

Packwood Henry. This figure also appears on p. 208.

Figure 6.1

Hospice: Doting Over Transformation

NOTE: Mandala created with compass, straightedge, and colored pencils. Copyright 2024 by Alison Packwood Henry. This figure also appears on p. 233.

Figure 6.2

Starting With a Basic Circle

NOTE: Mandala created with compass, straightedge, and colored pencils. Copyright 2024 by Alison Packwood Henry. This figure also appears on p. 275.

Figure 6.3

Reaching Beyond the Simple Circle

NOTE: Mandala created with compass, straightedge, and colored pencils. Copyright 2024 by Alison Packwood Henry. This figure also appears on p. 276.

Figure 6.4

Welcoming Complexity: Sharing Space, in Collaboration

NOTE: Mandala created with compass, straightedge, and colored pencils. Copyright 2024 by Alison

Packwood Henry. This figure also appears on p. 277.

Figure 6.5

Transgressing Boundaries

NOTE: Mandala created with compass, straightedge, and colored pencils. Copyright 2024 by Alison

Packwood Henry. This figure also appears on p. 278.

Figure 7.0

Befuddled: Accepting That I Do Not Know

NOTE: Mandala created with compass, straightedge, and colored pencils. Copyright 2024 by Alison

Packwood Henry. This figure also appears on p. 305.

APPENDIX B: A FORMAL POSITIONALITY STATEMENT

While many of the elements of my positionality are embedded in the narratives I have already shared, I respect the expectation of some that this take a certain format. I have chosen not to include a more performative positionality statement in the body of my dissertation after many conversations with colleagues and acquaintances about the intentions and impact of such a choice. My intention below is not to perform an expected role, but to share a snapshot of how I would describe my positionality in the moment, in case doing so adds meaning for my reader.

And so, switching to the third person, I will share that Alison Packwood Henry is the child of Gerald Wayne Packwood and Carol Ellison Packwood, both white. Wayne was born in 1941 and grew up in a small town in the ranching country of north-central Texas. His father Estel Adolphus Packwood, white, left school after eleventh grade and worked in a variety of unskilled jobs, including as a dairy hand, farm and ranch hand, and a church custodian. Wayne's mother Coye Crank Packwood, also white, graduated from high school where she was valedictorian of a class of 12. After high school, Coye went to work in the National Youth Administration—a depression era agency created in 1935 to provide work for the unemployed. Coye's father was a struggling share-cropper and a significant amount of Coye's NYA pay went back to support her family. Coye's assignment in the NYA was to work as a lab assistant to a chemistry professor at a community college nearby. Coye married and raised two children while working at various jobs in and outside the home (picking cotton, working at a laundry, picking vegetables crops, canning, sewing clothes for the family from grain sacks). Estel Adolphus and Coye lived their entire lives in the same rural community, and they only traveled outside Texas (to neighboring states by car) a few times. Indeed, they rarely left the county in which they were born. Until the age of ten, Wayne and his

family lived in a house without running water or electricity. After high school, Wayne moved to central Texas and went on to earn a bachelor's degree in education and a master's degree in mathematics. Wayne taught high school math in Austin, Texas until his retirement—34 years in public school, and 14 years in a private Episcopal high school which he helped to found. Wayne's one sibling, a brother, was a firefighter in central Texas for his entire career.

Alison's mother Carol was born in 1940 and grew up in a small agricultural community in south Texas, a short drive from the U.S. border with Mexico. Carol's father Austin Ellison, white, had a college degree in agriculture and ended up owning a small citrus farm in rural south Texas for several decades. Carol's mother Mary Margaret Rowe Ellison, white, had a college degree and took a teaching position to help support her family in the wake of what I believe to have been her father's suicide after the market crash of 1929. Mary Margaret and Austin lost their first child and went on to raise five children. Later in life, Mary Margaret returned to high school teaching in the social sciences. All members of the Ellison family spoke English and Spanish. They attended a Presbyterian church each Sunday. Carol was primarily raised by a Spanish-speaking, live-in maid for several years when, first, Carol's sister contracted polio and then Carol's brother experienced a life-threatening accident with a long recovery, both of which events demanded the full attention of Carol's mother (who was also caring for a nursing infant/toddler at the time). After high school, Carol moved to central Texas for college and earned her bachelor's degree in teaching and art. Later she attended graduate school and earned a credential to work in special education. While she began her career as an art teacher, Carol raised two children and held a variety of positions over the decades that she worked outside the home: she was a costumer for a community theater, she owned a contemporary fine crafts gallery, she worked with differently abled adults on job skills, she was

an office manager, she was the director of two different child care centers, she worked as an aide for high school students living with Asperger's and autism, and she worked as a community resource person for young adults living independently with special needs. Carol also joined the Peace Corps twice. Carol's four siblings who survived until adulthood, two sisters and two brothers, worked as a carpenter, a music teacher / homesteader, a social worker, and a bus driver / paper delivery person.

Alison grew up attending public schools and attending a Methodist church most Sundays. She and her younger brother, Eric, swam on a swim team at the neighborhood pool each summer, and the creek running behind their house was a regular play space for the children that lived up and down their street. Alison later earned a bachelor's degree and master's degree before moving overseas with her husband. She has worked as a college admissions counselor, an EFL teacher in Japan, a small business owner, a Waldorf teacher, and a university faculty member. Alison's brother is a pediatric ophthalmologist. Alison's husband, Philip, white, is a timber frame carpenter and architectural designer who grew up in Bolivia (age 2–17). Philip's parents were missionaries with the United Methodist Church, and his father was Director of Heifer Project in Bolivia for many years. There is a K-12 school in Santa Cruz, Bolivia named after Philip's father, who was instrumental in founding the school. Philip and Alison ponder the colonial enterprise of mission work, education, and philanthropy in the world and feel the chasm between the intentions and impact of their—and their parents'—lives.

APPENDIX C: [HEAVILY] ANNOTATED VERSION OF THE BIOGRAPHY OF MARIE THARP

I was always thrilled to find a source that delivered stories ready to be told. Indeed, I still watch used book stores for the Signature Lives Series published by Compass Point Books, because I could trust those sources to include wonderful anecdotes and just the right amount of detail as I prepared to tell a biography, especially in middle school. But, even having a single source for a story does not mean that one should simply tell the story as it has been written. Felt's (2012) biography of Marie Tharp is probably not the best example since Felt was clearly writing for an adult reader, but when I was thinking about the best way to approach the intersection of story and theory, Tharpe's biography sprang immediately to mind.

Though I now read Felt's autoethnographic approach with deep appreciation, my initial response was one of irritation. In my hurried, not-enough-hours-in-the-day Waldorf class teacher mode, I thought I simply needed the details of Tharp's life, not the circuitous route and stumbling blocks faced by her biographer. At one point, I put the book down in frustration with the thought that I just didn't have the time to muddle through Felt's long form approach. I now look back with a certain amount of bashful self-admonishment. While my response was understandable and reflective of the very real time constraints that teachers live with, my need for a ready-made story is indicative of one of the tensions that I will be exploring. For now, let me simply tell the story as I may have told it to my middle school students:

When I was preparing for today's class and reading about Marie Tharp's childhood, I was struck by one remarkable fact—that she attended roughly 17 schools before she graduated from high school! Can you imagine moving from

town to town, rarely staying in any one place for more than a few months at a time, almost never finishing a school year at the same school where you started? When I read that Marie described her mother as her best friend, it occurred to me that Marie would not have had time to make good friends outside her family and even if she had, she would have had to say goodbye just months after they met. There were even a few times when Marie didn't go to school for months at a time, once when she was quite sick, and other times when she was traveling with her mother and father.

Assumptions and reflections: There are some situations in which one's responsibility as a storyteller is to tell a certain version of the story. This might be true if one's students would benefit from hearing a particular version of a story or it might be true if any variation and interpretation would be disrespectful—if not a more heinous offence—to those who claim the story as cultural capital, so to speak. As a teacher of children, however, my primary responsibility is usually to the children in my care. Where are they in their development? What messages aspects of the story would speak to them? When I am crafting learning experiences in my classroom, I rely on my sense for the needs of my students. In this dynamic relationship, the shape of the story comes to life in the space between storyteller and listener (or reader). When I consulted Felt's (2012) biography of Tharp and took my students into consideration, I found myself starting the story in a place that might be meaningful to my 12 year old students—students who came to school more to be with their friends than for any learning experience their teachers might design. From this perspective, the relevance of a story may or may not have anything to do with the complex identities (e.g., intersectionality) of the story's subject. Felt's (2012) biography only makes brief mention of the

details above and yet they seem all-important to crafting a relevant story for the middle school

aged students in my classroom.

Over the next two days I will be sharing the story of Marie Tharp. Even the person

who wrote her biography a little more than ten years ago had to piece together

details of Marie's life from many different sources, and there are large gaps in what

we know of Marie's life. Fortunately for us, Marie started to write an autobiography

late in her life, and she was interviewed a few times before she passed away in

2006, when most of you were just two years old. Drafts of her autobiography along

with the interviews she gave, provide just enough detail to make a compelling story.

Assumptions and reflections: By naming the source of my story, and the limits of my

knowledge, I introduce a sense of humility and perspective. I have indirectly communicated that

this story, like all stories, does not exist as an objective truth outside the perspectives and

interpretation of those who seek to tell the story, in this case the story of a woman's life.

Marie was born in 1920 in a town called Ypsilanti, Michigan, over near the Great

Lakes. That was just over one hundred years ago. You might have a great

grandparent who was born about that time.

Assumptions and reflections: My reader can feel how aware I am of the students taking in

my story. I know that a general reference to the Great Lakes will make sense, and I add reference

to the ages of their own great grandparents to make Marie's birth year make some sense in their

own lives.

Marie's father worked for what was called the U.S. Department of Agriculture's

Bureau of Soils, and his work took him all over the area between Iowa to the

northwest, upstate New York to the northeast, and Alabama to the south. They spent long days along small dusty roads between towns where Marie's father took soil samples, surveyed the landscape, drew maps, and collected details that he would submit in his formal reports to the Bureau of Soils every four years when they would add Washington DC to the many cities and towns where they took up temporary residence. Marie and her parents traveled in a little Model T coupe or what we might call an old fashioned pickup truck that ran on thin, stiff tires so that they felt *every* bump and rut on the dirt and gravel roads they traveled. Marie's biographer found a picture of Marie sitting on the running board of her father's pickup when she was about 4 or 5 years old—I'll be sure to pass around the picture tomorrow.

Assumptions and reflections: My goal as I craft the language of the story is to speak out of rich, vibrant pictures in my own mind's eye and thus enable my students to generate their own rich mental pictures. This capacity to listen and form rich mental images is the foundation of listening comprehension and effective communication. The last thing I would want to do is to provide visual aids at this early stage of the process—images that would make it unnecessary for the students to listen carefully and use their own imaginative powers to generate images of their own. On subsequent days, when we are reviewing what they learned from the story, I would share pictures of young Marie sitting on the running board of her father's Model T or a map of the area in which her father's work took them as a family. When students finally see a photograph of a Model T truck, they might realize that the picture they had formed was quite different, but this itself is an important learning experience. The capacity to create mental images can be cultivated over time,

and middle school students who have not been asked to listen in this way may find it challenging

without lots of practice. In my experience, students who engage in this kind of deep listening on a

daily basis often have remarkable memory for details they have heard.

Since all the family's possessions were often piled in the back of their car, Marie

didn't have many personal possessions, much less many toys, but she did have a

tremendous amount of freedom. [Here I pause ever-so-briefly in my storytelling]

Marie was free to explore and occupy herself along the roadsides and fields where

her father was surveying, drawing maps, and taking soil samples. In later years

she recalled hunting for arrowheads in fields, looking for interesting trees, and

otherwise happily keeping herself company when she was not needed to help her

parents. They were a tight-knit family of three, perfectly happy to be what Marie

later called "perennial gypsies" (Felt, 2012, p. 17).

Assumptions and reflections: While I am trying to be true to Marie Tharp's life story as I

understand it, my principal responsibility is to my students' learning experience. As I read and

prepare a biographical story for my middle school aged students, my knowledge of my students'

lives brings certain details of the story into focus. As I was reading Felt's (2012) biography of

Tharp, I knew that I wanted to share not only the picture of a child who was content with very few

material possessions, but also an image of freedom *that might create a moment of cognitive*

dissonance for those students whose idea of freedom is to be allowed to use their phones or play

video games whenever and as long as they wish. A moment of cognitive dissonance for those

students who might complain loudly of boredom if they found themselves having to entertain

themselves without their devices. This was inspired precisely because my students were largely

from affluent families with many material comforts, including more than enough screens for every family member's pleasure.

Even though Marie Tharp's family did not get to take what we might call vacations, Marie's childhood took her to many interesting places. In 1926 Marie's family was living briefly in Indiana where they were within driving distance of the farm where the Ringling Brothers Circus animals were cared for and trained between tours. On Sundays, Marie and her father went out to see the lions, tigers and elephants relaxing in oat fields. Later that same year, Marie and her mother lived for a while in a boarding house in Pascagoula, Alabama, within walking distance of the soft sand beaches where Marie had her first experience of the ocean. In 1929, Marie and her parents got to see the inauguration of Herbert Hoover—years later she still had vivid memories of the "the pouring rain, the top hats and horses, and the men slowly waving from open-roofed cars" (Felt, 2012, p.18). For all the transitions in her life, Marie looked back with fondness on all these experiences.

Assumptions and reflections: Even after reflection, I am not sure I can articulate why I focused on these precise details, but that lack of clarity, itself, is worthy of note. I didn't have a handy checklist for what to include and what to focus on. I read the background material I could find on Marie Tharp and I found myself jotting down some details while skipping over others. It was as though I was holding the class in mind as I read about Tharp's life and I listened *to see which details needed to be shared. If it is not already clear, let me be more explicit. The teacher's process cannot be reduced to collecting answers on a simple rubric: year and city of birth,*

childhood story, education and profession, critical accomplishments—I groan inwardly as I

imagine such a transactional, superficial approach.

When Marie was about 16 years old, her parents finally decided to settle down in one place. They bought an old, dilapidated farm in Bellefontaine, Ohio. According to Marie's biographer, "everything was run-down. Fences toppled, barn falling over, house in disarray. But when he [Marie's father] took Marie and her mother to look at it, in the pouring rain no less, they all loved it" (Felt, 2012, p. 33). Unfortunately, Marie's mother was already showing signs of sickness, and not long after they moved in, it was clear that her mother was dying. Marie later recalled that as the leaves turned bright colors outside her mother's bedroom that fall, her mother slipped further and further away. That winter Marie's mother passed away. Marie's final years of high school must have felt even more lonely without her mother's company and loving support.

Assumptions and reflections: I loved reading that Mare and her family loved their new

home despite the fact that it was dilapidated and in need of repair. I also looked for the right way

to bring the death of Tharp's mother. In my teacher training, I was struck by Harwood's (2001)

reminder that children in this realm of childhood, roughly ages 7–14, benefit from encountering a

full range of emotions in the stories we tell. Understanding comes not merely from uplifting stories

of success and wellbeing, but from stories that engage emotions as varied as incredulity,

indignation, horror, fear, surprise, embarrassment, shame, relief, grief, reassurance, and joy.

Sharing a moment of loss in Marie Tharp's story is hard to capture here, as I convey the feeling as

much in the tone and cadence of my voice as in the words I say. Even so, I want to stress that I

would not try to lighten this moment in the story. Understanding the value of engaging a full range of emotions can also allay the concerns of parents who are worried about the impact of painful stories on their child. It does occur to me that I did give careful thought to when I brought certain kinds of content; I waited to tell Emmett Till's story until my students were 13 and 14-years old, but Harriet Tubman's story gave me a chance to share a story that contained disturbing acts of racially-motivated cruelty and violence with much younger students. It is almost impossible to say what is appropriate without knowing the students in a given class, but these are some of the decisions I made when striving to meet the needs of a particular cohort of students.

Late in her life, when Marie became an important figure in some scientific circles, she was interviewed by journalists. These interviews were especially valuable to Marie's biographer and give us insight into Marie's memories of her younger years. Marie shared with one interviewer that she always assumed that she would go to college even though attending college was not as common back then, especially for young women. Indeed, as a female, Marie would not have been allowed to follow in her father's footsteps, but her mother had enjoyed being a teacher in her younger years and Marie assumed that she would become a teacher, too, since it was one of the few professions open to college educated women in the U.S. at that time. What Marie could not have foreseen was the impact of World War II on her choices in college. When Marie started college she considered majoring in art or music, then, Marie took first a course called historical geography, and then a course called physical geography. Not only had Marie found a subject that really interested her, but one of her professors became something of a mentor. Perhaps

Dr. Clarence Dow recognized Marie's potential as a scientist. Regardless, it was Dr. Dow who recommended that Marie study drafting—the technical drawing used by designers, engineers, and geologists—so that she would be more likely to get a job. Dr. Dow also recommended that Marie take advantage of an accelerated program at the University of Michigan. With so many young men off fighting in the war, the petroleum industry was guaranteeing employment to young women who enrolled in a two-year advanced degree in Geology at the University of Michigan. This kind of opportunity would never have been possible before the war, but the big oil and gas companies needed geologists to help identify new sources for drilling and with few if any male graduates entering the field, the oil and gas companies were now willing to hire women for the first time in those positions.

Assumptions and reflections: One of the reasons that story crafting is both satisfying and mysterious is that a few sentences can convey so much—sometimes more than the storyteller even realizes. I look back on this short segment and marvel at how much cultural commentary is conveyed. My students might not have been able to come up with the current language to decry sexism, but they understood, they felt deeply the impact of sexism on the lives of young women who had so much to offer. I can't imagine a lecture style lesson that could convey so much so effectively in so little time and space.

Studying geology happened in the classroom and in the field. During the summers, Marie and her classmates headed west to Wyoming, Montana, and the Dakotas where they lived in small huts and spent their days studying the remarkable rock formations in places known as the Black Hills and the Devil's Tower. I'll be sure to

bring in some pictures to show you, but this part of the western United States has dramatic cliffs where it looks like you are seeing a cross section of the earth's crust—as though someone cut away a section of a mountainside revealing layers upon layers of differently colored rocks, minerals, and dirt.

When the summer field experiences were over, and Marie and her classmates headed back to Michigan, they took classes on the characteristics of different rocks and minerals, and they also heard a lot about competing theories of how the earth's surface was formed. The thick geology textbooks that Marie was required to read for her classes covered the most widely accepted theories written by notable scientists and scholars in the field. One textbook asserted that "the cause of crustal deformation is one of the great mysteries of science and can be discussed only in a speculative way" (as cited in Felt, 2012, p. 40). Indeed, Marie's biographer noted that in 1945, when Marie was getting her advanced degree in Geology, there were as many as 19 competing theories for how mountains were formed (Felt, 2012, p. 41). A faculty member in Marie's program was a proponent of what was called the contraction theory in which the earth was understood to be slowly shrinking, ever-so-gradually and the outer crust of the earth was thought to behave "like the skin of a shriveling apple" (Felt, 2012, p. 40) creating ridges, valleys and mountains. The contraction theory was rejected by other geologists because it seemed to account for some features of the earth's surface but not others. Some people might not have felt a need to have one overarching theory to explain how geologic features like mountains and valleys came to be, but scientists

continued to try to come up with a theory that would help them explain the world around them.

Assumptions and reflections: In keeping with the values of inductive teaching and learning, I used some words that might have been new to the students. Though there were isolated occasions when I paused to have the students help me define a word, I found it more effective to craft the story in such a way that they meaning of key terms became apparent as the story unfolded. My middle school students might have stumbled if they were asked to produce a definition of theory when they first heard this story, but I knew that by the time the story was complete and we had reviewed the content as a class, the students would have a strong sense for what was meant here by theory. As mentioned above, I would bring in visual aids (maps, diagrams, etc.) during our review of the story on the following day, but not when the students were hearing the story for the first time. I wanted them to try to picture the earth as a shriveling apple, its previously smooth skin now wrinkling into crests and valleys. Even if their initial attempts to picture what I was describing were misleading that first day, I always wanted to have them try to listen carefully enough to fully picture what I was saying in their minds eye. Then we might laugh the next day at how far off some of our mental pictures were—not laughing as if to mock but laughing in a way that normalized the process of trying and sometimes getting it all wrong.

As Marie Tharp's biographer explained, the year that Marie entered first grade—1926—a German scientist by the name of Alfred Wegener created quite a stir in the scientific community when he attended the annual meeting of the American Association of Petroleum Geologists in New York City (Felt, 2012). There he presented a theory that he called *continental drift*, which he thought would finally

resolve the uncertainty about how mountains, valleys, and other geologic features were created. He had published a paper explaining his ideas a decade earlier in his native language of German, but now he was bringing his ideas to American scientists for their consideration.

Alfred Wegener's theory was based on several observations about the surface of the earth. First, like many children who spend time playing with a globe or looking at a large world map, Wegener noticed that continents on either side of the Atlantic Ocean appear to fit together like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. Wegener suspected that this was not coincidental. To confirm this suspicion, Wegener gathered evidence from scientists who had taken rock samples taken on the opposite coasts—on the east coast South America and the west coast of Africa. What the rock samples showed was that the layer of rock and minerals—and the fossils found within—matched one another, just as though they shared the same geologic history. From this evidence, Wegener concluded that at some point in the history of the earth, the continents we now call South America and Africa were actually connected and that somehow they had drifted apart. In Wegener's imagination, all land masses had at one point been part of one supercontinent called Pangaea, but that over billions of years, the land masses had drifted apart.

Assumptions and reflections: It has never failed that at least a few students in the class have already heard of plate tectonics, and the theory of Pangaea. If so, they typically take the science of plate tectonics for granted as though it has always been the accepted theory. I intentionally relate this section as though Wegener were really stretching the limits of believability, and watch as, on

one hand, many students are nodding in agreement at the sensible argument that Wegener

constructed, and on the other hand, as a few students wonder why there was ever any question.

This is complex and challenging to explain, but I think this will be apparent as I go on.

Alfred Wegener thought that his idea was brand new when he first published his

theory in 1911. He made the all-too-common mistake of thinking that because the

idea was new to him, and because he had not heard it from anyone else, that he

was the first to discover it. Marie Tharp's biographer noted that there are records of

others who had published similar ideas in 1596 and 1838 (see Felt, 2012, p. 23),

but it is also easy to imagine that we don't have records of all the people who came

up with this idea on their own without having published a book or paper about it.

Assumptions and reflections: I will admit that of all the possible lessons that the students

might take from this story, the basic question of attribution of ideas strikes me as one of the most

important. If my reader were to look carefully at Felt's (2012) account, it would be clear that I am

actually being critical of her treatment. I am inspired by the work of O'Brien (2010), who

documents the way in which the achievements of Native Americans are effectively rendered

invisible, effectively extinguished from the historical record, when the behavior of Wegener (and

even Felt, I would contend) go unchallenged (see also Teresi, 2002, as described in the Chapter

II). The argument is subtly made, but feels all the more powerful for that subtlety.

If you've heard of the theory of continental drift before, you might be imaging that

Alfred Wegener was celebrated for finally publishing his theory. Certainly, Marie

Tharp's story would have been quite different if Alfred Wegener's ideas had been

well received. But the response was almost the opposite. The other scientists

attending the meeting of the American Association of Petroleum Geologists in New York in 1926 essentially laughed Alfred Wegener off the stage. The scholars, geologists, and petroleum industry leaders at the conference thought that Alfred Wegener's ideas were so absurd that they openly attacked his ideas and treated him as a fanciful dreamer. Although one conference leader spoke in his favor and another supported a wait-and-see approach, all the other speakers who took the stage hurled insults and criticism, and most of the criticism felt more personal than substantive (see Felt, 2012, p. 25). It didn't feel like a simple disagreement. It felt like bullying. At the close of the conference, Alfred Wegner had been utterly discredited by the other scientists present, and his ideas now joined the many other discredited theories that filled college level textbooks on geology. Before I take the story back to Marie Tharp, I will only observe that the one criticism from the conference that would continue to hold the most weight was that Alfred Wegener could not explain how and why the continents would drift apart. Certainly, the continents would not just move around the globe randomly for no reason at all. Without that explanation, all the other evidence was dismissed.

Assumptions and reflections: I read Felt's (2012) account carefully and did my best not to overstate or understate the degree of ridicule and derision that Wegener faced. I knew that this portion of the story would be one of the most poignant for the students in my class. I thought carefully about whether to use the word bullying above, but I also knew that I wanted the students to feel the full weight of Wegener's treatment at the hands of other scientists.

Decades later, Marie recalled that the theory of continental drift was presented in her graduate level Geology courses at the University of Michigan "but not in a way that suggested that it was a realistic possibility" (Felt, 2012, p. 40). Continental drift was one of many different theories, some hotly defended by her own professors, that were interesting but failed to answer basic questions about the earth's surface. Marie finished all the required courses for her master's degree, and then stayed in school a little longer to take more math and science courses, but in the summer of 1945 she graduated and took a job with an oil company in Tulsa, Oklahoma where she would work for the next three years.

Three years was all Marie could stand. Bored with her work for an oil company, Marie headed to New York to see if she could find work with other geologists. Thanks to the drafting course that Dr. Dow had recommended that Marie take years earlier, Marie was able to get a position with a group of scientists doing oceanographic research for Lamont Laboratory, part of Columbia University. The sign over the door to the office said "geophysical lab" but for Marie, this would end up leading to a drafting job that changed her life.

Assumptions and reflections: One of the tidbits that I took from my Waldorf teacher training and continue to employ is the addition of anticipation—good 'ole foreshadowing in the case if stories. I use it here, and elsewhere, not simply as a literary device but because I have come to understand how anticipation engages and motivates the listener or reader. In Waldorf circles, I might refer to activating the will forces (see Steiner, 2000), but no jargon is necessary to convey my meaning.

I have chosen to leave out many details from Marie Tharp's early years at Lamont Laboratory, which was then renamed Lamont Geological Observatory when they moved their offices to a big old house overlooking the Hudson River. If you ever want to read about Marie's life in more detail, I can recommend Hali Felt's (2012) biography, but for now I will skip forward to what must have been an interesting new work assignment. Imagine having a colleague show up one day with a big carboard box filled with paper printouts—the printouts actually came in rolls almost like scrolls. Each tightly wound printout included a long squiggly line drawing that appeared to flutter up and down along the scroll. These drawings were created by a machine called a fathometer. The fathometer was a relatively new addition to their research ships. As a ship sailed over the surface of the ocean, the fathometer was designed to send out a pinging sound, literally called a *ping* or *echo*. Then, the fathometer would measure how long it took for the sound to bounce off surfaces under the water. The longer it took for the ping to bounce off a surface, the deeper the ocean. If the ocean floor had been one vast flat plain, all the pings would have taken the same length of time. That was not the case.

Of course, back onboard the ship, the fathometer was connected to a delicate stylus that left the feathery line drawings I mentioned before, so that each scroll of paper showed the changing rise and fall of the ocean floor. When the ping came back more and more quickly, the stylus would rise up on the scroll showing an incline along the bottom of the ocean. When the ping suddenly came back much more slowly and continued that way, then the stylus would mark a rapid decline as

though the ship had crossed over an underwater cliff and the ocean floor was suddenly much deeper.

Assumptions and reflections: This level of detail is entirely missing from Felt's (2012) account, but I sensed that my students would benefit from listening carefully and trying to imagine both how a fathometer worked and how Marie Tharpe used the data. I am also slowing down the pace of the story here, adding more detail, and building a visceral sense for the complexity of Marie Tharp's work. I don't remember thinking of this at the time that I crafted this version of the story, but I think I might have been working to highlight the long hours and tremendous effort involved in these discoveries. This is even more evident at the story goes on.

What Marie already knew was that by cross referencing these feathery line drawings made by the sonar readings with details of the ship's course, she could do two things: Marie could plot the depth of the ocean floor at a set of coordinates along the ship's path, and she could see a graphic representation of the rise and fall of the ocean floor along crisscrossing paths. When Bruce Heezen arrived that first day with a box of scrolls, Marie Tharp's first reaction was that there was not much evidence to go on with only that one box of sounding records, but her colleague reassured Marie that there were boxes and boxes of sonar data for her to use. In fact, when all the boxes of data were delivered and stacked up in and around her office there were five years of sonar readings in all. Marie's task was anything but simple. On big, oversized sheets of paper laid out on her drafting table, Marie began making what would be a topographical map of the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean. Each point she drew of the map was cross-referenced with the

sonar readings and the ship's course. It was time-consuming and painstaking work that required an immense amount of patience. One point after another, carefully checked and re-checked. During World War II, when Marie was still in college, German scientists had made a limited map of the south Atlantic from data they collected, but Marie now had enough data to attempt a map of the north and south Atlantic—slowly but surely point-by-point, narrow line-by-narrow line.

As weeks turned into months, Marie continued to process the data from the fathogram scrolls, slowly filling in detail on the large piece of paper that was becoming a map of the Atlantic Ocean. Some of the features she detailed had already been described by earlier researchers, but Marie was able to provide more detail of the mountains, valleys, and even mountain ranges that cover the ocean floor. And, as Marie added more and more detail to the map, Marie made what felt like a new discovery. Along the range of underwater mountains that ran like a winding ridge down the middle of the Atlantic Ocean from north to south, Marie noted that there was clear evidence of a deep notch or rift that ran right down the center of the ridge.

Assumptions and reflections: I wonder whether my reader will be able to picture the equipment, data, and maps from my descriptions alone. What I discovered in the classroom, however, was that if I pictured something clearly in my mind's eye and spoke from that mental picture, then the students were able to see what I could see with remarkable accuracy.

This might not seem like a controversial discovery from our perspective, but this actually caused Marie and her colleague Bruce to get into an ugly argument, which became so heated that Bruce and Marie ended up yelling at one another. Bruce essentially accused Marie of sloppy work based on her "woman's intuition" while Marie defended her technique and results. Their fight finally ended in a truce, with an agreement that Marie would start over and do all her calculations again. It wasn't only Bruce who was uncomfortable with the implications of a mid-Atlantic rift; Marie also felt a strong need to revisit her results. The problem that Marie and Bruce both saw and kept to themselves was that an underwater rift like the one Marie had mapped could be used to explain Alfred Wegener's discredited theory of continental drift, and *no self-respecting geologist* in the United States at the time wanted to be associated with a theory that was generally reviled and considered a sign of bad science. Providing evidence that supported the theory of continental drift could literally end their careers if they weren't careful.

Assumptions and reflections: And now as a storyteller, I have arrived at the crux, at the place in the story when the silence in the classroom seems palpable. There might be a student who feels a need to pipe up and ask a probing question, but most of the students are far away, looking over Marie or Bruce's shoulder wondering what they would do. So much is left unsaid, but that is also part of the beauty of this approach to teaching and learning. 12-year old students know how proud they would be to have made this same discovery. They are also torn by the very real threat of ridicule, censure, and public humiliation.

And so Marie started from the beginning with a new piece of paper—actually several huge sheets of blank paper—slowly plotting points and using her knowledge of geology to extrapolate what the landscape looked like between those well-defined points. Days turned into weeks, and weeks turned into months, but in the end Marie had again detailed a deep rift that cut down the middle of the mid-Atlantic Ridge. Now, as it happened, at the same time that Marie was completing her second map, Bruce had an assistant plotting the location of undersea volcanic activity in the Atlantic. Once Marie and Bruce compared the location of Marie's mid-Atlantic rift with the location of undersea volcanic activity, the die was cast, there was no longer any doubt. Marie had uncovered the missing piece in Alfred Wegener's theory, the mechanism, so to speak, that explained how and why continents might drift slowly apart over billions of years. These two sets of data put together—the mid-Atlantic rift and the map of underwater volcanoes—provided an explanation for why the floor of the Atlantic Ocean continues to spread. Marie Tharp and Bruce Heezen no longer had any doubt but they also dreaded making their findings public. Would they be personally attacked, even bullied, as Alfred Wegener had been decades earlier? It was 1952 when Marie and Bruce finally accepted what she had revealed in her map of the Atlantic. News of her findings were not shared until 1956! Four years before they dared to share the full extent of what they had found, four years in which Marie continued to work on making more detailed maps and even painting maps on globes.

Assumptions and reflections: Four years sounds like a very long time when you are 12 years old. I see in my students' faces a mix of conviction, conflict, apprehension and know that they are experiencing the combination of certainly and uncertainty that plague the characters in the story. And, at the same time, I have left the students with some interesting ideas to mull over. What constitutes proof? What happens when no one believes the proof one has collected? Who gets to decide when a new theory should be adopted? Why them?

Bringing the story and the exercise to a conclusion

When I present the biography of Marie Tharp to middle school students, I usually tell the story over two days, but I always wish I could justify three. There is so much more to share. I usually wrap up the story with a brief but dramatic account of the International Oceanographic Congress that assembled in 1959 at the United Nations (see Felt, 2012, pp. 125–130). In the few years before, Bruce Heezen and a senior colleague had started giving presentations based on Marie Tharp's findings. They sometimes even included images of her maps. As top scientists gathered for the International Conference in 1959, the buzz was about "Dr. Heezen's speculations" with no mention of Marie. I try to capture the dramatic moment when Jacques Cousteau, previously a skeptic who had openly rejected the maps he credited to "Lamont"— again no mention of Marie— signals for the lights to be lowered and the film projector to start rolling. There, in footage gathered by Cousteau and his crew as they crossed the Atlantic to attend the Congress, dark shapes take form. The reason that Cousteau and his crew sent down their cameras in the precise location was that they intended to disprove the theory of continental drift that had begun circulating again. They used one of Marie's maps to figure out where to start filming. If they could show that there was no mid-Atlantic rift that aligned with volcanic activity, they figured, then the theory might be put to

rest. Instead, there were shouts for an encore. The filmstrip was rewound so that everyone could watch again, and there in black and white were images of one small segment of the mid-Atlantic rift that Marie Tharp had been mapping for seven years (Felt, 2012, pp. 125–130).

When I pulled out my well-worn copy of Felt's (2012) biography of Tharp to confirm a few details of the story, I was reminded of my initial frustration. Felt takes the reader on a winding journey of discovery, but the format makes it difficult for someone who just needs to confirm, for example, how many years Marie and her colleagues kept her findings under wraps. Felt's account does not lend itself to the hurried teacher who needs to absorb the key details and move on to the next part of their lesson planning. I am also keenly aware that I have related this tale somewhat inaccurately at times, as though the story took on a life of its own in my imagination in the years since I first read Felt's (2012) book. There is a barrier in all this that is difficult to define. Is it Felt's long-form, meandering approach that makes the book untenable as a resource for most teachers? Is it the workload of the teacher (with inadequate prep time built into their schedules) that creates the barrier? Is it, on the other hand, a more fundamental problem of how we expect to take in lessons and how teaching and learning should be organized? I prepared to close Felt's (2012) book at p. 130 after rereading the section about Jacque Cousteau when I glanced at the epigraph on the very next page: "Maybe I don't get your meaning—but I like mine. —Georgia O'Keeffe." Once again, I am persuaded that Felt is a reliable guide. This path is neither simple, nor direct.

Engaging in Critical Reflexivity

In many respects, critical reflexivity ends up being a fundamental aspect of being a good Waldorf teacher. Allow me to explain. In my teacher training, I embraced the idea that following a path of self-development is essential preparation for two complementary tasks. One side,

self-development builds the teacher's capacity to perceive clearly what will best serve their students, collectively and individually. On the other side, self-development builds the teacher's capacity to participate in a professional and spiritual community—often the faculty and staff of a school—and engage in the collective hermeneutical enterprise of interpreting foundational works on the art of education written by Steiner and others committed to this vision of education.

I must add that in this tradition, a teacher's path of self-development is highly personal and not imposed by others. Though foundational works by Steiner and others recommend meditation and exercises to develop personal capacities and traits (e.g., open-mind, even-temper, capacity for focus, etc.), each teacher is left in freedom to design their own practice, as they wish, and it is common in my experience for Waldorf teachers to respect one another's privacy around these practices. I was encouraged to end each day with a review of what had transpired, for example, making room for insights to arise as I pictured each student in turn, but I was in complete freedom to follow these suggestions or create my own distinct practice.

The connection I find myself drawing now is that the reflective practice expected of Waldorf teachers, coupled with both the activity of reading one's classroom and also participating in the collective hermeneutics of interpretation and meaning making in one's professional community, altogether, meet the expectations for critical reflexivity as described in the literature (Anderson, 2019; Denzin, 2014; Greer, 2016; Leigh et al., 2022; Le Roux, 2017; Nakata et al., 2012; Root et al., 2019; Russell-Mundine, 2018; Wu et al., 2018). So, as I return to the story above and bring new lenses to bear, I am actually not doing anything all that unusual from the perspective of Waldorf education. It is all part of the striving, the calling, that brings us to this profession in the first place.