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Pedagogies of Liberation: Integrative Epistemologies and Learning and Teaching Practices for Cultivating Social Equity and Well-being in the 21st Century

by

Amy Fujiwara Shen

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

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and the Designated Emphasis

in

Women, Gender, and Sexuality

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Evelyn Nakano Glenn, Chair
Professor Catherine Ceniza Choy
Professor Mel Y. Chen

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Abstract

Pedagogies of Liberation: Integrative Epistemologies and Learning and Teaching Practices for Cultivating Social Equity and Well-being in the 21ˢᵗ Century

by

Amy Fujiwara Shen

Doctor of Philosophy in Ethnic Studies

Designated Emphasis in Women, Gender, and Sexuality

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Evelyn Nakano Glenn, Chair

In 2014, minoritized students became the majority in U.S. public schools. This demographic shift has not by default translated into equity in education. Amid the dual pandemics of COVID-19 and increasingly visible systemic racism, many universities began emphasizing the use of institutional diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) statements and numerical data of admission rates of minoritized students to signify diversity at their institutions. However, both educators and students have critiqued these measures as being performative and falling short of enacting real social transformation while systems of power, privilege, and oppression remain unchanged. This study argues that merely increasing diversity of some minoritized students and faculty in systems of inequity does not constitute systemic change, especially without creating learning environments that foster equity and inclusion within those institutions. Therefore, my dissertation provides an interdisciplinary analysis of culture changes required to bridge the frequent gap between diversity discourse and equity and inclusion practices in higher education. In this century, we will need to learn new ways of seeing, thinking, and being. Instead of reinforcing limiting paradigms that foster duality, division, and domination, I posit that education must be transformed to cultivate new integrative epistemologies, pedagogies, and practices that prioritize interconnection and cooperation to foster social equity and well-being.

My research draws from critical mindfulness studies, critical ethnic studies, feminist studies, and equity-based and holistic pedagogies. This dissertation first outlines the root causes of systemic inequity, including the fundamental thought paradigms and three major forms of barriers that have enabled social inequities to persist in education. I then present a framework of integrative epistemologies and pedagogies for transforming education to foster social equity and well-being. Integrative here refers to epistemologies based in interconnection, praxis that connects personal and collective liberation, and holistic and equity-based pedagogies that engage the whole person in mind-body-heart-spirit. Rather than presenting a singular, prescriptive way of teaching, my theory of integrative pedagogy emphasizes a dynamic, learner-centered practice that is continually evolving and is necessarily customized according to the context of each class and group of participants.

For my students.

For my mentors.

For all educators working to create a more socially just, peaceful, and sustainable world through inner and outer transformation.

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CHAPTER 1
Toward a New Era of Collective Liberation

A new type of thinking is essential if mankind is to survive and move to higher levels.
Often in evolutionary processes a species must adapt to new conditions in order to survive.
Today we must abandon competition and secure cooperation.
This must be the central fact in all our considerations...otherwise, we face certain disaster.[1]
—Albert Einstein

For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house.
They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to
bring about genuine change.[2] —Audre Lorde

It's my conviction that we cannot change the world if we are not capable of changing our way of
thinking, our consciousness. That is why awakening, collective awakening, collective change in
our way of thinking, our way of seeing things, is very crucial.[3]
—Thich Nhat Hanh

In the First Century of the Third Millennium

I begin this dissertation with an example of Indigenous wisdom that helps to locate us in a longer continuum of time. The Indigenous prophecy of "The Condor and The Eagle" has been known for thousands of years by oral tradition[4] among Indigenous people throughout South, Central, and North America across the Bering Straits to the Asian Steppes.[5] This prophecy foretold of human society splitting into two paths, in which the Eagle represents the path of the mind, of the industrial, and of the masculine, while the Condor represents the path of the heart, of intuition, and of the feminine (Andersen "The Eagle and the Condor Prophecy"). The prophecy says that the 1490s would begin the eighth Pachakutic[6] (Perkins), a pre-Columbian concept meaning "a change in the sun," or a movement of the Earth measured by 500-year cycles (Twist). During this 500-year period, the Eagle people would become so powerful that they would nearly drive the Condor people out of existence, seen in "the conquering of the Americas and the killing and oppressing of the indigenous peoples in the subsequent 500 years—up to and including today" (Andersen). The Quechua people in the Andes call the latest Pachakutic an era of dominance and darkness, or 500 years of oppression and dominance (Twist). This part of the prophecy has already happened. The prophecy also goes on to state that the next Pachakutic, has the potential for the Eagle and the Condor to join, to fly together, and to create a new level of

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[1] Einstein, Albert. "The Real Problem is in the Hearts of Men: An Interview with Michael Armine." *The New York Times Magazine*, 23 June 1946, 383-388.

[2] Lorde, Audre. "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House." *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches by Audre Lorde*. 1984. Ten Speed Press, 2007.

[3] Thich Nhat Hanh. "Zen and the Art of Saving the Planet." *The Plum Village App*, 14 October 2021, https://plumvillage.app/zen-and-the-art-of-saving-the-planet/. Accessed 2 January 2022.

[4] Twist, Lynne, guest. Tami Simon, host. "Our Evolutionary Leap." *Sounds True: Insights at the Edge* (podcast). Spotify, 8 March 2022, https://open.spotify.com/episode/4dXs8vre8sMn7GVSS1uOxI.

[5] Perkins, John "Prophecy of the Eagle and the Condor" "John Perkins: Prophecy of the Eagle & the Condor." YouTube, uploaded by *Omega Institute for Holistic Studies*, 9 May 2008, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n7mq5PQwdFM.

[6] Following a practice of Gloria Anzaldúa and AnaLouise Keating, I do not italicize non-English words in this dissertation since doing so "denormalizes and otherizes them" (Keating *Teaching Transformation* 228).

consciousness for humanity (Andersen)—what the Quechua people call a new era of balance and light (Twist). Yet, the prophecy only speaks of the potential. It is up to humanity to "activate this potential and ensure that a new consciousness is allowed to arise" (Andersen). Before the arrival of that new era, the prophecy also says there will be a transition period of 25-50 years, in which there will be massive climatic events that will humble all creatures of Pachamama, or the Earth Mother, so that they remember their rightful role in relation to her (Twist). As the prophecy explains, during the past 500 years, the mind and the heart of the human species have been separated, truncated, and lost from each other (Twist). The Pachakutic of balance and light will come when the mind and the heart of the human species will remember that they are one (ibid). This part of the prophecy remains to be fulfilled.

According to this long view of human evolution, we are now located in the pivotal transition period[7] between an old era of dominance and darkness and a new era of balance and light. The first century of the third millennium, or the twenty-first century, is thus considered a critical period. Climate change and the global pandemic have been resounding forms of feedback from the Earth. History has shown that civilizations that do not evolve to coexist in harmony with the environment are extinguished.[8] Can we evolve in a way that all living beings and the Earth are not just surviving but also thriving? How do we make this evolutionary shift and enter a new era of collective liberation?

This dissertation considers the role that education can serve in helping us make this necessary evolutionary shift for our well-being, for society, and for the Earth. Moving ourselves out of the past era of dominance and oppression requires a fundamental paradigm shift, or as Zen Master and peace activist Thich Nhat Hanh says, "a collective awakening, a collective change in our way of thinking and our way of seeing things" (Thich Nhat Hanh "Zen and the Art of Saving the Planet"). Yet, to change our way of thinking and seeing things, we must first become aware of our current way of thinking and seeing things. This dissertation thus begins by examining the paradigms of dualistic thinking and division and domination, established more than 500 years ago that have continually been reinforced through discursive and material practices, and have imposed worldviews, cultures, and systems that perpetuate social inequity. I investigate the root cause, or the *why*, of those paradigms, tracing it to a fundamental fear of the human condition, and shed light on *how* these paradigms of duality, division, and domination are perpetuated. Furthermore, I posit that it is necessary to develop a new integrative consciousness and practices based in interconnectedness and collective liberation, which can transform dualistic thinking and divisive and dominative practices. In this century, we will need to learn new ways of seeing, thinking, and being that prioritize cooperation instead of competition. Instead of reinforcing limiting paradigms that foster duality, division, and competition, education must be transformed to cultivate new integrative epistemologies, pedagogies, and practices that move us forward as a species while living sustainably with the Earth.

In the first two chapters of this dissertation, I examine three major ways in which formal education in the US has served to perpetuate systems of inequity and oppression. The central

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[7] This transition period reflects what Gloria Anzaldúa calls nepantla, a Nahautl term she uses "to theorize liminality and to talk about those who facilitate passages between worlds, whom I've named nepantleras. I associate nepantla with states of mind that question old ideas and beliefs, acquire new perspectives, change worldviews, and shift from one world to another" ("(Un)natural Bridges" 1). She states, "I think of how feminist ideas and movements are attacked, called unnatural by the ruling powers, when in fact they are ideas whose time has come, ideas as relentless as the waves carving and later eroding stone arches. Change is inevitable; no bridge lasts forever" (1).

[8] See Robert Bergman's Chapter 3 in *Humankind: A Hopeful History* (2019), which discusses human survival during the Ice Age and the evolution of the human species as *homo sapiens* and the disappearance of *Neanderthals*.

chapters of my dissertation then analyze integrative epistemologies and pedagogies that cultivate integration in oneself and with others to foster social equity and well-being. I posit that cultivating a new integrative consciousness and practices in education—based in interconnection and cooperation—is crucial for helping us to evolve beyond the limiting fear-based paradigms of duality, division, and domination that create social harm and inequity. My interdisciplinary research draws from critical mindfulness studies, critical ethnic studies, feminist studies, and equity-based pedagogies to present an integrative framework for liberatory education. Integrative here refers to holistic epistemologies based in interconnection, praxis that connects personal and collective liberation, and pedagogies that engage the whole person in mind-body-heart-spirit.

The Function of Education in the 21ˢᵗ Century

In the 1960s, Paolo Freire, Brazilian educator and philosopher, stated that education functions either as an instrument of domination to enforce conformity to the status quo or as an instrument of liberation. In such a process, education cannot be neutral.[9] Other education scholars have noted that schools in the United States continue to function as part of the colonial project (Paris and Alim 2017), or that they are contradictory sites that both reproduce and disrupt social inequities (Nasir 2015, Yang 2017). In 2022, nearly a quarter of the way into the twenty-first century, efforts to enforce conformity to the status quo, or preserve systems of domination and oppression, have newly intensified in response to small advances in equity and inclusion in the US. These backlashes have ranged from extreme violence to more subtle forms of resistance to social equity, or entering a new era of balance and light. Extreme forms of resistance to social equity have included politically conservative attempts to suppress voter rights, censor K-16 teachers from teaching fuller and more accurate accounts of history, ban books, and stop all forms of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) training and education in schools and workplaces. Legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw has referred to the intensification of these campaigns as "moral panic over what and how we learn about history" ("TruthBeTold"). Meanwhile, a backlash to advances in social equity has also appeared in more covert ways among sectors of self-identified liberals, including efforts to recenter whiteness in anti-racist discourse and DEI work. Anthony Conwright notes that Robin DiAngelo's *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism* (2018), and similar books that skyrocketed in sales after the Black Lives Matter movement began gaining momentum in 2020, these reactions subvert black struggle by shifting the focus into a project of recentering whiteness and prioritizing the care of emotions of White people (Conwright "The Trouble with White Fragility Discourse"). Whether considered extreme or subtle, or conservative or liberal, these seemingly opposed maneuvers of attacking DEI education or positioning oneself as a proponent of DEI efforts while centering "white fragility" in the process, ultimately share a common practice of recentering whiteness in response to equity work—all of which create a distraction and hinder real systemic change. To be clear, the focus of this dissertation is not about indicating which side of a contemporary political divide is right or wrong but rather to identify the underlying root causes that propel the perceived need to create or preserve inequity in the first place. Once those root causes are understood, the ability to transform the suffering caused by social inequity, and the ability to effectively create a world that fosters collective well-being, are much greater.

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[9] Freire, Paolo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Translated by Myra Bergman Ramos. 1970. Penguin Classics, 2017.

Studies in critical mindfulness[10] offer helpful insights into an aspect of the human condition that has driven the impulse to create or preserve inequity through division and domination for centuries, described as *the fear of annihilation* (Thich Nhat Hanh *No Fear, No Death* 2002) or *existential resentment* (James K. Rowe "The Political Value of Mindfulness" 2017). Although that fear may be an aspect of the human condition, humans do not need to succumb to that underlying fear or be controlled by it. Mindfulness—defined simply as "awareness that arises through paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgmentally" (Jon Kabat-Zinn "Defining Mindfulness")—helps people generate awareness of what is happening internally as well as externally. Mindfulness practice helps us become aware of our thoughts without being overly attached to or identified with them. Cultivating clear awareness of our thoughts and feelings, including the root fear of annihilation, is a first step toward overcoming that fear. Moreover, right mindfulness[11] is grounded in ethics that include an integrative worldview of non-duality and interbeing rather than fear, division, and domination. By cultivating an awareness of our inner worlds, we can more mindfully choose how we act and shape our outer worlds. By cultivating a meta-awareness of both our inner and outer worlds, it becomes more possible to transform education from functioning as an instrument of domination into working as an instrument of liberation. To accomplish this transformation, however, we must clearly understand the major ways in which education has functioned as an instrument of domination in the past and present through three major forms, namely through overt and covert methods of perpetuating inequity and the internalization of oppressive paradigms.

Overt methods of perpetuating inequity include enforcing colonial education, denying equitable access to learning resources, segregation, explicit bias and discrimination, harassment, gag orders, and other acts of intimidation. Covert methods include emphasizing ideologies of neoliberal individualism, meritocracy, racialized stereotypes, and misaligned forms of discourse and practice, such as issuing performative diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) statements and trainings while maintaining inequitable systems and cultures. Internalization of oppressive paradigms includes when social justice movements adopt the same frameworks and tools of oppressive systems that they seek to change. While each practice differs, all three methods intentionally or inadvertently adhere to the same paradigm of division and domination, which ultimately hinder real systemic change.

Overt Barriers to Social Equity

One of the recent overt backlashes against advances in social equity include the political campaigns that aggressively target critical race theory (CRT) or any form of teaching a fuller account of US history in K-12 and higher education. These campaigns misrepresent what critical

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[10] Scholar David Forbes, author of *Mindfulness and Its Discontents: Education, Self, and Social Transformation* (2019), uses the term "critical mindfulness" to describe a critical, social, moral mindfulness that challenges unmindful trendy uses of what scholars Ron Purser and David Loy ("Beyond McMindfulness" 2013) have called "McMindfulness" or "corporate mindfulness," an expedient brand of mindfulness geared toward self-help and increasing productivity.

[11] "Right mindfulness" (samma sati) is a term used in Buddhism to distinguish it from "wrong mindfulness" (miccha sati*)*, in which right mindfulness is grounded in ethics and an intention to liberate oneself and others, not as an expedient tool used only for personal or corporate gain (Purser and Loy "Beyond McMindfulness" 2013). Thich Nhat Hanh also explains that right mindfulness is a path and a way of life, not merely a tool or a means to an end (Thich Nhat Hanh "Mindfulness is a Path Not a Tool" 2014). Christopher T. McCaw refers to this distinction as "thick" and "thin" mindfulness (McCaw "Mindfulness 'Thick' and 'Thin—A Critical Review of the Uses of Mindfulness in Education" 2019).

race theory is and what it teaches (Conwright "White Anxiety, Redefined"). By distorting CRT, these campaigns seek to sow seeds of fear, panic, and anger among the public. To exploit fear for the purpose of political mobilization, these campaigns have also used the ideology of the "Great Replacement Theory" (GRT), [12] and point to the growing population of racialized minorities and voters in the US as a sign that Whites will be "replaced" by minorities if action is not taken to stop it. On the one hand, political campaigns and backlashes against social equity advances are not new. Since the 1960s, pushbacks against Affirmative Action called it "reverse discrimination" (Newkirk II "The Myth of Reverse Racism"). In 2010, opponents of Ethnic Studies in Arizona claimed that Ethnic Studies was promoting the overthrow of the US government or the resentment against certain race or class of people. Notably, the ban on Ethnic Studies in Arizona was overruled by a federal judge in 2017 (Díaz "Arizona"). Ethnic Studies as a broad, multidisciplinary field entails teaching and learning a fuller account of US history, even if the facts are inconvenient or uncomfortable, to learn from past wrongdoings and thus create a more socially just present and future. Ethnic Studies also allows for a more inclusive study of the many contributions to civic, cultural, and spiritual life made by otherwise historically marginalized communities. In 2020, the California State University system approved a policy that made Ethnic Studies and social justice studies a college graduation requirement ("California State University Approves"). Yet, those small gains do not signify that the work of social equity and inclusion is finished. Despite the fear-based claims of GRT ideology, Whites are not being "replaced" by minorities due to their growing populations or small advances in equity.

Importantly, replacement is not the goal of actual equity and inclusion work. Real systemic change that fosters social equity and inclusion cannot use the same systems or consciousness that created inequity and exclusion in the first place. In other words, the goal of equity and inclusion cannot be to simply replace the figure at the top of a system of division and domination with a new one. The consciousness that created such a system, and that system itself, must be transformed. Thus, it is important to recognize that the current "fear of replacement" behind the Great Replacement Theory and anti-critical race theory campaigns reflect a root *fear of annihilation* that also drove the foundational dividing of the self and the hierarchizing of the mind-body-heart-spirit, humans and Nature, racialized categories, and genders centuries ago.

During the era of the European Enlightenment, that root fear of the human condition was not clearly understood. Although views of human nature were dialectical and contested, attempts to escape a fear of the human condition through engaging in divisive and dominative acts eventually became normalized into ways of seeing, thinking, and "knowing." Once fear-driven worldviews became paradigms of thought, that also then created the justification for the material and discursive practices of colonization, imperialism, genocide, misogyny, slavery, and other exploitative forms of labor and extractive uses of land and natural resources. In her essay "A Cyborg Manifesto" (1985), feminist scholar Donna Haraway critiques the Western tradition of ordering the world through "antagonistic dualisms," which she explains have been systematic to the logics and practices of domination of women, people of color, nature, animals, and those

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[12] The "Great Replacement Theory" was recently disseminated by Renaud Campus, a French far-right conspiracy theorist and white nationalist, who wrote the book *Le Grand Remplacement* (2011). For further explanation of the dangerous adoption of the GRT conspiracy theory, see the "AAPF Statement on the Buffalo Massacre." African American Policy Forum, 19 May 2022, https://www.aapf.org/post/aapf-statement-on-the-buffalo-massacre; Conwright, Anthony. "The Lethal Logic of White Supremacist Violence: Retracing the Descent of Replacement Theory into Racial Terror." The Forum, 19 May 2022, https://forummag.com/2022/05/19/the-lethal-logic-of-white-supremacist-violence/; and "The Great Replacement Theory Explained." National Immigration Forum, 1 December 2021, https://immigrationforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Replacement-Theory-Explainer-1122.pdf.

constituted as "other."[13] The systematic repetition of these discursive and material practices over the past several centuries has created the current modern world system—a subject of critique in decolonial studies. That world system is what the Indigenous prophecy of "The Condor and the Eagle" characterized as an era of domination and oppression. Aníbal Quijano, Peruvian scholar of decolonial studies, has explained that the shadow side of modernity is coloniality, while decoloniality is a framework that helps us to see that notions of European modernity have been constructed through coloniality—they are two sides of one coin.[14] Argentine scholar Walter Mignolo then further developed this concept.[15] For Mignolo and other decolonial scholars, the modernity/coloniality dyad examines coloniality beyond geographical determinism and includes systems of power maintained through Eurocentric epistemologies.[16] Thus, Mignolo argues that independent thought and decolonial freedom require "epistemic disobedience."[17] Similarly, decolonial education scholar K. Wayne Yang states that, "Western freedom is a product of colonial modernity, and I mean that such freedom comes with conditions, with strings attached, most manifest as terms of unfreedom for [those deemed] nonhumans" (Yang 7). In other words, while elements of "progress" may have emerged from the modern world system, major destruction and harm to living beings and the Earth have also been enacted in the process. To now evolve beyond these systems of inequity—for our well-being, for society, and for the Earth—requires that we seek not to just place a new figure at the top of the same system of division and domination and uphold a fear-based system. To enter a new era of balance and light, we must cultivate a new consciousness and epistemologies based in collective liberation—of interconnection and cooperation rather than division and competition—and our systems and practices must be redesigned to function in alignment with that goal.

Covert Barriers to Social Equity

Just as real systemic change does not occur by placing a new figure at the top of a hierarchy of division and domination, it also does not occur by adding some new figures to its margins. Even before the recent conservative backlash to equity and inclusion arose, education systems in the US had been struggling for decades to actualize the "equity and inclusion" components of their institutional diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) promises.[18] Covert barriers to social equity are more subtle and thus difficult to detect, since they may appear to champion social equity, often showcasing "evidence" or fulfillment of DEI commitments through strategic discourse, while masking systemic inequities. Like the overlap in extreme conservative attacks attempting to stop DEI education altogether and covert liberal practices of recentering white privilege in DEI work, the overt fear-stoking tactics of GRT ideology and anti-CRT campaigns also overlap with a covert practice among many educational institutions of

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[13] Haraway, Donna J. "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century." 1985. *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. New York, Routledge, 1991, pp. 149-181.

[14] Quijano, Aníbal. "Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality." *Cultural Studies*, vol. 21, no. 2, 2007, pp.168-178.

[15] Mignolo, Walter. "Coloniality: The Darker Side of Western Modernity." pp.463-484. Delinking: The Rhetoric of Modernity, the Logic of Coloniality and the Grammar of De-coloniality." *Cultural Studies*, vol. 21, no. 2, 2007, pp. 449-514.

[16] Mignolo, Walter. "Delinking: The Rhetoric of Modernity, the Logic of Coloniality and the Grammar of De-coloniality." *Cultural Studies*, vol. 21, no. 2, 2007, pp. 449-514.

[17] Mignolo, Walter. "Epistemic Disobedience, Independent Thought, and Decolonial Freedom." *Theory Culture, and Society,* vol. 26, no. 7-8, 2010, pp. 159-181.

[18] Dobbin, Frank and Alexandra Kalev. "Why Diversity Training Doesn't Work: The Challenge for Industry and Academia." *Anthropology Now*, vol 10, no. 2, 2018, pp. 48–55.

presenting numerical data of increases in demographic diversity as evidence of their commitment to DEI. However, increasing "diversity" in numbers alone does not mean "replacement," nor does it indicate "equity and inclusion." Both overt and covert methods, whether intentional or inadvertent, function as barriers to real systemic change.

Thus, although racially minoritized students became the majority in US public K-12 schools in 2014 (Strauss), that demographic shift has not translated into equity in education. The global COVID-19 pandemic laid bare deeply rooted social inequities, providing further evidence that dismantling systemic oppression in education requires going beyond creating institutional diversity statements or simply providing minoritized students with access to education, especially when education has historically been based on using assimilationist and deficit frameworks for minoritized students. Without transforming fundamental epistemologies and practices based in division and domination and instead basing efforts on interconnection and collective liberation, systems of inequity and oppression will remain intact, regardless of how many new figures are added to the margins or how many ad hoc measures are added to try to patch over the social harm and injustices created by systems of inequity.

Systemic Inequities Laid Bare in the COVID-19 Era

During the global pause brought forth by the COVID-19 pandemic, pedagogy scholar Gloria Ladson-Billings recommended that we not scramble to find ways to return to the "normal" of the past in education. She explains that "Although many educators and policy makers insist that we have to 'get back to normal,' I want to suggest that 'going back' is the wrong thing for children and youth who were unsuccessful and oppressed in our schools before the pandemic. Normal is where the problems reside" (Ladson-Billings "Hard Reset" 68). Similar declarations arose from other faculty and staff in higher education.

In addressing the conditions of working amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and anti-Asian racism, the faculty co-editors of *Asian Diasporic Visual Cultures and the Americas* journal Alexandra Chang and Alice Ming Jai Wim stated, "Rather than rush back to a business-as-usual model, we extended our deadlines and engaged with slowness; we practiced a politics of refusal" (Chang and Wim 213). In March 2020, the Modern Language Association issued a "Statement on COVID-19 and Academic Labor," urging universities to consider adjusting their normal practices. The public statement, endorsed by numerous other academic organizations, outlined students and workers whose precarity within academia was further exacerbated during the pandemic:

> While the full impact of this crisis and the demands that it now makes on faculties, students, and scholars will not be fully known for some time, the MLA calls on colleges and universities to implement practices that will ward off disastrous consequences for graduate students; contingent faculty members, including adjunct, postdoctoral, non-tenure-track, and graduate instructors; untenured faculty members; and international scholars and students. [...] In sum, we call on institutions to act with ethical imagination and commitment in response to both the individual and shared challenges facing our communities during this unprecedented pandemic. ("Statement on COVID-19")

As the pandemic progressed, however, systemic oppression and inequities became increasingly visible, revealing that the ethical imagination and commitment to individual and shared challenges facing our communities requires more than just stop-gap and ad hoc measures.

After the murder George Floyd in 2020, which was recorded by witnesses and seen around the world, the Black Lives Matter movement gained further momentum, becoming the largest anti-racist mobilization in US history (Adler-Bell "Behind the CRT Crackdown" 2). Meanwhile, hate crimes, including mass shootings, targeting Asian Americans also increased by 339% in cities across the nation (Yancey-Bragg and Chen). Since the start of the pandemic to early 2022, over 10,300 hate incidents targeting Asian Americans were reported across the nation (ibid). Russell Jeung, sociology professor and co-founder of the Stop AAPI-Hate coalition, described the growing mobilization of people speaking up against anti-Asian racism as the largest Asian American social movement he has seen in his lifetime (ibid). The increased *visibility* of systemic racism in the US prompted many universities to revise, or draft for the first time, statements of commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), or to post statements of solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement, and in some cases statements of solidarity with Asian American communities. Yet, the weight of that diversity work in higher education, also known as the "minority tax,"[19] has historically also been placed onto people of color. The recent interest in issuing and gathering statements of commitment to DEI or anti-racism amid the dual pandemics of COVID-19 and the increased *visibility* of systemic racism was no different. Chang and Wim explain that their decision to extend deadlines, to engage in slowness, and practice a politics of refusal was because

> many of their journal's authors, who tend to be of Asian descent, were burning out because of the increased burden of representation, of self-representing, of pivoting to online teaching while dealing with mounting demands of diversity, equity, and inclusion work. This additional work, already traditionally shouldered by poc [people of color], has been further spurred by the global racial reckoning as institutions try to give themselves instant overhauls at least on paper—stopgap measures that don't move beyond the pr patchwork—rather than the real work of dismantling systemic racism (Chang and Wim 214).

In *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life* (2012), a comparative study on diversity work across higher education institutions, scholar Sara Ahmed explains that it has become the norm among universities to present documentation, in the form of DEI statements or other types of public relations patchwork, to stand in as proxy for the actual work of dismantling systemic oppression and inequities. According to Ahmed, that manner of institutionalizing the language of diversity, has caused diversity work to lose its critical edge and potential for effectual transformation. Elaborating on what Chang and Wim describe as a reason for burnout among people of color in education, Ahmed explains that, in addition to their regular duties plus other unpaid "minority tax" labor assigned to them, minoritized faculty and staff are often

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[19] The "minority tax" is defined as the burden of extra unpaid duties and responsibilities placed on minority faculty in the name of increasing diversity at their institutions, which reduces their time and energy for other work, including professional requirements that are measured for tenure, promotion, and other forms of compensation. See Williamson, Theresa, M.D., C. Rory Goodwin, M.D., Ph.D., and Peter A. Ubel, M.D. "Minority Tax Reform—Avoiding Overtaxing Minorities When We Need Them Most." *The New England Journal of Medicine,* 20 May 2021, https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMp2100179.

burdened with fulfilling the institutional task of drafting documents and moving them through circular channels of bureaucracy, leaving little or no time for the real work of systemic change.

Adding to the critique of the old "normal" in education, sociocultural anthropologist and education scholar Jonathan Rosa states, "We can't simply respond with a spirit of recuperation or return to status quo. This has to be an opportunity for reckoning with what was never stable, what was never fair or equitable or sustainable or healthy" (Rosa "Equity in School"). Rosa explains that "The fear and uncertainty triggered worldwide by the spread of the coronavirus is already a familiar experience for many U.S. students. [...] To these students, schools have long been a site of trauma and struggle, rather than safety and support—and a place where inequities are exacerbated, not eased" (Rosa). In clarifying how social inequities were laid bare by the dual pandemics, Rosa astutely points out that the disruption to education during COVID-19 became a newly prioritized concern for educational institutions because the disruption presented barriers and uncertainty to some people for the first time. However, for others those barriers and uncertainties in education have always existed. The hope is, Rosa says, for those more privileged to have now experienced what it feels like to be forced on a daily basis to operate through systematic barriers, that they may better understand that "the world has been systematically constructed to better facilitate certain people's movement, and that we could remake the world so that it is more accessible for people. That is not just a naturally occurring thing. It is what we make of it" (Rosa). The problem, however, as Rosa notes is that schools have responded to the different needs and resources of students in an ad hoc and idiosyncratic way, yet we cannot continue to just respond to things on the fly (ibid). Critics of the public university's neoliberal turn toward profit-over-people models of corporatization might not be as optimistic that school administrators will be compelled to eradicate systemic inequity in their institutions due to empathy or civic responsibility.[20]

Nonetheless, the economic unsustainability of systemic inequities in education has also now become more visible at a material level. Recent reports on higher education show that nationwide student enrollment in colleges and universities decreased by more than 600,000 students during the COVID-19 pandemic (Whitford), the largest decline in college enrollment since 2011 (Nietzel). Furthermore, student enrollment did not rebound in fall 2021, as many college administrators had hoped, but instead has continued to decline. The state of California had an overall 6.5% decline in enrollment, higher than the 3.5% national average and the sixth highest decline in the nation (Shalby). In California's three-tier public higher education structure—consisting of the University of California (UC), California State University (CSU), and community college systems—various measures were taken to try to alleviate the impact of the pandemic by adjusting several of the normal barriers to the admissions process, such as suspending the use of SAT/ACT scores, expanding the number of math courses that meet A-G admissions requirements, and extending application deadlines (Gao and Johnson). While the UCs saw an overall increase in applications for fall 2021, in which 43% of admitted students came from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups, the highest proportion in UC history, the number of applicants from low-income backgrounds decreased (ibid). In contrast, the CSUs had a 5% decrease in applications from California residents. Although the CSUs increased their

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[20] According to Christopher Newfield, author of *Unmaking the Public University: The Forty Year Assault on the Middle Class* (2008) and *The Great Mistake: How We Wrecked Public Universities and How We Can Fix Them* (2016), the public university has been in a state of financial and political crisis and decline for over forty years. In adopting certain private-sector business models, the university has increased costs while reducing the quality of education, contributing to the fall of the middle class, and decreasing the university's value to society.

admission rates from the previous year, actual enrollment of new first-year students still decreased (ibid). California's community colleges had the sharpest decline with 14.8% less enrollment due to many of its working-class students having to choose the workforce over the classroom (Shalby). Although some higher education administrators were surprised by the continued decline in college enrollment (ibid), student activists of the Third World Liberation Front movement in the 1960s had explicitly outlined these inequities in California's higher education system. Gary Okihiro, American Studies and International Affairs scholar, explains that

> In 1968 Third World Students noted that California's public higher education mirrored and produced the relations of power. Community colleges composed the state's lowest tier; above that was the California state system [CSU]; and at the top was the University of California system. Students of color populated the lower two levels, while whites and children of the elite predominated in the highest tier. At the two-year community colleges students generally received vocational training and earned associate degrees, while the four-year state system offered bachelor's degrees; for advanced studies and degrees, students had to attend the University of California. Employment patterns followed the three-tier educational hierarchy, from manual technical labor for community college graduates to middle-level professional jobs for California state graduates to management and advanced degrees in business, education, engineering, law, medicine, and the arts and sciences for University of California graduates. (Okihiro 2146-2150)

It should not be a surprise then that the pandemic's disproportionate impact on students of color and low-income students was mirrored accordingly across California's three-tier college system. In addition to students who had no choice but to withdraw from college for various reasons during the pandemic, including needing to work and provide support and care for themselves or their families, many other students opted to delay or forego enrolling in college since paying the cost of tuition and fees could no longer be justified for what was being offered. While most students who withdrew from or delayed enrollment in college were students of color and students from low-income backgrounds, international student enrollment also steeply declined by 15% (Silver). The reasons were both distinct from and overlapping with why underprivileged US students opted out of college enrollment.

Despite the dramatic decline in enrollment by international students in 2020, who comprised only 5% of total students enrolled in US higher education, international students still contributed $39 billion to the national economy that year (Silver). Currently, an international undergraduate student enrolled at UC San Diego must pay an additional $29,754 per year in non-resident tuition and fees in addition to the annual $14,733 for in-state tuition and fees (UCSD "Cost of Attendance"). An international undergraduate student enrolled at CSU's San Diego State University pays $11,880 per year in non-resident tuition and fees in addition to the annual $8,174 for in-state tuition and fees (SDSU "Cost of Attendance"). UCSD currently ranks as one of the nation's top ten picks for international students, with international students now comprising 25% of its total student population (Robbins "UC San Diego's Foreign Enrollment Hits Record"). A key component of public education's shift toward a neoliberal corporate business model has entailed increasing admission numbers of international students who pay rising costs of non-resident tuition and fees in addition to in-state tuition and fees. This approach

is exemplified at UC San Diego, which has since 2008 decided "to heavily recruit high paying international students who could help the campus offset deep cuts in state funding" (Robbins "UCSD Foreign Enrollment Drops" 2021). Until now, that strategy has, in part, allowed universities to avoid doing the real work of dismantling systemic inequities in education. Yet, the unsustainability of this approach has become more evident. As a journalist reported in 2020,

> The downturn [of international student enrollment] represents a potential financial problem for public universities like UCSD, which decided to offset cuts in state funding in recent years by throwing open their doors to foreigners willing to pay higher rates of tuition. / UCSD experienced explosive growth using that strategy. In fall 2009, the university had 1,905 international students, roughly 450 of whom were from China, whose citizens revere America's system of higher education. / By fall 2019, foreign enrollment hit 8,842, about 5,600 of whom were from China. But the school added only 50 international students last fall, down from 319 a year earlier. (Robbins "UC San Diego's Foreign Enrollment")

Therefore, both the dual pandemics of COVID-19 and exacerbated systemic racism, including an increased *visibility* of social inequities at educational institutions in the US, have begun deterring international student enrollment.

For over seventy years, enrollment of international students in US higher education had steadily increased, from 25,000 in 1948-1949 to over one million in recent years (Svrluga). Just over half of all international students now come from China (35%) and India (18%) (Silver), with the number of international students from China having nearly tripled between the years 2009-2019 (Rauhala). International students from China alone contributed $15 billion to the US economy in the 2018-2019 academic year (ibid). Although international student enrollment from China sharply declined in 2020, a recent Pew Research Center report shows that it had in fact already been steadily decreasing in the past few years. According to the report, one factor may be that some students may find the US a less desirable place to study abroad (Silver). Another reason for the nationwide slowdown starting in 2016 was partly due to changes in US immigration policy, which made it harder for foreign students to remain in the country to work after they graduated (Robbins). The Pew Report also adds that "Some observers, including the president of Columbia University, have raised concerns that tense bilateral relations between the U.S. and China are damaging American universities' ability to attract top academic talent, particularly from China. Still others have pointed to policies put in place during the Trump administration to restrict Chinese students from studying in certain fields or even revoke their visas" (Silver). According to a 2021 Pew Research Center survey, a "majority of Americans (55%) support limiting Chinese students studying in the US, even as a broad majority (80%) say it is good for US colleges and universities to accept international students in general" (ibid). Therefore, as numbers of COVID-19 cases and deaths continued to rise in the US, systemic racism against Asian Americans became more visible, hostility against China grew and was conflated with all people of Chinese nationality, and a violent domestic insurrection attempting to overthrow democratic election results erupted at the US Capitol in January 2021, current and prospective international students from China—many of whom had since childhood held an idealized notion of the American Dream—became disillusioned about the United States (Rauhala). As a result, many international students from China decided to delay enrolling in US colleges or chose alternatives in other countries (ibid).

Relying on international students to offset the increasing costs and inequity generated in corporatized models of higher education is not a sustainable solution. Attempting to deny the existence of persistent systemic inequities by censoring educators or banning books is also not a realistic solution. DEI statements also cannot patch over deeply rooted inequities. Educational institutions need to evolve by creating socially equitable and sustainable systems.

Bridging the Gap Between Diversity and Equity and Inclusion

It is estimated that the entire US national population will reach a majority-minority population by 2045 (Poston, Jr.). In California, which has the nation's largest state population of over 39 million people, non-White Latinos (39%) became the state's largest ethnic group in 2014 (Johnson et al "California's Population"). According to US Census data, Asian Americans, who comprise 15% of California's population (Johnson et al), were reported as the fastest growing single-race group in the US between 2000-2019 (Budiman and Ruiz "Asian Americans"), whereas the national populations of African Americans and multiracial Americans are also rapidly growing (Budiman and Ruiz). As racially minoritized students in the US became the majority in public K-12 schools in 2014, racially minoritized students are also likely to become the majority in many US colleges during this century. For some schools, that change has already happened. As mentioned, however, demographic shifts have not by default translated into equity and inclusion in education. For example, although currently "43% of all California public higher education students are Latino, only half of them ultimately earn a degree" (Styer Martínez and Miranda). Thus, despite the fear-based claims of GRT ideology and the common PR practice among some institutions of using demographic data of admissions numbers to indicate their commitment to DEI, the gap between "diversity" and "equity and inclusion" has persisted.

One reason for the persistent gap is that demographic shifts among students have not been reflected in faculty representation. In fact, the diversity gap between racially minoritized faculty and racially minoritized students has widened in recent years as full-time White faculty hires increased by 10% (Davis and Fry). According to a 2017 study, 80% of K-12 teachers are White, while 76% of faculty in US higher educational institutions are White (Davis and Fry). Racially minoritized faculty are even more underrepresented in certain disciplines, particularly STEM and writing programs. In a state-by-state analysis of teacher diversity, California had the highest gap of 44% between teacher and student diversity (Boser). Research in education studies have shown that there is a direct correlation between racially minoritized faculty inclusion and racially minoritized student success, since racially minoritized faculty can serve as role models, mentors, and educators who are able to draw from first-hand and culturally relevant experience to guide students from similar backgrounds.[21]

Besides racial inequity, the persistent gap between diversity and equity and inclusion also extends to gender. In their book *Building Gender Equity in the Academy: Institutional Strategies for Change* (2020), Sandra Laursen and Ann E. Austin present findings on the main causes for underrepresentation and barriers to equity for female faculty in STEM fields, namely explicit exclusion and implicit bias, unwelcoming and unsafe work environments, lack of accountability for noncompliance of equity, and lack of structural support for women to balance work and

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[21] See Richard Ingersoll and Henry May, "Recruitment, Retention and the Minority Teacher Shortage" *Consortium for Policy Research in Education*, 2011; Anna Egalite and Brian Kisida. "The Effects of Teacher Match on Students' Academic Perceptions and Attitudes. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, vol. 40, no. 1, 2018, pp. 59-81; and Robert W. Fairlie, et al. "A Community College Instructor Like Me: Race and Ethnicity Interactions in the Classroom." *The American Economic Review*, vol. 104, no. 8, 2014, pp. 2567–91.

personal lives as whole people with intersectional identities. Thus, despite the use of numerical data of admission rates to signify "diversity" at universities, a closer examination shows that access to higher education does not by itself produce equity and inclusion, especially without creating learning environments that foster equity and inclusion within those institutions.

The disruption of "normal" in education, brought forth by dual pandemics that laid bare deeply rooted inequities in education for both students and education employees, has therefore presented a critical opportunity to envision and design better education systems. For education scholar Jonathan Rosa, it raises the question: "What happens when we design schools in the first place with these concerns [of equity, sustainability, and support] at the front and center rather than always positioning them on the periphery? How does this become an opportunity for us to rethink whose experiences we are attending to most centrally in schools?" (Rosa "Equity in School").

The convergence of dual pandemics has underscored that diversity discourse cannot substitute for the real work of transforming systemic inequities. Redesigning education to foster equity and sustainability in the twenty-first century is crucial not just for the survival of educational institutions, but also for well-being, social justice, and for the Earth. To be effective, however, innovating education must go beyond performative and ad hoc measures. It must engage in the real work of dismantling systems of division and domination, while also cultivating epistemologies, pedagogies, and practices that foster social equity and well-being.

As the recent decline in college enrollment indicates, educational institutions that are not clearly addressing issues of equity and inclusion are becoming less attractive to students (Aquino). This appraisal will become even more salient as minoritized students increasingly become the majority at many universities and colleges. According to DEI administrator Carlos Tasso Eira De Aquino, "The survival of today's educational institutions depends, therefore, on developing truly inclusive campus and online environments" (ibid). Since one of the greatest shortcomings in the unfulfilled DEI claims of higher educational institutions has been the gap between its diversity discourse and its actual practices of equity and inclusion, this dissertation focuses on epistemologies and pedagogies that foster equity and inclusion. This research is significant because only increasing "diversity" of students and faculty in numbers—whether at the top or at the margins of systems of inequity—does not by itself create social equity. Real systemic change that moves our educational systems from diversity to equity and inclusion requires a fundamental paradigm shift guided by epistemologies and learning and teaching practices based in interconnection, cooperation, and collective liberation.

Internalization of Oppressive Paradigms as Barriers to Social Equity

In addressing the internalization of oppressive paradigms within social justice movements, Audre Lorde advised that "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change" (Lorde 111). Accordingly, this dissertation is not merely seeking inclusion of more minoritized students or faculty at the margins of a Eurocentric or male-dominant status quo. It is also not merely seeking for some minoritized people to gain higher status within that status quo's constructed hierarchies of division and domination. It does not perceive of the institutionalized knowledges established during the European Enlightenment as universal or most beneficial—particularly for helping us to now evolve beyond systems of inequity. In other words, this dissertation does not attempt to solve systemic inequities in education by using the same consciousness that created those problems.

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During the European Enlightenment, the whole self was split into divided parts of mind, heart, and body with these parts classified and ranked as superior or inferior. Feminist and decolonial scholars have critiqued this formation of Western discourse and epistemologies. That "ordering" of the inner world was an attempt to evade the vulnerability of human condition and the fear of existential annihilation, which also drove the perceived need to order the outer world by separating and classifying humans and animals and construct racial and gender taxonomies. The desire to control vulnerability and impermanence—inevitable aspects of the human condition—by constructing a divided self and defining power as domination over others in a divided and hierarchized world became the logics of coloniality/modernity. Another outcome of the divided self was that *intellectual* knowledge was separated from and favored over other knowledges and ways of knowing, which were devalued and suppressed. René Descartes' phrase *cogito ergo sum* (I think, therefore I am) became a slogan for European Enlightenment's humanism[22] and was taken as evidence of the superiority of humans over animals and Nature, man over woman, and Europeans over other humans. Intellectual knowledge was also divided into separate disciplines. Learning within distinct disciplines of intellectual knowledge further naturalized linear and dualistic ways of thinking. To this point, Linda Tuhiwai Smith explains in *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (2012) that academic research has been conflated with European ways of knowing, in which imperialism became embedded in disciplines of knowledge as regimes of truth. In addition, scholars have also noted that knowledge in higher education came to be primarily characterized as the ability to deconstruct rather than construct and integrate. This has had specific ramifications for defining the terms of inclusion for people of color in higher education.

Postcolonial scholar Gayatri Spivak has problematized the ways in which privileged, academic postcolonial critics unwittingly participate in the exploitation of the Third World. Responding to the widely discussed question raised in Spivak's essay titled "Can the subaltern speak?" (1988)[23] decolonial scholars Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang state that the subaltern can indeed speak, yet a better question is "Can the subaltern be heard?" They explain that people of color can only be heard in academia in certain ways—through damage-centered narratives, in which stories of their victimization are gathered as if to simply be added to a growing archive of trauma for the settler colonial gaze (Tuck and Yang *R Words* 2014). This dissertation does not wish to engage in the exercise of adding another damage-centered narrative to academia's archive of trauma. Moreover, in recognizing the importance of specificity among different intersectional identity positionalities and experiences, this dissertation also does not engage in a hierarchy of oppressions—another variation of producing damage-centered narratives that requires adopting the master's tools of divide and conquer to seek greater contingent inclusion into the status quo. Instead, by using an integrative framework for constructing liberatory education, this dissertation brings the global south into conversation with the global south, and the global south into conversation with the global north—not as subordinates but as equals—for the purpose of building more socially just and sustainable pathways forward.

Climbing Together the Hill of the Century

This dissertation is inspired by the lived teachings of Zen master and peace activist, Thich Nhat Hanh, who has explained that that the notion "I think, therefore I am" immediately

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[22] Okihiro, Gary. *Third World Studies: Theorizing Liberation*, Duke University Press, 2016, pp. 80-81.
[23] Spivak, Gayatri. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, Macmillan, 1988, pp. 24-28.

reveals its limitations because it indicates that a person is not present because they are caught up in thinking. He states that it is similar to saying "I think, therefore I am...not here" since you are lost in your thinking (Thich *You Are Here* 33). Alternatively, he offers the expression "You are, therefore I am"[24] and "You and I inter-are"[25] to explain *interbeing*—a way of understanding the human condition with clarity and compassion—instead of fear, division, and domination—and as a basis for living harmoniously with all living beings and Nature. At the turn of this millennium, the United Nations officially adopted Thich Nhat Hanh's *Five Mindfulness Trainings*,[26] which includes interbeing, as its code of non-sectarian global ethics.[27]

At Thich Nhat Hanh's memorial service in 2022, members of his monastic community shared a collection of his letters, titled "Climbing the Hill of the Century Together,"[28] which consisted of teachings of guidance and care written to his students during his lifetime. In that collection of letters, Thich Nhat Hanh states that he had done around 60% of the work of finding the authentic philosophical and practical teachings of mindfulness, while introducing them to the West and adapting them for modern times. Yet, 40% of the work still needs to be done by the rest of us. The remaining work of collective awakening is part of what is required to move us forward into a new era that fosters well-being, social justice, and environmental sustainability.

This dissertation also considers the theories of Bertrand Russell, the British education reformer, polymath, Nobel Laureate, and humanitarian who opposed imperialism, explained that the work of construction is more difficult than deconstruction, yet ultimately more rewarding.[29] He advocated for education that promoted the development of moral character and wisdom rather than just the accumulation of knowledge. Russell defined *knowledge* as the acquisition of data and information, whereas *wisdom* is the practical application and use of knowledge to create social value. Related to Russell's call for a more ethical and practical purpose of education, Zen Buddhist philosopher D.T. Suzuki described intellectual knowledge as limited, noting that it is useful for deconstructing. According to Suzuki, however, intellectual knowledge was insufficient for the work of construction, which requires moral character and an entirely different set of faculties of the human spirit.[30]

Developing a new consciousness and skills for constructing well-being, social justice, and environmental sustainability will be crucial in this century. In the documentary film *Road to Peace* (2012), the 14th Dalai Lama states, "This century should be a century of dialogue. Then I think we have a real possibility of peace" (Stuparich). Similarly, Thich Nhat Hanh has stated that the practices of deep listening and mindful communication are necessary for global peace.[31] Moving ourselves as a human species out of the past era of division and domination may not be

[24] Thich Nhat Hanh. "You Are, Therefore I am." *Dharma Cloud Temple 2013*, Parallax Press – Better Listen!, 2013.

[25] Thich Nhat Hanh "Interrelationship." *Plum Village*. 2 July 2019, https://plumvillage.org/articles/interrelationship-poem-by-thich-nhat-hanh/.

[26] Thich Nhat Hanh. "The Five Mindfulness Trainings." *Plum Village*. 15 June 2022, https://plumvillage.org/mindfulness/the-5-mindfulness-trainings/.

[27] Gach, Gary. "Thich Nhat Hanh's Code of Global Ethics: The Five Mindfulness Trainings." *Kosmos Journal for Global Transformation*, 2 October 2019, https://www.kosmosjournal.org/kj_article/thich-nhat-hanhs-code-of-global-ethics/.

[28] From Thich Nhat Hanh's collection of letters read at his memorial service in 2022. "Climbing Together the Hill of the Century." *Deer Park Monastery*, 29 January 2022, https://deerparkmonastery.org/thich-nhat-hanh/climbing-together-the-hill-of-the-century/.

[29] Russell, Bertrand. *Education and the Good Life*, New York, Boni & Liveright, 1926.

[30] Suzuki, D.T. *Essays in Zen Buddhism*. New York, Grove Press, 1961.

[31] Thich Nhat Hanh. "Listening Deeply for Peace." *Lion's Roar*, 14 March 2021, https://www.lionsroar.com/listening-deeply-for-peace/.

an easy task, yet it is possible through personal and collective transformation. It requires the awareness that an old consciousness based in duality, division, and domination, and its systems and practices, are not working for our well-being, for society, and the Earth—and that we now have a responsibility to create a fundamental paradigm shift. In education, this entails foregrounding integrative epistemologies and pedagogies based in interconnection and collective liberation.

Methods and Significance of Research

Much research on social justice in education has utilized a US-centric framework and has advocated for greater inclusion of marginalized students or faculty into existing systems of inequity, or it critiques the ineffectiveness of various ad hoc measures for transforming systemic inequities. As someone who navigated numerous barriers and inequities in higher education for many years, both as a former first-generation college student and then as an educator advocating for students and colleagues, my research is both a personal and academic project. In solidarity with multiple generations of students and educators who have faced and struggled with persistent inequities in education, I have endeavored in my research to outline the root causes of systemic inequity, including the fundamental thought paradigms and key methods that enable social inequities to persist in education. Furthermore, my research has sought to provide preventative measures, rather than ad hoc treatments to temporarily or partially reduce systemic inequity and oppression, by presenting an integrative framework of epistemologies and pedagogies for transforming education to serve as an instrument of liberation that fosters social equity and well-being. Integrative here refers to holistic epistemologies based in interconnection, praxis that connects personal and collective liberation, and pedagogies that engage the whole person in mind-body-heart-spirit.

Accordingly, my dissertation utilizes mixed methods in textual analysis, cultural studies, and participant observation research that draws from my experiences in teaching, program development, and applied mindfulness practice. Mixed methods are important for this research since they allow me to move between formalized knowledges while also attending to the complexity of lived experiences. Integrating personal experience in this research via self-reflection and participant observation is essential in mindfulness practice to cultivate awareness and insight. It is an important practice in feminist studies to name one's subjectivity rather than seek to present one's subjectivity as objective or universal.[32] It is also a vital practice in decolonizing education in which lived experiences and embodied wisdom constitute knowledge alongside formalized intellectual knowledges.[33] Furthermore, my interdisciplinary research in critical mindfulness studies, ethnic studies, feminist studies, and equity-based pedagogies is intended to bring these fields of scholarship and applied practices together to help bridge the gap between just performing or critiquing diversity discourse and doing the constructive work of creating learning environments that foster equity and inclusion.

Important research on innovative teaching practices in K-12 education, including mindfulness-based interventions (MBI) and social emotional learning (SEL), has been increasing. This is a step in the necessary direction of equally valuing and cultivating emotional intelligence (EQ) and interpersonal skills, along with intellectual knowledge (IQ) and critical

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[32] Haraway, Donna J. "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective." *Feminist Studies*, vol. 14, no. 3, 1988, pp. 575-599.

[33] Tuhiwai Smith, Linda. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. 2ⁿᵈ ed, Zed Books, Ltd., 2012.

thinking skills. These skills are crucial for the constructive work of cultivating well-being, social justice, and environmental sustainability in the twenty-first century.

In higher education, studies on the neurological and physiological benefits of mindfulness have significantly increased, yet the focus has primarily been on scientific knowledge without examination of social structures. Meanwhile, the growing mental health crisis among college students across the nation has spurred some campuses to incorporate mindfulness practices into their wellness center programs or, in some cases, course curriculum. Many programs thus far, however, focus on mindfulness as an individual self-care practice without considering or addressing systemic factors that cause or exacerbate stress, anxiety, depression, and other mind-body-spirit health struggles in the first place. Similarly, some studies on mindfulness in education focus on the intrapersonal or inner work of transformation, with less emphasis on the structural changes also necessary to create cultures based in equity and well-being. In contrast, most research on educational social justice provides structural, or in some cases interpersonal levels, of analysis without examining the importance of intrapersonal practices or the inner work of social justice.

My research provides an intervention to the social harm and inequity caused by paradigms of duality, division, and domination by analyzing a range of holistic epistemologies, pedagogies, and practices. My dissertation also contributes to creative and scholarly work in holistic studies and integral education—or what I refer to as *integrative epistemologies and pedagogies that foster personal and collective liberation*. It is my hope that this research inspires and empowers students and educators by providing an integrative framework for cultivating liberatory education.

Chapter Overview

This introductory chapter has provided an analysis of the paradigms of consciousness that enable the persistent gap between diversity discourse and equity and inclusion in higher education. Chapter 2 further investigates the paradigm of the divided self and power as domination, tracing its root cause to a fear of the human condition, and examines corresponding practices that have shaped the modern world system, particularly in education. My research analyzes three major types of barriers to social equity in education, enacted by overt and covert methods and internalization of oppressive paradigms. This chapter engages with Gary Okihiro's analysis of post-1968 ethnic studies and the unfinished work of the Third World Liberation Front, and then extends it to explore different philosophies of the human condition that help to denaturalize the fear-based paradigms that have discursively and materially shaped the modern world system.

In Chapter 3, I analyze integrative epistemologies—including Buddhist philosophies of impermanence and interbeing, Indigenous knowledges and pedagogies, and Gloria Anzaldúa's borderlands theory and spiritual activism—all of which are based in interconnection, non-duality, and mutuality. These offer transformative solutions to fear-based paradigms of division and domination that drive the perceived need to create social inequity and define power as domination in the first place.

In Chapter 4, I examine Gloria Anzaldúa's theory of spiritual activism, Thich Nhat Hanh's philosophy of engaged Buddhism, and bell hooks' theory of engaged pedagogy. All three theories are grounded in embodied praxis that integrate mind-body-spirit and present worldviews based in relationality and interconnection, and thus elucidate the connection between personal change (inner work) and social change (outer work). Understanding the links between the inner

and outer work of social justice is crucial for being able to actualize personal and collective liberation.

These chapters provide the groundwork for Chapter 5, in which I first discuss methods from equity-based pedagogies, including *culturally sustaining pedagogies*—which empower diverse students and educators with asset-based and culturally relevant frameworks instead of assimilationist and deficit frameworks to which marginalized communities have historically been subjected in education—and *holistic pedagogies* that engage students as whole people. This includes engaging different learning styles, trauma-informed pedagogy, and contemplative pedagogy.

Next, I introduce my theory and development of *integrative pedagogy* from several of my own courses. Integrative pedagogy, as a holistic pedagogy, engages the whole person and facilitates integration, empowerment, and embracing differences with others—rather than teaching fear, hate, and division in oneself or with others—thus providing transformative alternatives to dominant ideologies of division and domination that perpetuate social harm and inequity. Empowering diverse students to become adept at engaging with different worldviews, develop self-reflection and metacognition of their thinking and writing processes, and deepen their listening and communication skills—equips the next generations with vital cooperation skills for relating with others in socially just, peaceful, and sustainable ways. Rather than presenting a singular, prescriptive way of teaching, my theory of integrative pedagogy emphasizes a dynamic, learner-centered practice that is continually evolving and is necessarily customized according to the context of each class and group of participants.

The epilogue to this dissertation then summarizes an integrative path forward in cultivating learning environments that foster social equity and well-being, while pointing to future research possibilities in liberatory education.

CHAPTER 2
Healing the Paradigm of the Divided Self and Power as Domination

*Ultimately, it is unawareness of greed, hatred, and delusion in ourselves, as well as
in our institutions, that is the root of disease, and the source of our dis-ease.*[34]
–Jon Kabat-Zinn

White supremacy isn't the elephant in the room. It is the room.[35]
—Brené Brown

Patriarchy isn't the shark. It's the water.[36]
—Brené Brown

A Story of Two Wolves

The exact origin of the parable of the "Two Wolves" is unknown but has sometimes been attributed to the Cherokee or Lenape people. The parable relates the following story:

> An old Cherokee is teaching his grandson about life. "A fight is going on inside me," he said to the boy.
>
> "It is a terrible fight and it is between two wolves. One is evil – he is anger, envy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, and ego." He continued, "The other is good – he is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion, and faith. The same fight is going on inside you – and inside every other person, too."
>
> The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather, "Which wolf will win?"
>
> The old Cherokee simply replied, "The one you feed."[37]

The story of "Two Wolves" reflects a common theme of the human condition captured in various other stories across different times and cultures – the existence of both light and dark aspects within all human beings and the ability to choose, through mindfulness, which aspects to nurture.

If we apply the lesson of the "Two Wolves" parable to the prophecy of The Condor and the Eagle, we can hypothesize that the past era was shaped by having the dark aspects of human nature fed more than the light aspects. To enter a new era of collective liberation thus requires

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[34] Kabat-Zinn, Jon. Foreword. *The Inner Work of Racial Justice: Healing Ourselves and Transforming Our Communities Through Mindfulness* by Rhonda V. Magee, Penguin Random House LLC, pp. ix-xiv.

[35] Brown, Brené. "Words, Actions, Dehumanization, and Accountability." *Unlocking Us,* Spotify, 13 January 2021, https://open.spotify.com/episode/3VeEuyFibDfesoCOx5jUA7.

[36] Brown, Brené, host. Elizabeth Lesser, guest. "The Power of Women's Stories." *Unlocking Us*, Spotify, 28 October 2020, https://open.spotify.com/episode/55atWP0vLw6lQGXUyhDe2Y.

[37] "The Two Wolves – A Cherokee Legend" https://www.firstpeople.us/FP-Html-Legends/TwoWolves-Cherokee.html.

that we make a fundamental paradigm shift to further cultivate the light aspects of humankind, which will be the focus of Chapters 3, 4, and 5. First, we need to understand how a fragmented worldview shaped the collective consciousness of the past era so that we can choose wisely.

Planet A or B: Ideologies of Human Nature

Dutch historian, Rutger Bergman, explores this theme in his book *Humankind: A Hopeful History* (2020), and presents an alternative account of human evolution based on seven years of research of world history that belies dominant narratives of human nature based in fear and cynicism. In an opening example, Bergman mentions a survey used by Tom Postmes, social psychology professor at the University of Gronigen in the Netherlands, who for years has asked his students the same question: Do you believe we live on Planet A or Planet B? On Planet A, in a state of emergency, people look out for each other's well-being and safety, offering to lend a hand and, in some cases, even give their lives to help complete strangers. On Planet B, each person must fend for themselves, panic ensues, and children, the elderly, and people with disabilities get trampled on (Bergman 2-3). Postmes says that "97% of people believe that we live on Planet B, yet the truth is, in almost every case, we live on Planet A" (Bergman 3). The reason is not due to lack of research either, Postmes emphasizes, "We've had this information available to us since World War II" (3). Along with copious other examples from around the world, Bergman uses this case to show that most of us have been fed stories throughout our lives that lead us to hold negative views of human nature and thus see the world through a lens of fear and cynicism.

In presenting a vast number of studies that prove otherwise, Bergman's book aims to dispel the myth of what Dutch biologist Frans de Waal calls "*veneer theory*: the notion that civilisation is nothing more than a thin veneer that will crack at the merest provocation. In actuality, the opposite is true. It's when crisis hits [...] that we humans become our best selves" (4). Bergman's research shows how our worldviews have been shaped by those in positions of power who circulate ideologies, including veneer theories, through culture-making institutions, including the media, education, and churches to skew our views of humanity, despite evidence that demonstrates otherwise. So, if an abundance of evidence reveals that veneer theories are more often untrue than true, then why have veneer theories, or other pessimistic views of humankind, been upheld as a dominant worldview in the modern era?

To begin, Bergman cites Rebecca Solnit's *A Paradise Built in Hell* (2009) to provide one reason for the prevalent use of veneer theory—"elite panic comes from powerful people who see all humanity in their own image. Dictators and despots, governors and generals – they all too often resort to brute force to prevent scenarios that exist only in their own heads, on the assumption that the average Joe is ruled by self-interest, just like them" (qtd. in Bergman 7). Bergman adds that "the doctrine that humans are innately selfish has permeated the western canon—from well-known thinkers like Thucydides, Augustine, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Luther, Calvin, Burke, Bentham, Nietzche, Freud and America's Founding Fathers" (Bergman 17). While those may be the worldviews of elites in positions of power, why do the average Joes also come to believe it?

To explain why humans are susceptible to believing veneer theories, Bergman refers to psychology studies of *negativity bias*, which show that humans are more attuned to the bad than the good, and *availability bias*, which demonstrates that humans tend to believe that what we "see" or have continuously been fed is common rather than the exception (14-15). Furthermore, veneer theories function like a *nocebo effect*, which is the opposite of a *placebo effect*. As

Bergman explains, some things are true whether or not we believe in them (e.g. water boils at 100 degrees Celsius), while other things have the potential to be true, if we believe in them – also known as what sociologists call a *self-fulfilling prophecy* (8-9). The term *placebo effect* was coined to explain experiments in which patients felt better or recovered after being told they were given a pill or surgery that would cure them, even though they were only given a sugar pill or had not received any surgery. In contrast, the *nocebo effect* can create the opposite result in that, if people are told that something will make them ill and they *believe* it—even if it does not contain any harmful elements—they can actually become ill. The lesson of the nocebo effect is that if you believe something enough, it can become real (9). Bergman cites a study done in the 1990s by economics professor Robert Frank who gave his students a range of assignments that presented humans as egotistical to gauge the students' generosity over time. The outcome was that the longer they studied that version of economics, the more selfish they became. Frank concluded that "We become what we teach" (Bergman 17).

Similarly, in the parable of the "Two Wolves," the lesson is that humankind consists of both dark and light aspects and the aspect that prevails will be the one that we feed. The continual use of veneer theories, then, has operated like a *nocebo*, by continuously feeding the dark aspects of humankind, despite resounding evidence for decades now that humankind more naturally tends toward fulfilling its light aspects. Throughout his book, Bergman demonstrates that veneer theories, even if not based in evidence, have been used as a guiding framework for the systems and cultures of our institutions, from policing to prison systems, churches, healthcare, scientific research, and schooling—which, in turn, shapes our ways of seeing, thinking, and interacting with others.

To further elucidate what Bergman calls a "more realistic" history of humankind, his research dispels one of the most widely circulated and influential examples of veneer theory from the modern era—Darwin's theory of evolution. He states that, for the biologist, Charles Darwin, "who'd once considered becoming a priest, the impossibility of reconciling the cruelty of nature with the biblical story of creation ultimately destroyed his faith in God" (Bergman 53). Unable to reconcile experiences of struggle, suffering, and death while observing Nature, Darwin theorized that evolution is based on natural selection, which he described as the "survival of the fittest" achieved through competition and adaptation. Yet, throughout his book, Bergman presents numerous studies that have since proven a different theory of evolution—humans are hardwired to cooperate. Throughout the history of human evolution, those who had the best cooperation skills were the most likely to survive and thrive. The reason is because humans are a relational species who depend on each other for resources, knowledge, comfort, connection, growth, and evolution. Scientific studies have shown that people with healthy relationships also tend to enjoy greater physical health, emotional well-being, and longer life spans. Simply put, as human beings, we need each other. Consequently, Bergman advocates that the time has come for a new view of human nature—what he calls a *new realism* (20). Unlike fear-based and cynical views of human nature, he explains that this new realism includes recognizing that the key to human evolution has not been domination but rather cooperation.

While Rutger Bergman's "new realism" history of human evolution demonstrates that humans who cooperate best are most likely to survive and thrive, Omega Institute co-founder and author Elizabeth Lesser's restorative account of history told from women's perspectives presents further eye-opening evidence that a fragmented, fear-based worldview has skewed our understanding of the human condition. In her book, *Cassandra Speaks: When Women Are the Storytellers, the Human Story Changes* (2020), Lesser demonstrates that the guiding stories we

choose to tell become the culture, thereby shaping our values and belief systems (1). Lesser examines origin stories from the Western canon and compares them to origin stories of Indigenous, pre-colonial cultures around the world. In many Indigenous creation myths, Lesser explains that

> neither sex was created to dominate the other. Both men and women shared the responsibility to help the community thrive, and connect with the sacred. Researching and reading these stories has given me a different view of 'human nature' and what is possible. But they are not the stories that are driving our culture today; they are not the stories most of us [in the West] were raised on. (23)

After investigating origin stories from Western cultures—including those involving Eve, Pandora, and Cassandra—Lesser states that these stories would be very different if told from the perspective of the women. Yet, the versions of these stories narrated by men and passed on through generations as dominant ideology shared a common theme of demonizing women, blaming them for the human condition.

Elizabeth Lesser cites Joseph Campbell, the well-known scholar of mythologies, who states that the idea of woman as sinner does not appear in other cultural mythologies besides that of Eve and the story of the "original sin" or "fall of man" (31).[38] She adds that other scholars have researched earliest translations of the book of Genesis and noted that, in the original Hebrew text, "the knowledge of good and evil" meant the knowledge of how things really work for human beings, in the realm of time and birth and death. There was no narrative of blame or inherent state of condemnation (31). Regarding this shift in views of the human condition in the Western canon, Rutger Bergman also investigates how interpretations of Christian doctrine took a pessimistic turn, stating that a "negative outlook has also permeated Christianity from its early days. The Church Father Augustine (354-430) helped popularise the idea that humans are born sinful" (Bergman 17). Unlike the parable of "Two Wolves," which acknowledges the existence of both light and dark in humans, either of which we can choose to cultivate by conscious choice, Bergman explains that

> The concept of original sin remained popular through the Reformation, when Protestants broke with the Roman Catholic Church. According to theologian and reformer John Calvin, 'our nature is not only destitute and empty of good, but so fertile and fruitful of every evil that it cannot be idle.' [...] Weirdly, not only traditional Christianity but also the [European] Enlightenment, which placed

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[38] However, see Nassi, Viola. "The Figure of La Malinche in Chicana Literature: Between Betrayal and Redemption." *The Scottish Centre for Global History*. 17 February 2021, https://globalhistory.org.uk/2021/02/the-figure-of-la-malinche-in-chicana-literature-between-betrayal-and-redemption/. Gloria Anzaldúa and others have written about the myth of La Malinche, or Malitzin, an enslaved Nahua woman from Mexico who served as an interpreter to Spanish colonialist Hernán Cortés and gave birth to one of the first Mestizos (a person of mixed Indigenous and European ancestry). Malitzin was blamed for the fall of the Aztec Empire while later also revered as the "mother of Mexico." Although this is not a creation myth about the start of humankind, La Malinche served as a creation myth of a new social formation of people—los mestizos. In Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza (1987), Gloria Anzaldúa discusses the contradictory views of La Malinche as victim, traitor, and mother of Mexico under multiple patriarchies. Similar to creation myths involving Eve, however, earlier myths of La Malinche often blamed Malitzin for man's conditions instead of conveying a fuller account of how things really worked.

reason over faith, is rooted in a grim view of human nature. Orthodox faithful were convinced our kind is essentially depraved and the best we can do is apply a thin gloss of piety. [European] Enlightenment philosophers also thought we were depraved, but prescribed a coating of reason to cover the rot. [...] When it comes to notions about human nature, the continuity throughout Western thought is striking. (18)

In addition to Bergman and Lesser, other scholars have noted the importance of finding the original texts or translations of Christian doctrine rather than later interpretations that were institutionalized for political purposes. Responding to the original translations of the book of Genesis that recognize the capacity for knowledge of good and evil in humans, Lesser states, "Isn't this the crux of human life and the lesson of every great teaching tale? That we are lost, but we can be found. That we suffer, but we can grow wise. That if we take personal responsibility, we might grasp the knowledge of good and evil and chart a noble path home" (31). Certainly, that is the moral of the "Two Wolves" parable. However, Lesser explains that

> taking responsibility so as to grow wise is often not our first response to suffering. A more common, knee-jerk reaction is to look for someone else to blame. [...]
>
> But, in truth, there is no one to blame for the conundrum in which we find ourselves. Life is full of challenges, humans are full of desires, and each one of us is faced with daily choices between good and evil. We long for Eden—that state of being where the opposites are united, where peaceful abiding is the norm. But what if the whole point of life is to find Eden within and, in doing so, to create heaven on Earth? This is what the awareness of good and evil really means: to recognize that all the light and all the darkness in the world also dwells within your own heart, and instead of blaming the "other," our task is to become like gods—self-aware and responsible for choosing goodness over evil. (32)

A state of being where opposites are united resembles the notion of an era of balance and light, which the prophecy of "The Condor and the Eagle" envisions that we can reach after undergoing a transformation, if the human species can remember that the heart and mind are one. Similarly, Lesser states that, although origin stories from Western cultures entailed demonizing women and devaluing feminine aspects, she insists that we can still "break the spell" of these fragmented narratives that have been driving the culture for centuries and choose how the rest of story will unfold. For that task, studies in critical mindfulness offer helpful insights into how fear of the human condition is linked to certain dominative actions and how we can overcome that root fear and choose wisely.

The Inner: Human Condition and Fear of Existential Annihilation

In his essay, "Georges Bataille, Chögyam Trungpa, and Radical Transformation: Theorizing the Political Value of Mindfulness" (2017), political ecology scholar James K. Rowe discusses the overlapping theories of two very different historical figures—the French philosopher, George Bataille (1897-1962), and Tibetan Buddhist meditation master, Chögyam Trungpa (1939-1987), one of several key spiritual leaders who helped introduce Shambala teachings of Tibetan Buddhism to the West. Despite differences in culture and lifestyle, Rowe

explains that "these apparently disparate thinkers are primarily linked by their shared emphasis on what I will call *existential resentment*, when explaining worldly challenges like economic inequality and nuclear build-up" (Rowe 50). Rowe clarifies that

> By existential resentment, I mean the felt smallness that humans can feel in the face of our finite and fleshy existence [...] Both Bataille and Trungpa, in their respective works, articulate how easy it is for humans to feel small and servile in the face of a contingent existence, and how this felt servility often fuels compensatory desires for aggrandizement and domination, desires with profound material effects. For Trungpa, we struggle with a "fear of death, fear of oneself, and fear of others" that fuels aggressive behavior [...] Similarly, Bataille sees humanity as "revolting intimately against the fact of *dying*, generally mistrusting the body, that is, having a deep mistrust of what is accidental, natural, perishable" [...] This mistrust fuels efforts to best others as a way of compensating for the lack of power and control we can feel in the face of decay. Both Trüngpa and Bataille draw a strong causal link between existential resentment and dominative social relations. (50)

As George Bataille saw it, "We dominate our bodies and each other in efforts to surpass and ultimately control our animality, our impermanence" (Rowe 52). While that fear of impermanence may be a universal struggle of the human condition, Rowe explains that individuals and cultures respond to that struggle in different ways. For example, Tibetan Buddhism "offers meditative practices for befriending the reality of death. We are not destined to resentfully interpret death as domineering, or to flee from felt servility with fantasies of mastery" (53). For that purpose, Chögyam Trungpa's teachings focused on meditation as a life-affirming practice "for transforming existential resentment into deep and embodied appreciation for the fundamental goodness of earthly life by directly addressing the fear that leads to such resentment" and, instead, "if we can embody that basic goodness both individually and collectively, then we are much less likely to harm ourselves and others due to compensatory bids for oppressive power" (Rowe 58). Rowe states that, "While Bataille offers a clearer existential diagnosis of systemic challenges, Trungpa's body of teachings and methodology for treatment are more robust" (51). Here, Rowe is also careful to note that Buddhism does not automatically make a nation or social organization immune to social inequity or corruption, adding that Tibet has also remained stubbornly attached to some of its feudal hierarchies, including forms of economic and gender inequality, that predated Buddhism (54). However, he also argues that, due to the Buddhist emphasis on universal well-being and the Tibetan Buddhist cultural priority of transforming existential resentment into affirmation of life, "the process of privatizing land that kick-started capitalism in Great Britain was less imaginable and actionable in Tibet" such that "tax-paying peasants had relatively equal access to land" (53-54). Consequently, Rowe argues that the political value of mindfulness is that it can elucidate a clear diagnosis, as well as offer preventative treatment for, the root driver of social inequity. Even if not perfected in all cases, Rowe argues that mindfulness still opens a pathway towards increasing liberation (54). In other words, if we can clearly see and understand our root *fear of death, fear of oneself, and fear of others*, we are more likely to be able to transform that fear and not need to engage in dominative social relations to try to compensate for a felt smallness in the human condition.

Thich Nhat Hanh (1926-2022), the Vietnamese Zen Buddhist master and one of the key figures for pioneering modern mindfulness in the West, dedicated his life to being a peace activist, using non-violent methods to bring understanding, peace, and harmony to the world through his prolific writings and embodied teachings. He also wrote in depth about the root fear of the human condition and how to transform it. In his book *No Death, No Fear: Comforting Wisdom for Life* (2002), Thich Nhat Hanh states that the greatest fear of human beings is that "when we die, we will become nothing. [...] And so we are filled with a fear of annihilation" (2). He also explains that this fear is based on a misconception shaped by notions of birth and death:

> We believe it begins when we are born—when, out of being nothing, we become something—and it ends when we die and become nothing again. So we are filled with a fear of annihilation. But if we look deeply, we can have a very different understanding of our existence. We can see that birth and death are just notions; they're not real. The Buddha taught that there is no birth and no death. Our belief that these ideas about birth and death are real creates a powerful illusion that causes us a great deal of suffering. When we understand that we can't be destroyed, we're liberated from fear. It's a huge relief. We can enjoy life and appreciate it in a new way. (Thich "Free from Fear")

Living in a continuous state of fear of annihilation diminishes our ability to live fully in the present moment. Thich Nhat Hanh emphasizes that this impacts us as well as others. He explains,

> When we are not fully present, we are not really living. We're not really there, either for our loved ones or for ourselves. [...] We are running, running, running, even during our sleep. We run because we're trying to escape from our fear. [...] We cannot enjoy life if we spend our time and energy worrying about what happened yesterday and what will happen tomorrow. If we're afraid all the time, we miss out on the wonderful fact that we're alive and can be happy right now. [...] We forget that life is only available in the present moment. ("Free from Fear")

As Rutger Bergman, Elizabeth Lesser, Georges Bataille, Chögyam Trungpa, and James K. Rowe have also demonstrated in their work, it is not only us and our close loved ones who suffer from living under the control of this fear of existential annihilation. That fear has been a driving force in the modern era for creating veneer theories that are then used to justify the material practices of inequity, for devaluing the feminine, for social violence, and hoarding of resources. Instead of seeing that we can choose to live on Planet A, feeding into that root fear has led to ways of thinking, seeing, and systems based in division and domination to compensate for a felt smallness of the human condition. In other words, the root fear of the human condition became a catalyst for making Planet B into a reality that was then forced onto many others.

The Outer: Making of a Modern World System

Critical analyses in decolonization studies in the Americas tend to focus on time periods after the onset of colonization. My analysis began further upstream to try to uncover the root causes of worldviews based in division and domination that have manifested in misogyny, colonization, coloniality, imperialism, genocide, slavery, and persistent inequity in education

systems. The root fear that drove the dividing of the self and the perceived need to dominate others in the external world was established before formal colonization began. At this point, my research on liberation also intersects with Third World studies and decolonization studies.

In *Third World Studies: Theorizing Liberation* (2016), scholar Gary Okihiro critiques the ideologies of humanism developed during the European Enlightenment, which "extols the primacy of the self over self's others" (316). He states that the slogan "I think, therefore I am" is a positivist formulation of humanism with the self as center. According to this discourse, humans

> have the ability to shape their own destinies and possessed the power to rule over and even subdue nature. Not all humans, however, were equal. Nonwhites and women might approach but could never achieve the status and rights of white men. That humanism consorted with racism, patriarchy, and imperialism to justify and advance nationalism, conquest, colonization, and the capitalist world-system. (316)

Okihiro contrasts the positivist humanism of European Enlightenment with Brazilian educator Paolo Freire's view of human subject-self formation in dialogical pedagogy, which "generates consciousness and critical thinking, intervention and action," a process that creates subjects (not objects) grounded in society, who are agents of history, rendering them "truly human" (qtd. In Okihiro 312). To enforce the views of European Enlightenment's humanism as regimes of truth has required what Freire calls a banking system of education, in which teacher bankers (subjects) deposit knowledge into student ciphers (objects) (Okihiro 2133). This banking system of education is built upon a binary and hierarchy of teacher-colonizer and student-colonized (ibid). From its inception in the seventeenth century, formal education in the United States was established under English settler colonialism as a system designed for rule rather than liberation. Later in this chapter, I will examine how formal education in the US has specifically been used a system of domination for racial and gender minoritized communities. First, however, it is important to note the role that settler colonial life had in normalizing fear-based worldviews among European settlers themselves.

As for decolonization studies, a focal point in Rutger Bergman's research on human evolution is that the establishment of settler life and private property was not the start of the advance of civilization, as is commonly told in settler-colonial master narratives of history. Instead, he explains that it was when humans began to settle in one place that things began to fall apart (Bergman 103). According to Bergman, for most of human history, men and women were equal. Unlike the stereotype of the chest-beating caveman with a short fuse, our male ancestors were probably not machos but more like proto-feminists (103). Like Lesser's study of pre-colonial Indigenous creation myths in which genders were equal and shared responsibilities, Rutger states that scientists have found that equality between the sexes offered *Homo sapiens* an advantage over other *hominins* like Neanderthals, who had larger brains and were thus arguably more dominant in terms of competitiveness according to Darwin's theory of evolution. Yet, Bergman explains that studies that show that, in societies where authority is shared with women, people tend to have more diverse social networks and child-rearing was a responsibility shared by the whole tribe. One anthropologist states that this may explain why children in foraging societies tend to hold views of the world as a "giving place" (97). Furthermore, Bergman adds that anthropologists have also now discovered that nomadic forager and hunter-gatherer societies led relatively comfortable lives, with work weeks averaging twenty to thirty hours at most, since

Nature provided everything that was needed. In contrast, as settlers, farmers had to toil in the fields and were left with little time for leisure (103). He also explains that settled life took an especially heavy toll on women by enforcing gender inequality.

> The rise of private property and farming brought the age of proto-feminism to an end. Sons stayed on the paternal plot to tend the land and livestock, which meant brides now had to be fetched for the family farm. Over centuries, marriageable daughters were reduced to little more than commodities, to be bartered like cows or sheep. In their new families, brides were viewed with suspicion, and only after presenting them with a son did women gain a measure of acceptance. A legitimate son, that is. It's no accident that female virginity turned into an obsession. Where in pre-history women had been free to come and go as they pleased, now they were being covered up and tethered down. The patriarchy was born. (103)

In addition to gender inequality, settler life generated new challenges to public health. Bergman explains that settled farmers proved to be less healthy than nomadic foragers since farmers began consuming a monotonous menu of grains each day, whereas nomads got plenty of exercise and had a varied diet rich in vitamins and fibers (104). In addition, settlers had begun living in closer confines and began domesticating animals for milk and food. Infectious diseases like measles, smallpox, tuberculosis, malaria, cholera, and the plague, as well as sexually transmitted diseases, emerged when a nomadic lifestyle was turned into farming and settler life. Soon after humans had settled in one place, famines, floods, and epidemics emerged. This onset of an endless cycle of disasters spurred on by large settlements eventually caused a major shift in religious life. Bergman states that, for our nomadic ancestors, the gods were not interested in the mere lives of mortals, yet for settlers a whole clerical class was put in charge of figuring out why the gods were so angry. For the first time, humans developed a notion of sin (105). Yet, if all these natural disasters and new forms of oppression emerged with settler life, why did humans continue down that path? Bergman explains that the simplest answer is that they got trapped.

Early settlements on fertile lands did not require much work, yet as settlements grew and populations expanded, the population of wild animals declined (Bergman 107). To compensate, settlements had to extend to areas without fertile soil. Farming became hard, heavy labor that required ploughing from dawn to dusk. Before long, humans lost their foraging skills (107). They were also soon hemmed in by neighboring settlements and did not welcome trespassers. Eventually, farmers outnumbered foragers and f arming settlements could raise more food per acre and thus raise larger armies. Nomadic tribes that stuck to their traditional ways had to fend off invading colonists and their infectious illnesses. In the end, tribes that refused to bow down to a despot were beaten down by force (ibid). The outbreak of these first clashes signaled the start of the great race that would shape world history—villages were conquered by towns, towns were annexed by cities, and cities were swallowed up by provinces as societies all frantically scaled up to the meet the inexorable demands of war. This culminated in the catastrophic event lamented by Swiss-born philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-78): the birth of the state (ibid).

Rousseau believed that humans were basically good, and that civilization is what ruins us (Bergman 44). His philosophies contradicted those of an earlier influential English philosopher, Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) whose book *Leviathan* (1651) presented a pessimistic view of

human nature as inherently wicked. Exemplifying Rebecca Solnit's theory of elite panic,[39] Hobbes had written "Read thyself, [and] your own fears and emotions, and you will thereby read and know what are the thoughts and passions of all other men upon the like occasions" (44). Hobbes theorized that all humans are wicked because "Humans are driven by fear. Fear of the other. Fear of death" (ibid). He argued that humans have a ceaseless desire of power after power that can only result in war of all against all, or anarchy, which he assured could only be tamed if we agree to relinquish our liberty to a sovereign ruler (44-45). Hobbes' theories are often cited by rulers and dictators. Yet, Rousseau believed that civilization was not a blessing, but a curse.

Contrary to settler-colonial master narratives, a taboo issue of America's past on which most history textbooks are silent, was that this enforced "civilization" was not desirable. One of the few willing to acknowledge it was one of the Founding Fathers, Benjamin Franklin, who wrote that "No European who has tasted Savage Life can afterwards bear to live in our societies" (Bergman 108). He described how "civilized" White men and women who were captured by Indians would "take the first good Opportunity of escaping again into the Woods" (109). Colonists fled into the wilderness by the hundreds, whereas the reverse rarely happened. Living as Indians, they enjoyed more freedoms than they did as farmers and taxpayers. For women, the appeal was even greater. One colonial woman explained to men sent to "rescue" her that "We could work as leisurely as we pleased" (109). Another woman told a French diplomat "I shall marry if I wish and be unmarried again when I wish. Is there a single woman as independent as I in your cities?" (ibid). Since history has mostly been written by the victors, this is how narratives of history get distorted. By censoring this fuller version of history, civilization came to be equated with peace and progress and wilderness with war and decline. Likewise, as Elizabeth Lesser demonstrates in *Cassandra Speaks*, this is how power and leadership became associated with war and domination, rather than compassion and cooperation. After settler life began, one of the key institutions established to enforce this notion of civilization—and its ideologies, values, and belief systems—was education.

Uses of Education as an Instrument of Domination

Rutger Bergman explains that hunter-gatherer children often learned together through play, and in the process learned how to cooperate among groups of mixed ages. Yet, the culture of play was radically transformed with the onset of settler life (Bergman 284). For children, the dawn of civilization brought the constraints of mind-numbing farm labor and the idea that children required raising, much like raising crops. It was believed that they needed to develop the veneer of civilization through application of a firm hand. Along with the emergence of the first cities and states came the first education systems. The Church needed pious followers, the army loyal soldiers, and the government hard workers. Play was seen as the enemy (Bergman 284). Good citizenship had to be drilled into people, now that nation-states had formed their borders.

After the onset of the Industrial Revolution, the aim of education changed from what it had been during agrarian times, as more labor became relegated to machines. Kids had to learn how to read and write, and design and organize, so that they could pay their own way as adults rather than work on family farms. By the 1980s, life at workplaces and in classrooms became increasingly busier. Individualism and the culture of achievement gained precedence (Bergman 285). ADHD and other behavioral disorders began to increase among children during the school year as individualism and achievement were prioritized over community, play, and creativity.

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[39] This elite panic can also be found in the "moral panic" of recent campaigns attacking critical race theory and provoking fear among the public by using the "great replacement theory" to maintain a status quo of inequity.

More recently, bullying also became recognized as a national pandemic in schools and workplaces. Despite the popular assumption that bullying is a natural human behavior, sociologists have found evidence to the contrary through extensive research on places where bullying is endemic, which they call *total institutions* (291). Sociologist Erving Goffman describes total institutions as having the following characteristics:

- Everybody lives in the same place and is subject to a single authority.
- All activities are carried out together and everybody does the same task.
- Activities are rigidly scheduled, often from one hour to the next.
- There is a system of explicit, formal rules imposed by an authority. (qtd. in Bergman 291)

Total intuitions characterize most prison systems, but also appear in various workplaces, nursing homes, and schools. In contrast, at schools that incorporate a basic amount of structure and guidance yet do not enforce rigid hierarchies—and regularly foster unstructured play and creativity and community building through interacting with those of different ages and abilities—cases of bullying were practically non-existent (292). While Bergman's social psychology analysis of education after the onset of settler life provides useful insights into how education systems have functioned as instruments of domination that hinder creativity, cooperation, and well-being—including for European settlers and their descendants, Gary Okihiro engages with world systems theory and Third World studies to analyze how education in the US has functioned as a colonial and imperial project that has specifically reinforced social inequities for racially minoritized communities using different strategies over time.

In *Third World Studies*, Gary Okihiro states that the European Enlightenment divided and demarcated the Earth by continents – Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Americas – and those divides delineated the racial construction of four groups described as having particular "natures." Those who defined themselves as superior due to geography or by inheritance and blood then saw themselves as deemed to possess virtues and rights over so-called inferior races. The project of segregating, naming, and attributing—or the discourse of taxonomy—was an imperial exertion of power over the planet and all its inhabitants (Okihiro 276). By now, we can see that the need to divide and dominate is not exactly an indicator of biological superiority, but rather a fear of impermanence and vulnerability in the human condition without having the tools to transform that fear from within. Various European philosophers and rulers engaged in dividing the self. Then, a paradigm of division and domination was extended further outward to materialize the world system and a trajectory of capitalism (276).

Gary Okihiro explains that mercantile or trade-based capitalism produced profits and, beginning in the eleventh century with the Italian city-states, trade with Asia was the principal means for acquiring wealth and influence. Okihiro states that "China and India remained fabulous in European accounts and imaginations largely because of their resources, mainly raw silk from China, which fed the expanding textile industries of northern Italy, but also spices and slaves from India (1651). For hundreds of years, until about the fifteenth century, Muslim caravans from West African kingdoms transported gold, ivory, and slaves to the Mediterranean's southern rim. That trans-Saharan trade had supplied most of the gold held by Europeans who in turn traded it for Asian silks, spices, and slaves (Okihiro 1669). Asians controlled the products desired by Europeans and managed the trade's nature, volume, and prices (1660). Okihiro explains that, as various European states sought to bypass the trade's gatekeepers and gain direct

access to Asia, Spain and Portugal were initially at a disadvantage to neighboring Italian city-states who capitalized on overland trade with Asia in the Mediterranean world. However, their location on the Atlantic's shore gave them an advantage in eventually charting a route to China and India by sea to circumvent the more landlocked middlemen. In doing so, the Atlantic world eclipsed the Mediterranean world in the fifteenth century, coinciding with the start of the latest Pachakutic. With its early foundations in the Mediterranean, nations on the Atlantic set out to perfect the arts of conquest and colonization (276) using both discursive and material practices.

To sustain this new lifestyle of settlement, which included the desire to expand into other people's lands to acquire and control their resources, material systems of exploitative labor were increased. As Okihiro notes, hundreds of thousands of enslaved Africans supplied the labor for sugar plantations on islands off the West African coast and later in the Caribbean (280). The African slaves and sugar sold in Europe provided capital to finance the long and arduous journey around Africa to the Indian Ocean and Asia. Meanwhile, across the Atlantic, Native Americans were forced to mine the gold and silver that enriched Spain, and the bullion was traded in the Pacific region for Asian goods. Settler colonies were established to secure the imperial, oceanic highways, and capital, (migrant) labor, and culture moved across the world-system (Okihiro 280-285). In that imposed web, the core accumulated wealth at the expense of its peripheries, resulting in Europe's development and the underdevelopment of the Third World (285). Those connections were specifically structured to conduct not commerce in the sense of exchange but rather exploitation. Conquest involved military might and sexual violence. Rape of the land and people, mainly women, was a method of subjugation and means for producing dependencies. In Asia, unequal trade was enforced through wars, unequal treaties, colonizing and establishing control of port cities, at times impoverishing local populations and forcing migration.

These oppressive material practices of forced inequity were made more feasible and sustained through discursive practices, or the strategic use of language and ideology. For those of the colonizing class, discourse helped normalize a sense of entitlement. A Spanish colonizer called the highly profitable traffic of labor and resources "an inheritance," gesturing to the privileges of blood and race (Okihiro 284). For the colonized, however, language was a weapon in the colonizer's arsenal used to their disadvantage. By removing native languages and ideologies, and replacing them with the conqueror's tongue, this produced colonized minds. Without a consciousness of the subject-self, self-determination was more easily denied (289). These colonial and imperial projects, built upon a paradigm of division and domination, were reinforced in formal education.

From its inception in settler colonial societies, formal education in the US was established as a system of rule. Gary Okihiro explains that "The Puritans who arrived in Plymouth Colony in 1630 under the leadership of John Winthrop, were highly educated, and had predominated at many English colleges, including Oxford and Cambridge" (2157). Determined to build "a city upon a hill" that would serve as an exemplar of godly governance, the Puritans established Harvard College in 1636 to train a cadre of clergy and teachers to school the masses (Okihiro 2155). By 1642, the Puritans founded a tax-supported school system to train children to read, learn the principles of religion, and comply with the law. Those educational goals—literacy, values, and a pliant citizenry—remain fundamental to schooling in the United States (2159). This matches Bergman's account of the development formal education under the emergence of nation-states, in which good citizenship had to be drilled into people. Furthermore, formal schooling in the US, as part of a colonial and imperial project, reinforced social inequities rather than inclusion.

White Women and Working-Class Whites in Formal Education

As Gary Okihiro explains, White women were initially excluded from the clergy and teaching, but that changed between 1790-1820 once settler occupation was established and colonizers began facing the vexing question of their conquests and their absorption into the nation (2116). Several female academies were founded "to train women to take their place in the new republic as 'republican mothers'[40] and 'daughters of Columbia.' These were White, middle-class women who, as mothers, bore the responsibility of nurturing the next generation of leaders" (2164). Yet, that education for those privileged women was still designed for a "gentler sex" since philosophy, mathematics, and science were considered subjects that could "overtax their limited mental capacities, resulting in illness or deviant, manly women" (ibid). Later in this chapter, I will discuss how this systemic bias still produces systemic gender inequity in higher education today. My emphasis here is on Okihiro's point that constructions of race, gender, sexuality, class, and nation were central from the start of formal education systems in the US.

In the nineteenth century, greater inclusion of White women and the White working-class masses into US public education accompanied the nation's transition from mercantile to industrial capitalism (Okihiro 2253). In Massachusetts, Horace Mann (1796–1859), a politician and educational reformer, regularized school hours and instituted grade levels and a standardized curriculum. Mann championed universal public education as essential for shaping useful citizens. Teacher training for men and women began in 1837, and for the first time in US history school attendance became the rule rather than the exception for White children from ages five to nineteen (Okihiro 2255). As mentioned with Bergman's analysis of formal education, this mandatory formal education was not exactly liberatory education, yet having both access and inclusion in higher education generally meant greater chances of social mobility. For BIPOC[41] communities in the US, however, formal education has had a different history.

BIPOC Communities in Formal Education

Rather than a simple linear path from exclusion to inclusion, formal education for racially minoritized communities has entailed shifting from predominantly overt barriers to equity—such as forced colonial education, exclusion, and segregation—to various covert barriers to equity, such as strategies of inclusion based in assimilation and deficit frameworks. Therefore, while a reduction in total structural exclusion may appear as symbolic progress, the following section analyzes how covert practices of exclusion, along with the internalization of oppressive paradigms in social justice efforts, have also enabled social inequities to persist in education.

Three Forms of Barriers to Social Equity in Education

Three major obstacles to social equity in education—overt barriers, covert barriers, and the internationalization of oppressive paradigms by some social justice movements—have often been practiced simultaneously rather than in a linear progression. Over time, different strategies have been employed to enact these three forms of barriers to social equity so that, as one strategy

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[40] The term "republican motherhood" was first used by historian Linda Kerber in her essay "The Republican Mother: Women and the Enlightenment–An American Perspective" (1976) and later in her book *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (1980). Kerber's essay and book analyze ways in which male philosophers of European Enlightenment ideology excluded women. When American political theory did not envision a role for women in the public sphere, women advocated for it through an ideology of female patriotism, arguing that women could guarantee the future of the republic by nurturing patriotic sons and husbands. Using this rationale, they entered the public sphere as teachers and taught Republican values and ideals to students in schools.
[41] Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)

is diminished or banned, it may initially seem that diversity, equity, and inclusion has been achieved. Yet, as the following analysis shows, new barriers can quickly reappear in the form of backlashes or new strategies.

Overt Barriers

For Indigenous Americans, the history of formal education in the US has been inseparable from the colonial project of nation building, with segregation and assimilation used as the key strategies to colonize the minds of people after the land had been colonized. As a system of colonization, education for Indigenous peoples "was often couched in the language of redemption and uplift from a state of savagery to an exalted plane of civilization" (Okihiro 2168). As one example, the Foreign Mission School was established in 1816 by missionaries to "civilize into subservience native peoples, including Native Americans, Pacific Islanders, and Asians" (Okihiro 298). Samuel Armstrong, a son of missionaries, found it his calling to minister to what he referred to as the nation's "darkies"—Hawaiians, African Americans, and American Indians (298). Armstrong founded the Hampton Institute, which educated African Americans and Indigenous Americans to work with their hands and not their minds (245) and taught them to defer their dreams of equality and remain contentedly in their assigned places (298). Henry Pratt, another educator and former commander of African American troops during the US Civil War, admired Armstrong's pedagogy and established the Carlisle Indian Industrial School (303). Pratt's educational motto was to "kill the Indian in him, and save the man" (303). Armstrong agreed with that mission and gave a practical rationale for institutionalizing this form of miseducation, saying "it is cheaper to civilize Indians than to exterminate them" (ibid). In other words, *mis*education for the purpose of colonizing the minds of people fosters obedience.

In contrast, the key strategies used to oppress Blacks through education have primarily been exclusion and segregation. Gary Okihiro states that since "Blacks, both men and women, were broadly seen as chattel," they "were widely excluded from education and, especially under slavery, literacy" (2164). The historical effort to exclude African Americans from education demonstrates that education can be used to colonize and oppress, and at the same time, it also has the potential to "lead to transgressions and rebellion" (ibid). Thus, some scholars emphasize that education is a contradictory site than can both reproduce and disrupt inequity (Nasir, Yang). However, as necessitated by nation building and imperial projects during World War I and World War II, the strategy of racialized and gendered segregation would later change to a strategy of inclusion and assimilation when the US social formation required the labor and citizenry of White women and African Americans (2168). Yet, segregated and inferior schools relegated African Americans to service and agricultural work in the North and South (2260). Therefore, increased diversity of access to education did not signify equity and inclusion.

Meanwhile, "Mexican" and "Oriental" schools in the West schooled children into subservience and thus utility for the ruling class (Okihiro 2264). Yet, this oppression has also generated resistance. As Okihiro notes, the segregated schools and the inequality they produced and sustained bred resistance, eventually culminating with the US Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision that rendered public-school segregation illegal. This historical case that marked the end of *de jure* segregation of schools is often taught in US history textbooks as a singular event involving one racially minoritized group, yet it was in fact built upon collective resistance to oppression and coalitional work to advance collective liberation.

Gary Okihiro explains that "Leading up to and foundational for the Brown decision, seen mainly as an African American achievement, were Asian and Mexican American demands for

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educational equity" (2268). An initial step in this process was an early case begun in 1884, when the White principal of Spring Valley Primary School in San Francisco, California had refused to admit eight-year-old Mamie Tape, a US citizen by birth, who was the daughter of Chinese migrants Joseph and Mary McGladery Tape. Mamie's parents sued for their daughter's admission to school, in *Tape v. Hurley* (1885), citing the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment (1868). In this case, the court agreed with the Tapes and declared, "To deny a child, born of Chinese parents in this State, entrance to the public schools" is "a violation of the law of the state and the Constitution of the United States" (Okihiro 2268). In response, legislation in limited regions of California allowed segregated Oriental schools for Asian children, which satisfied the equal protection clause according to the Supreme Court's decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), which had been the pillar for upholding racial segregation (Okihiro 2269). Although Plessy had declared that separate was equal, Mary Tape disagreed. In her letter dated April 8, 1885, she assured the board of education that her demand for equality was "more American" than the "race prejudice" of school segregation (2273). This exemplified one common interpretation of what it means to be "American." While not a total victory, the Tapes' advocacy for equal rights paved a step forward for future advances in educational equity.

Secondly, another critical case emerged in 1924, when Martha Lum was banned from enrolling at Rosedale Consolidated High School in Mississippi because, although a US citizen, she was of Chinese ancestry. In *Gong Lum v. Rice* (1927), the US Supreme Court unanimously ruled that Martha Lum must attend "a colored school" for children "of the brown, yellow or black races" (Okihiro 2275). The Court declared that school segregation fell within state powers and did not violate the Constitution's equal protection clause. The ideology enforced by this ruling, Okihiro states, was that it was thoroughly American to provide superior schools for Whites and inferior schools for non-Whites (2275). This was another interpretation of what "American" means. Although Gong Lum's case did not desegregate the public schools, it provided another precedent for *Brown v. Board of Education* (2278), like *Tape v. Hurley*.

In a third case, a California public school denied entry to Sylvia, Gonzalo, and Jerome Méndez on the basis of their race (Okihiro 2283). In 1943, the Westminster Main School declared that the children must attend the segregated Mexican school a few blocks away. Three years later the children's parents (whose mother was Puerto Rican) and other Mexican Americans joined in a lawsuit against school segregation in *Méndez v. Westminster* (1946-47). As Felicitas Méndez, the mother, testified in court, "We always tell our children they are Americans, and we thought that they shouldn't be segregated like that [...]" (2286). This case provided a clear example coalitional work to advance greater social equity for multiple groups.

In *Méndez v. Westminster*, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) joined the Méndez appellate case as *amici curiae* and offered their arguments in briefs for the court proceedings (Okihiro 2291). The NAACP saw the Méndez case as a precursor for what would later become its legal challenge to Jim Crow segregated schools, and one of the attorneys for the Méndez case—Thurgood Marshall—also became the lead attorney in the Brown case. Judge McCormick ruled that "equal protection of the laws [...] is not provided by furnishing in separate schools the same technical facilities, text books and courses of instruction [but rather] a paramount requisite in the American system of public education is social equality" (2297). This decision anticipated the language of the future Supreme Court chief justice Earl Warren, who was California's governor during the Méndez trial. Eight years after Méndez, the Court unanimously agreed in

Brown v. Board of Education that "Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal" (2296). This court ruling was a victory due to coalitional work involving multiple communities.

After having just experienced the wartime detention of Japanese Americans, the JACL warned against singling out a single class of people. The JACL's court brief noted that if discrimination against Mexican American children is established "on the basis of ancestry only, [...] then who can tell what minority group will be next on the road to persecution. If we learned one lesson from the horrors of Nazism, it is that no minority group, and in fact, no person is safe, once the State, through its instrumentalities, can arbitrarily discriminate against any person or group" (Okihiro 2303). Ultimately, the cooperation between the JACL and the NAACP in the Méndez case also led to increased solidarities in the fight against school segregation in the 1950s, right up to Brown, in which Japanese Americans were the only non-White group to participate in the case as an *amicus curiae* (2307). Thus, the slow gains in public school desegregation were in fact hard-won advances built upon coalitional work of multiple communities throughout history. Yet, *de jure* desegregation of schools then—much like greater diversity in admission numbers today—did not automatically lead to equity in education.

Backlashes to Equity: Reinforcing Overt Barriers to Halt Social Justice

Even as US public higher education in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century increased admissions to accommodate the needs of a rapidly expanding industrial capitalism, its narrowing also soon followed after the increased democratizing and diversifying of the nation through civil rights struggles and immigration reform, specifically the Civil Rights Act (1964) and Immigration Act (1965), in which the former outlawed discrimination on the bases of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin in voting, public education, and accommodations, while the latter ended the racist immigration quotas that had been imposed since the 1920s (Okihiro 2309). Those policies resulted in greater freedom for those who had been excluded from the full promise of equality under the law and vastly larger numbers of Asian and Latinx immigrants. Much like current backlashes, advances in equity then prompted a White, middle-class backlash evidenced in the "Reagan revolution" launched during Ronald Reagan's presidency (1981–89), which advocated for reducing government and state-initiated social reform programs and a faith in supply-side economics that restructured taxes to favor the wealthy (2319). Those campaigns pushed back against the massive New Deal programs of President Franklin D. Roosevelt (1933–45), and civil rights and antipoverty programs of President Lyndon B. Johnson (1963–69). The drive to reverse Third World gains in higher education also came during the Reagan administration. Defenders of "Reaganomics" pushed to return to the traditional and core values of American education by singing the praises, without apology, of the dominant majority and its so-called natural good. Called the culture wars of the 1980s and 1990s, this backlash against diversity featured "calls from the right for a return to whiteness and European values to reclaim and restore the nation from people of color and the radical left" (2368). A strikingly similar pattern of backlash against equity appears in contemporary political campaigns targeting critical race theory or any practice of teaching a fuller and more inclusive US history in education.

At present, the root fear of existential annihilation (of Whites and "Eurocentric values") is again fed through the latest veneer theory, the Great Replacement Theory, as a vehicle for political mobilization to preserve white privilege and reclaim the nation from non-Whites and the "woke Left." While a fundamental paradigm of division and domination as well as veneer theories have been used for centuries to compensate for the fear of existential annihilation, that

paradigm of division and domination (or divide and rule) needs to be transformed to enact real systemic change. We must elevate cooperation over division and domination.

In her book *The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Us and How We Can Prosper Together* (2021), political strategist Heather McGhee, demonstrates that we are all losing by buying into a zero-sum paradigm. The zero-sum paradigm holds that we can only win if someone else loses. Conversely, if someone else wins that means we somehow lose. The zero-sum mindset is the logic that drives racial capitalism and is a derivative of the paradigm of division and domination. Refuting the popular belief in and the zero-sum paradigm, McGhee's research shows that racism is costly to all, including working-class White people, who also lose, as public goods—including quality education and healthcare—become increasingly privatized. McGhee also shows that we all gain by working across racial lines to accomplish what cannot be done alone—what she calls the *solidarity dividend*. McGhee's solidarity dividend utilizes intersectionality to demonstrate that working-class Whites share struggles with economically oppressed racially minoritized communities. Thus, she advocates for solidarity to replace the constructed binary and divide-and-rule paradigm of "Whites versus non-Whites." The approach of class solidarity has drawn criticism from activists who emphasize that black and brown working-class communities face more oppression than working-class Whites. While those arguments are valid, McGhee's book still raises an important question of why and how to create solidarity to work together for a common cause, even if other issues of inequity also need to be addressed.

Recently, more nuanced analyses of class oppression and the wealth gap have increasingly entered popular culture, which is important for undoing the dualist thinking used to maintain systems of division and domination. In Dave Chappelle's stand-up comedy special *Equanimity & The Bird Revelation* (2017), he recounts his experience of standing in line at a voting booth before the 2016 US Presidential elections, when he saw what he calls "poor Whites" show up in large numbers, believing the political rhetoric that they would be "saved" by Trump. That belief mobilized voters who had felt alienated by liberal politicians whom they believed were elitist and looked down upon poor Whites. Dave Chappelle expresses both sympathy and critique of what he calls their "naïve" belief in Trump as a savior for the working-class and poor, and jokes that Trump is more interested in helping people like him—the wealthy, even as a black man—than he is in helping the poor, including poor Whites. Political commentators have noted that Trump declared in his campaigns that he "loves the poorly educated."[42] While the poorly educated may have believed this meant that he was interested in helping them, political commentators stated that Trump's "love" of the poorly educated refers to how they could be more easily manipulated into supporting him. In another example, Robert Reich, economics professor and former US Secretary of Labor featured in the documentary films *Inequality for All* (2013) and *Saving Capitalism* (2017),[43] examines the prevalence of crony capitalism in the US that has kept the middle-class stagnant in a period of the rising cost of living. While the nation's wealthiest have become wealthier, widening the gap between the wealthy and middle-class in the US has widened, Reich seeks to demonstrate that there is not just a binary choice between capitalism or socialism—a tactic often used to try to silence those who speak up against *predatory capitalism*, or the cultural acceptance of domination and exploitation

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[42] Hafner, Josh. "Donald Trump Loves the 'Poorly Educated'– and They Love Him." *USA Today*, 24 February 2016, https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/onpolitics/2016/02/24/donald-trump-nevada-poorly-educated/80860078/.

[43] Reich, Robert. *Inequality for All*, directed by Jacob Kornbluth, 2013 and *Saving Capitalism*, directed by Jacob Kornbluth and Sari Gilman, *Netflix*, 2017.

as a normal economic practice. The increase of crony capitalism entails lobbyists influencing lawmakers in government to ensure that the wealthy are protected and get wealthier, while the middle-class increasingly must struggle to afford the basic costs of living. Yet, there are also different forms of capitalism. As one example, Yvon Chouinard, founder and CEO of Patagonia, is well-known for pioneering a socially responsible business model guided by principles of stewarding "people, planet, and prosperity" in ethical and sustainable manners.

Meanwhile, Rutger Bergman's "new realism" account of human evolution also unpacks a false binary between capitalism and communism, and highlights the fundamental human evolutionary trait of cooperation—what Heather McGhee calls the *solitary dividend* and other social justice movements refer to as coalition-building. Rutger points out that the two major socioeconomic ideologies of the twentieth century—capitalism and communism—have both shared a cynical view that people cannot motivate themselves, which thus requires extrinsic systems of "carrots and sticks" to be established and enforced (266). Capitalists believed that the only way to compel people into action was through reward with money as the carrot, whereas communists believed that avoidance of punishment, the stick, was a more effective motivator (ibid). Bergman describes numerous case studies that dispel this myth. These studies show that extrinsic-based systems tend to suppress intrinsic motivation, and thereby produce a nocebo effect. Moreover, he explains that many capitalist structures simultaneously rely on intrinsically driven socialism, or people helping others not for the reward of money or a fear of punishment. He argues that we have been living under social structures built on myths that limit human potential and that it is time to imagine and create systems that do better.

The recent overt efforts to censor CRT teaching or DEI trainings and ban a wide range of books exploit the root fear of existential annihilation and draw upon constructed racial categories to create a division between "Whites" and "non-Whites." Yet, on a material level, working-class Whites now share an increasingly overlapping struggle with economically oppressed racially minoritized communities. Instead of clinging to an ideology of "white supremacy"—and a zero-sum promise of privileges at the expense of non-whites—to compensate for fear of annihilation exploited by GRT or other veneer theories, it is necessary to dismantle the paradigms that ultimately oppress all of us and introduce a new consciousness and practices that foster collective liberation.

Covert Barriers

While these attacks on education are extreme, overt practices are not the only cause of barriers to social equity in education. Covert practices can at times be even more effective in perpetuating inequity because they are more difficult to detect and thus eliminate or transform. One of the most common covert practices of perpetuating inequity in education appears in the form of performative DEI discourse and trainings.

Sara Ahmed's studies on institutional diversity work in *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life* (2012) entail an in-depth analysis of how the common practices of posting DEI statements on public-facing sites for optics, and moving DEI-related documents internally through circular channels of bureaucracy to cover an institution's legal liability against discrimination, have come to stand in as proxy for actual systemic change. Frank Dobbin and Alexandra Kalev also outline five key reasons why DEI training in two-thirds of cases has, in fact, failed to effect change in women and minorities' careers. In their article "Why Doesn't Diversity Training Work? The Challenge for Industry and Academia" (2018), they present findings from numerous studies of antibias trainings that show that these do not decrease implicit

nor explicit bias. Yet, despite the ineffective results of these trainings, these remain the main go-to solution for corporate executives and university administrators facing public relations crises concerning discrimination and inequity charges (Dobbin and Kalev 49). They explain that the five key reasons these DEI trainings fail to effect change are because 1) short-term interventions rarely change people 2) some studies have shown that antibias trainings actually reinforce stereotypes by asking people to suppress them 3) in some cases, DEI trainings can inspire unrealistic confidence in anti-discrimination programs, making employees complacent about their biases, and in some cases even emboldened to express their biases, after having checked off a mandatory "DEI training" box 4) some cases find DEI training causes Whites to feel excluded and thus reduces their support for DEI, reporting having more animosity toward other groups after the mandated trainings and 5) some studies in organizational research show that people generally tend to react negatively to efforts to control them. Therefore, in cases where DEI trainings were introduced with external motivation, such as to avoid lawsuits, participants showed more resistance than when DEI training was introduced due to an internal organizational rationale, such as management needs (50). Dobbin and Kalev then offer alternatives to these five factors that make DEI trainings ineffective and even counterproductive. They explain that 1) mandatory DEI training does not change workplaces unless it is part of a broader effort, involving multiple components 2) rather than just telling people to suppress their stereotypes of other groups, trainers can reduce stereotypes and increase empathy by fostering cross-cultural contact with members of other groups 3) prevent complacency due to transactional anti-discrimination training by introducing "moral licensing" literature as part of training, which shows that when people do something good (e.g. attend a training) they are likely to feel licensed to do something bad afterward (e.g. discriminate in hiring) 4) reframe multiculturalism and antibias training to also be inclusive of Whites and men, or the "majority culture" and 5) de-emphasize external factors as motivation for the training (e.g. the law) to lessen the feeling that employees are being controlled and manipulated, and instead encourage internal motivation (Dobbin and Kalev 52). Ultimately, however, Dobbin and Kalev point to a recent meta-analysis that suggests that a change in unconscious bias by itself does not lead to change in discrimination. This reinforces their argument that employers cannot expect training to change the workplace without making other changes to policies and culture (ibid).

DEI consultant, Aiko Bethea, also provides helpful guidelines, adding to the now large field of research on the ineffectiveness of mandatory and performative DEI trainings and statements. In June 2020, after the murder of George Floyd, Bethea wrote the widely read essay titled "An Open Letter to Corporate America, Philanthropy, Academia, etc.: What Now?" to explain why performative DEI work has not produced systemic equity. In one of her twelve recommendations for change, Bethea concurs with Dobbin and Kalev's research findings that mandatory "one and done" DEI trainings are ineffective. She also concurs with Sara Ahmed's argument that accountability and compliance measures must be built into systems change. Otherwise, the disconnect between diversity discourse and equity and inclusion practice persists. Bethea adds that DEI metrics must go beyond "demographic representation and counting the number of ethnic groups, gender, sexual orientation, ability, etc." ("Open Letter"). She adds that metrics must also include rates of retention, promotion, salary, and engagement (ibid). This is also the case among institutions of higher education where demographic data on admissions numbers are used to signify not just diversity but also equity and inclusion, despite the large gap between admissions numbers and retention and graduation rates of minoritized students and retention and promotion rates of minoritized faculty. Bethea states that DEI work must be

relational and transformational, not just transactional, to be effective. In other words, only increasing numbers without transforming a system's cultures does not produce equity and inclusion. In the next chapters, this dissertation shows why inclusion strategies based in assimilation and deficit frameworks for minoritized students does not produce equity. An essential part of the relational and transformational work required to foster systemic change entails cultivating a new integrative consciousness and learning and teaching practices that foster social equity and inclusion.

Another covert variation of perpetuating social inequity in education is the practice of recentering whiteness in DEI work. This is different from including Whites in antibias or DEI trainings as one member along with all others within a multicultural society. As Anthony Conwright explains in "The Trouble with White Fragility Discourse: Why HR Divisions Can't Be on the Vanguard of Racial Reform" (2022), Robin DiAngelo's best-selling book *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism* (2018) and other race-related books increased by as much as 6,800% after the murder of George Floyd in 2020. While DiAngelo's and similar books may appear to be championing social equity, they essentially subvert black struggle into projects of recentering white privilege in antiracist and DEI work. Conwright states that the trend among a large swathe of White liberals is to position White self-help as a corrective to structural racism. This shifts the focus and resources of DEI work on the grievance and emotions of White people, while the struggles, experiences, and well-being of BIPOC people takes a back seat. Thus, by prioritizing the experiences and concerns of White people in DEI work, white privilege and racial inequity remain intact. Much like the co-optation of the Blacks Lives Matter movement momentum to recenter whiteness in antiracist discourse, another variation has involved certain approaches to "decolonization" work as it became a new buzzword across universities in the past decade. Decolonial scholars Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang critique this phenomenon in their article "Decolonization is Not a Metaphor" (2012), stating that decolonization had become so widely used for any type of social justice work, including among other racially minoritized communities, that it had lost its intended focus on Indigenous peoples. For Tuck and Yang, decolonization meant repatriation of Indigenous land and life—and nothing else. As a result of the increasing obscurity of the term decolonization when applied so widely to everything, history professor Steven Mintz states that the pervasiveness of the term should require us to ask what it means to decolonize the academy, the canon, the curriculum, and pedagogy (Mintz "Decolonizing the Academy"). Like the recent proliferation of books that recenter whiteness in antiracist and DEI work, some academic conferences addressing the topic of decolonization have entailed panels of exclusively White scholars asking the question what it means to decolonize our syllabi and classrooms. As all-White panels shared their opinions on decolonizing education from the center of the room, educators of color were "invited" to be audience members at the room's peripheries. Similar to recentering whiteness in DEI and antiracist work, this strategy allows White scholars to appear to championing antiracism, decolonization, and systemic equity, while keeping systemic white privilege central and unchanged. As K. Wayne Yang states in *A Third University is Possible* (2017), "the university is more interested in operating as a decolonizing university than in decolonizing itself" (Yang 53). Unlike overt efforts to censor or ban DEI education or teaching, however, talking about DEI and decolonization work can appear as if progress or change is occurring. Yet, these covert forms of re-centering whiteness and re-marginalizing BIPOC voices and experiences ultimately enable systems of division and domination, and racial and gender systemic inequity, to remain intact.

In "Behind the Critical Race Theory Crackdown: From Racial Blamelessness to the Politics of Forgetting" (2022), Sam Adler-Bell analyzes the distinction between overt and covert tactics used in the culture wars of the late twentieth century and in the current culture wars against CRT and DEI work in education. Adler-Bell argues that a strategy among White conservatives is to censor and suppress any knowledge of systemic inequity to create a freedom from ever even being accused of being complicit in any injustice—what he calls *a desire for impunity*, or the implicit racial bargain practiced by White conservatives during the Trump presidency ("Behind the CRT Crackdown"). However, he states that White liberals have been critiqued for participating in a fervor of "wokeness" that is not so much motivated by a desire for justice but rather a desire to be absolved of guilt—what he calls a *desire for absolution*, or the implicit racial campaign practiced by White liberals during the Obama presidency. Both conservatives and liberals share an aspiration for *moral innocence*, he argues, yet use different strategies. Adler-Bell asserts that "both are varieties of evasion—re-focusing all conversation on the alibi rather than the crime. In the face of American history, White Americans are two suspects who can't get their story straight" (ibid). That tension in *how* to evade a moral racial reckoning—because of a desire for moral innocence—has fueled much of the political divisiveness of the current era. Neither strategy results in genuine systemic change. Besides these overt and covert methods of perpetuating systemic inequity, another major barrier to equity in education has been the internalization of oppressive paradigms within social justice movements themselves.

Internalization of Oppressive Paradigms

In *Third World Studies: Theorizing Liberation* (2016), Gary Okihiro traces the genealogy of ethnic studies, and examines where Third World studies and ethnic studies converge and depart. Okihiro argues that ethnic studies has thus far been an unfulfilled version of the vision and demands of the student-led revolution of the Third World Liberation Front (TWLF) in 1968 (140). To begin, he first clarifies what Third World studies is not:

> To clear the deck, Third World studies is not identity politics, multiculturalism, or intellectual affirmative action. Third World Studies is not a gift of white liberals to benighted colored folk to right past wrongs; Third World studies is not a minor note in the grand symphony of US history. Within the United States, diversity and pluralist versions of the nation trivialize the intellectual claims of Third World studies, reducing power relations and their interventions to cultural celebrations, difference, and competence. Moreover, Third World studies is not about teaching students to "resent or hate other races or classes of people" as Arizona's SB 2281 (2010) alleges in legislation that rendered ethnic studies and Chicano/Latino Studies illegal in the public schools. Accompanying that curbing of intellectual freedom was the banning of offensive books to the ruling class from school libraries. (Okihiro 146, 152)

He then also clarifies what Third World studies is and how it offers tools for complex thinking:

> Third World studies is about society and the human condition broadly; Third World studies is about the United States in its entirety and its place in the world. The social formation [...] and movements of society, its structures, relations, and changes over

time are the deep and capacious subject matter of Third World studies. Power or agency and its articulations exhibited in the formations of race, gender, sexuality, class, and nation as discrepant and intersecting constructions and practices conceive and cultivate the social formation. Attending to the multiplicity of those forces ceaselessly at work in the locations and exercises of power, the social formation requires a complexity to our thinking and action to engage and resist the forces that oppress us all. (Okihiro 152, 157)

He states that self-determination was the central aim of the TWLF, yet for post-1968 ethnic studies, this came to mean each racialized group speaking for and about itself mainly within the US nation-state (Okihiro 163). Noting that it is rare to find institutionalized programs in comparative ethnic studies, since most programs segregate the faculty, students, and curricula of each racialized group, Okihiro argues that this pattern mirrors and succumbs to the organization of knowledge by distinctive disciplines and fields with their own tribal members, hierarchies, histories, literatures, cultures, and professional journals and organizations (168). In other words, this pattern adopts the same paradigm of division and domination established in European Enlightenment to justify racism, misogyny, colonization, and imperialism. He specifies that the abandoning of Third World studies for post-1968 ethnic studies can be called identity politics and intellectual segregation. While Okihiro confesses to once being among the generation of scholars who subscribed to the practice of identity politics, he now acknowledges that the cultural nationalism of identity politics adheres to European national or racialized categories, often to the marginalization of gender, sexuality, and class (168). By using those frameworks, he argues that the principal pivots of post-1968 ethnic studies are the relations between a binary construction of Whites (the dominant group) and non-Whites (the subordinate group). Black or brown, red, and yellow power are supposed antidotes to the poison of white supremacy, but Okihiro states that this follows and is in reaction to white power and is thus accordingly limited by its model and prior condition (174). In other words, the consciousness that created inequity in the first place cannot be the same consciousness used to transform it.

Third World studies had begun as a revolutionary student led movement in 1968 at San Francisco State College (137). Students of the Third World Liberation Front (TWLF) drew connections between domestic racial oppression and imperialism and oppression of people of color in Third World countries. They identified and affiliated with the oppressed, disempowered, and exploited peoples of the Third World (433). In their statement of purpose, the TWLF declared

> We adhere to the struggles in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, ideologically, spiritually, and culturally....We have decided to fuse ourselves with the masses of Third World people, which are a majority of the world's people's, to create, through struggles, a new humanity, a new humanism, a New World Consciousness, and within the text [sic] control our own destinies. (Okihiro 440)

> We offer a positive program. We are not anti-white; we are anti-white-racist-oppression and it is this powerful and just determinant that is the genesis of our movement, but the growth of the movement is affirmative; an affirmation of our humanity, our strength, our beauty, our dignity, and our pride. (Okihiro 496)

Students in the TWLF declared that higher education in the US must address the masses as well as the ruling elite who predominate in books and courses offered in the academy and demanded a unified Third World curriculum. However, when administrators signed an agreement in 1969 to end what had been the longest student strike in the history of US education, administrators and faculty granted what Okihiro calls "post-1968 ethnic studies," leaving the vision and demands of the Third World studies unfulfilled in some areas, though emerging in other areas. As post-1968 ethnic studies turned toward cultural nationalisms and the nation-state, a consciousness of both global and local oppression and the need for collective liberation was abandoned (Okihiro 246). Instead, cultural nationalism became upheld as the highest expression of self-determination, and an end in itself, rather than as a strategic, albeit necessary, step toward liberation (252). Various women of color feminist scholars have also critiqued this approach of *oppositional politics*.

As AnaLouise Keating explains, oppositional politics relies on a binary logic that "keeps us locked within the status quo" such that in "this dualistic either/or system, difference become rigid and divisive" (*Teaching Transformation* 7). Patricia Hill Collins explains the divisiveness in oppositional politics by stating, "In either/or dichotomous thinking, difference is defined in oppositional terms. One part is not simply different from its counterpart; it is inherently opposed to its 'other.' Whites and Blacks, males and females, thought and feeling, are not complementary counterparts— they are fundamentally different entities related only through their definitions as opposites" (*Black Feminist Thought* 70). Moreover, another limitation in adopting the identity politics and intellectual segregation model has been what Okihiro describes as turf wars among racialized minority programs (e.g. African American, Indigenous, Latinx, and Asian American Studies), fighting for scraps of resources and political agency at the margins of universities while systemic white privilege maintains central. Such turf wars often entail some minoritized groups or individuals competing with other minoritized peoples in a strategy called a "hierarchy of oppressions" to gain greater contingent inclusion into the status quo. In *Pedagogies of Crossing: Meditations on Feminism, Sexual Politics, Memory, and the Sacred (2006),* transnational feminism scholar M. Jacqui Alexander describes the limitations of oppositional politics, stating that "the ego learns to become righteous in its hatred of injustice. [...] We learn how to hate in our hatred of injustice, and it is these psychic residuals that travel, sometimes silently, sometimes vociferously, into social movements that run aground on the invisible premises of scarcity— alterity driven by separation, empowerment driven by external loss, of having to prove perpetual injury as the quid pro quo to secure ephemeral rights" (Alexander 325–26). The internalization of "divide and conquer" paradigms among racialized minorities competing for inclusion into the status quo has inadvertently contributed to sustaining a system of division and domination with white privilege maintained as the center and minoritized groups at the margins.

Adding some diversity at the margins or the top of division-and-domination hierarchies does not entail systemic change. Despite the symbolic progress of increasing diversity in admissions, a significant gap remains between minoritized student admissions and retention and graduation rates. Meanwhile, minoritized students who do persist in higher education often must navigate assimilation and deficit frameworks in their learning processes to succeed in formal higher education. Furthermore, scholars of color have also often been interpellated into practices that perpetuate systems of coloniality upon which formalized education was built. Postcolonial scholar Gayatri Spivak has critiqued the ways in which relatively privileged postcolonial scholars have unwittingly participated in exploitation of the Third World. Decolonial scholars Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang have argued for the need to "refuse research" for the settler colonial gaze in which the academy "includes" people of color to only be "seen" through

damage-centered narratives. Scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith has cautioned Indigenous scholars against reproducing colonial methodologies of research and instead reclaim control over empowering Indigenous ways of knowing and being. Moreover, Gary Okihiro states that cultural nationalism of post-1968 ethnic studies, and an aspiration of self-determination defined by the confines of the nation-state, devolved into solely claims for civil rights instead of a Third World liberation and international human rights freedom movement. Consequently, K. Wayne Yang states that the "scyborg – a Third World figure constructed in and interpellated in assemblages of the first world university – is not liberated; they are privileged" (70). Moreover, the framework cultural nationalism to define self-determination left out Native Americans and Pacific Islanders who have continued to live as colonized subjects within the nation-state (Okihiro 1252). Rather than take the nation-state framework for granted, it is important to examine its construction. The primacy of the nation was advanced by English philosopher, Thomas Hobbes, who as Rutger Bergman had mentioned held a pessimistic view of humankind. For Hobbes, individuals were in a state of nature (deemed as "chaos") prior joining civil society, which brought order to their lives, and thus citizenship was a social contract (Okihiro 1265). Okihiro explains that Hobbes' ideas were codified by Swiss diplomat Emmerich de Vattel in his *Law of Nations, or The Principles of Natural Law* (1758). However, Vattelian law combined with English philosopher John Locke's theory of property rights, based on labor, disadvantaged Indigenous peoples (1271). These ideologies set the foundation for Europeans claiming Indigenous people's territories rooted in the notion that Native Americans occupied, but did not "possess," the land (Okihiro 1280). As Evelyn Nakano Glenn notes in "Settler Colonialism as a Structure: A Framework for Comparative Studies of U.S. Race and Gender Formation" (2015), "Settler society does not recognize indigenous conceptions and from their own perspective of land as property, views indigenes as failing to make productive use of it" (Nakano Glenn 57). From Indigenous worldviews, however, the land is not an object to be possessed. These and other integrative epistemologies will be discussed further in Chapter 3. What is important to note here is that the dominant ideologies of civilization, nation, citizenship, and land possession had stemmed from root paradigms of division and domination. The framework of cultural nationalism subscribed to those same paradigms.

Another limit to adopting cultural nationalism as the highest expression of self-determination is that it entailed using identity politics as an end itself instead of as a strategic means to an end. The term "strategic essentialism"[44] was coined by postcolonial scholar Gayatri Spivak in 1985 to describe the strategy by which differences within a group are temporarily downplayed and unity assumed for the sake of achieving political goals. During various social movements for civil rights in the US during the 1960s-1970s, otherwise diverse groups that normally may not identify with the racially constructed categories developed during the European Enlightenment would organize under large umbrella categories of race as in "African American," "Asian American," and "Latino/a" to have greater political impact in larger numbers. In the process, however, division and domination paradigms were employed and certain identity positionalities were privileged (e.g. male, heteronormative) over others (e.g. woman, queer). These cultural nationalisms often reproduced practices of coloniality and patriarchy within their own communities.

Throughout the feminist movement, women have also had to address exclusions and oppressions reproduced within some practices of feminism, which have privileged the needs and

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[44] See Gayatri Spivak's 1985 essay "Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography." *The Spivak Reader: Selected Works of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak*. Donna Landry and Gerald MacLean, eds. Routledge, 1996.

experiences of White, middle-class, and heterosexual women. Audre Lorde's speech "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House" was delivered at a feminist conference in 1979 to address the widespread racism and homophobia that existed within feminism. Adrienne Rich's critical essay "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence" (1980) also critiqued the adoption of compulsory heteronormativity among women, which devalued not only the existence of queer women but also the importance of loving relationships between women, regardless of sexuality. In explaining that women are socialized to identify with males for social and political mobility, instead of identifying with other women, Rich argued for the practice of women-identified women, or women valuing other women instead of primarily seeking identification with males to gain social mobility within heteropatriarchal systems.

The adoption of cultural nationalism and identity politics as an end in itself, rather than as a strategic and temporary means to an end, has enabled intragroup oppressions and marginalization. Furthermore, as mentioned in the "hierarchy of oppressions" strategy, identity politics and oppositional politics have also enabled intergroup oppressions, such as racially minoritized groups employing racialized stereotypes and essentialist identities of other groups. A common practice among some scholars is to give detailed analyses of data to demonstrate struggles of "black and brown" communities, while bypassing equally critical and rigorous analysis of data among Asian American communities, while explicitly or implicitly reinforcing the divisive and misleading model minority stereotype of Asian Americans. During the COVID-19 pandemic, various scholars frequently stated on media outlets[45] that the pandemic harmed "Black and Brown" communities the most, while "Whites and Asians" were relatively less impacted by COVID-19. Yet, a closer inspection of disaggregated data shows that some Asian ethnic groups were experiencing some of the highest rates of infection and mortality.[46] This varied by region and was due to different factors, including occupational exposure for those who did not have the option to work remotely, intergenerational households, lack of health insurance, and language barriers. Furthermore, the intensification of anti-Asian hate crimes caused many elder Asian Americans to avoid seeking healthcare for illnesses, even if not COVID-related, since they were afraid that they would be attacked as scapegoats for the virus. As stated in Chapter 1, Asian Americans—particularly women, elderly, and immigrants—were blamed as scapegoats for the virus, and thus also harmed by the pandemic through hate crimes. The soundbite analysis of "Black and Brown" versus "Whites and Asians" by some scholars of color at prestigious universities completely overlooked those facts, thus reinforcing binary thinking, hierarchies of oppressions, and a divisive model minority stereotype.

In the twenty-first century, some even still refer to the model minority stereotype as a "positive" stereotype, despite much research that dispels that myth. Numerous writers and scholars have written at length about how the model minority stereotype includes the depiction of all Asian Americans as being not good at English, leadership, or other social skills, which results in "inclusion" without political agency. The model minority stereotype of Asian Americans in education also elides the fact that, as of 2018, 2% of educators in U.S. public schools are Asian American, while 79% are White, 9% are Hispanic, 7% are Black, and 1% are

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[45] Fox, Maggie. "Study Confirms Pandemic Hits Black Americans, Native Americans, and Latinos Harder than Whites." *CNN*, 4 October 2021, https://www.cnn.com/2021/10/04/health/pandemic-deaths-minorities/index.html.
[46] See Yee, Amy. "COVID's Outsize Impact on Asian Americans Is Being Ignored." *Scientific American*, 6 May 2021. https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/covids-outsize-impact-on-asian-americans-is-being-ignored/; and Daniel Wong, MD, et al "Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in COVID-19: Emerging Disparities Amid Discrimination." *Society of General Internal Medicine*, 2 October 2020, https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007/s11606-020-06264-5.pdf.

Native American ("Race and Ethnicity of Public School Teachers" USDOE). Finally, the argument that the model minority stereotype is positive often ignores the fact that overtly negative stereotypes are simultaneously employed against Asian Americans—as perpetual foreigners, yellow peril, and disposable sex objects. Angela Kong explains how the model minority stereotype and yellow peril stereotype have worked simultaneously at historically white institutions to imply that Asian Americans are "overcrowding college campuses" (Kong "Re-examining Diversity Policy at University of California, San Diego" 1), even as they continue to experience inequity and lack of inclusion at those institutions. Emphasizing misleading and divisive stereotypes of any racial group—or engaging in a hierarchy of oppressions—does not lead to genuine systemic change or liberation.

One study pointed out that the news media primarily showed video footage of black-on-Asian hate crimes during the COVID-19 pandemic, although data shows that 75% of the reported hate crimes against Asian Americans had been perpetrated by White people.[47] Therefore, to counter the effects of divide-and-rule, greater attention in education and the media needs to be placed on coalition-building among BIPOC communities, including African Americans and Asian Americans, and BIPOC and White communities—that have occurred and are occurring, as well as the constructive and integrative knowledges and skills to create them.

In addition to cultural nationalism and oppositional politics, another example of slippage into essentialism is when the settler-native-slave triad framework used in settler colonial studies becomes conflated with racialized identities. K. Wayne Yang explains that the triad is useful for decentering white supremacy as the sole umbrella of oppression, noting that we are all complicit, just some more than others. Yet, it becomes problematic when suggesting that racial identities are fixed points on the triad as: settlers, Indigenous peoples, and Black people (8). According to Yang, "Settler-native-slave technologies operate everywhere on everybody in intersecting, sometimes contradictory ways, and always with a dynamic specificity that radically changes with context" (9). As one example, Yang states, "Antiblack technologies operate on Mien people in Oakland, California in 2016 differently from how antiblack/anti-Indigenous/pro-settler technologies might try to reconstruct Mien students into Asian students just a few miles away at UC Berkeley" (ibid). The slippage into racial essentialism and the uncritical use of disaggregated data have been pernicious for Asian Americans who do not fit the model minority stereotype.

One antidote to division and domination is coalition and cooperation. As with the JACL coalitional activism in the Brown v. Board of Education hearing and Japanese Americans who vocal protests against internment camps for Muslim Americans after 9/11, critical research on the harmful effects of the constructed hyper(in)visibility of Asian Americans as a monolithic model minority (read: docile, hardworking, successful, non-leaders) will provide useful in the coming decades for coalition building with other minoritized communities whose increasing numbers on college campuses also do not automatically translate into equity and inclusion. The response used for Asian American students, "There are so many of you here, what's the problem?" to dismiss consideration of any need for structural or cultural transformation in equity and inclusion practices now also applies in some cases to Latinx students at colleges designated as Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) and campuses with majority Latinx student populations.

Throughout my work as a scholar-activist in education, I have from time to time met people—usually faculty or staff more than students—who express surprise that I can relate to or

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[47] Yam, Kimmy. "Viral Images Show People of Color as Anti-Asian Perpetrators. That Misses the Big Picture." *NBC News*, 15 June 2021, https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/viral-images-show-people-color-anti-asian-perpetrators-misses-big-n1270821.

am invested in empowering and advocating with people from diverse backgrounds, even if they do not share my "racial" or "ethnic" identity. One reason comes from embodied knowledge. As someone from a multiethnic, multilingual family that was originally forged in love despite social taboos and has survived different imperialisms, wars, and exile—I am cognizant of the constructed-ness and potential harms of (non-strategic) essentialist identity politics in erasing the complexity and reality of lived experiences. Another reason is that a critical education made this awareness possible. An intersectional lens helps one to see that the oppressive "technologies" that are used against one marginalized group can also be used against another group. While recognizing and honoring differences in experiences among people's multiple identity-formations, I do not have to be of that same "group" to at least be aware of the technology.

Intersectionality

To address the structural exclusions created by (non-strategic) essentialism, legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term "intersectionality" in 1989 to describe the interlocking systems of oppressions and privileges that create different experiences for people along axes of race, gender, sexuality, class, and other identity positionalities.[48] An intersectional lens allows one to see important differences within essentialist identity categories, which is crucial for recognizing that not all members of a group are privileged or oppressed in the same ways. Intersectionality urges groups to examine and transform intragroup oppressions. Understanding intersectionality also allows groups to see common ground and form coalitions across differences in racial identity to find common ground along experiences of class, gender, or sexuality—or vice versa. Intersectionality is a vital framework for women of color and queer of color social justice work. Yet, it is still not a guaranteed practice, since (non-strategic) essentialism of race and gender categories of identity continue to persist in education in harmful ways.

Critical Ethnic Studies

Fortunately, as Gary Okihiro clarifies, not all post-1968 ethnic studies scholars saw race and the nation-state as the sole or primary subjects of their field. To distinguish themselves from the post-1968 ethnic studies that became the prevailing norm at many colleges, some refer to their scholarship and practice as "critical ethnic studies." New generations of scholars have since created innovative research that cuts across disciplines and social formations, advancing the field of critical ethnic studies, for which liberation remains the objective (411). Okihiro's analysis of Third World studies retains the original TWLF vision for universal liberation (self-determination) against all forms of oppressions, material and discursive, but he states that his book *Third World Studies: Theorizing Liberation* (2016) merely starts a conversation and invites further dialogue, including dissent, to keep advancing the conversation. This dissertation builds upon Okihiro's revival of Third World studies, as well as vital work in women of color feminism, queer studies, and decolonial studies, and brings these into dialogue with integrative worldviews and practices. In doing so, I hope to inspire students and educators to newly envision what is possible and necessary to move us beyond limiting paradigms of division and domination that have thus far shaped systems of education and enabled systemic inequities to persist.

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[48] Crenshaw, Kimberlé. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color." *Stanford Law Review*, vol. 43, no. 6, July 1991, pp. 1241-1299.

Beyond Gender Identity

The internalization of oppressive paradigms in education has also perpetuated systemic gender inequity. While racially minoritized students have been subjected to assimilationist and deficit frameworks based on race, ethnicity, culture, and language, women have also been subjected to assimilation tactics using deficit frameworks of gender, particularly cultural traits and values deemed as feminine. In their book *Building Gender Equity in the Academy: Institutional Strategies for Change* (2020), Sandra Laursen and Ann E. Austin investigate why women faculty are persistently underrepresented in STEM fields in higher education and why women still face implicit bias and unwelcoming environments, despite the increasing numbers of women in higher education. Their research describes the structural and cultural barriers that women face in the recruitment, retention, and promotion stages of employment. For women who make it past barriers of implicit or explicit bias in the recruitment phase, those who are hired are often expected to assimilate into male-dominant cultures and diminish aspects of themselves related to their identities as women. In their article "Stop Telling Women They Have Imposter Syndrome" (2021), Ruchika Tulshyan and Jodi-Ann Burey explain that women are often diagnosed with having "imposter syndrome" if they feel marginalized in a male-dominant workplace. Instead of institutions examining the structural and cultural practices of the work environment—which may include bullying, harassment, exclusion, and microaggressions—women are pathologized as being insecure or lacking confidence and told they need to work on themselves to fit in and succeed. Some women have also advised other women to do this, even while acknowledging gender inequity in the workplace. For example, former Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg's best-selling book, *Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead* (2013), takes this approach, while former tenured professor Karen Kelsky's book *The Professor is In: The Essential Guide to Turning Your Ph.D. Into a Job* (2015), advises women scholars in all fields on how to hide any traces of femininity in their application process, from their writing to the way they speak and behave, and replace it with more masculinist codes of writing, speaking, and behaving. Otherwise, Kelsky states women and their work will be judged negatively due to explicit or implicit bias. After leaving academia, Kelsky started a private consulting business for graduate students and junior scholars, and frequently contributes articles to higher education newsletters, giving the same advice as her book.[49] As researcher Brené Brown has said, "patriarchy isn't the shark; it's the water" ("The Power of Women's Stories"). Despite the mainstream success of her first book, Sheryl Sandberg's second book *Option* B: *Facing Adversity, Building Resistance, and Finding Joy* (2017), co-authored with Adam Grant, took a different tone on how to navigate work, life, and grief after her husband had passed away. Instead of advising women to mimic men in the workplace to get ahead, she was now advising how workplaces should be more compassionate and accommodating to those experiencing grief or other challenges in life; in other words, to be more accepting of the fullness of the human condition. In an interview, Sandberg admitted that she was embarrassed by some parts of her first book *Lean In* and stated that *Option B* offered some revisions. As K. Wayne Yang states in *A Third University is Possible* (2017), "the first world university wants you to become masculine in the most disciplined sense of the word and will provide you with the necessary prosthesis and will cut off your tail. But you, as [*decolonizing*] scyborg, must use these technologies to bend the fabric of power to suit your decolonial desires" (58). Women teaching women how to mimic men in education or the workplace to succeed is not what Adrienne Rich meant by women-identified women. The disdain for feminine traits and values have been internalized by both men

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[49] Kelsky, Karen. *The Professor Is In*, https://theprofessorisin.com/.

and women, and have also provided the grounds for homophobia and transphobia among masculinist cultures and environments.

In March 2022, Florida governor Rick DeSantis signed the "Don't Say Gay" bill into law, which bans students and educators in Florida from saying "gay."[50] DeSantis argues that students should be educated in schools, not "indoctrinated."[51] Ironically, proponents of the bill argue that schools should not be "pushing gay lifestyles" onto children but should be "upholding Christian values." According to that perspective, the inclusion of LGBTQ+ peoples is called indoctrination while enforcing a singular interpretation of Christian values in schools is not. Similarly, the culture wars of the 1980s and 1990s had sought to undo civil rights gains made during the 1960s and 1970s. Gary Okihiro noted that this earlier backlash against diversity featured "calls from the right for a return to whiteness and European values to reclaim and restore the nation from people of color and the radical left" (*Third World Studies* 2368). The current campaigns against CRT, DEI, or any form of teaching a fuller account of US history in schools, are being fueled by the Great Replacement Theory, which exploits a root fear of existential annihilation. They have mobilized some voters and policymakers to attempt to put a halt to all kinds of more inclusive education. To conjure up new outrage and keep the mobilization going, social emotional learning (SEL) was recently added to the pool of conservative attacks in education.

Jennifer C. Berkshire states that "What began as a howl of protest against 'critical race theory' has quickly built to include a seemingly endless litany of conservative complaints about what gets taught in schools and by whom" (Berkshire "Unwoke and Illiberal"). Regarding the attacks against SEL, Berkshire explains that

> This brand of instruction, it turns out, was actually brought into schools at the behest of businesses looking to recruit future knowledge-economy workers outfitted with "soft skills," like team building and collaboration. But in the hothouse culture-war reveries of Parents United, SEL has taken its place alongside DEI and CRT as another sinister form of woke-ist mind control masquerading as sensitivity and empathy. (Berkshire)

Berkshire explains that a teeming market of organizations is feeding on parents' outrage and cashing in on this latest wave of backlash social equity advancements in education. Parents Unite charges $350 a head for parents to gather and commiserate at conferences on how to "get their schools back" (Berkshire). Moms for Liberty offers $500 bounties for teachers who violate education gag orders. Parents outraged against SEL education are calling it "gender ideology" (ibid). Berkshire notes that, at a Parents Unite conference, "Erika Sanzi, who [...] recently transitioned from Obama-era charter school advocate to parents' rights crusader, explained from the stage, parents who might be too fearful to speak out about CRT are going to revolt when they realize that the schools are trying to turn their kids trans" (Berkshire). In *Cassandra Speaks*, Elizabeth Lesser showed that the construction of a divided self, where masculinity is privileged and the feminine devalued and blamed for the human condition, has contributed to thousands of years of misogyny, which can also appear as "homophobia." That fear of the feminine can also appear as "transphobia," or a fear of nonduality and balance. I posit that the divided self—with

[50] Diaz, Jaclyn. "Florida's Governor Signs Controversial Law Opponents Dubbed 'Don't Say Gay'." 28 March 2022, https://www.npr.org/2022/03/28/1089221657/dont-say-gay-florida-desantis.
[51] Allen, Greg. "Florida Gov. DeSantis takes aim at what he sees as indoctrination in schools." *NPR*, 13 July 2022, https://www.npr.org/2022/07/13/1110842453/florida-gov-desantis-is-doing-battle-against-woke-public-schools.

masculine privileged over feminine, mind over heart, humans over Nature—does not need to be protected from being replaced, or to be mastered and leaned into. It needs to be healed.

Healing the Divides

My research seeks to shed light on and transform the persistent underlying deficit frameworks of gender and race used in education, not to advise others or myself how to master them through strategies of assimilation and self-abnegation. Elizabeth Lesser states in her book *Cassandra Speaks* that societies must stop blaming women for the human condition and instead find ways to live more in balance. She explains that many women, including herself, who began entering leadership positions after the 1980s, did not know how to act at first. They wore blazers with shoulder pads to appear more like men and engaged in dominating behaviors. Yet, this is not what is needed to bring all of us back into balance and wholeness—or social equity and well-being. For centuries, the feminine principle has been suppressed and devalued by men and women. She argues that the feminine principle needs to be restored. This requires all of us to change the guiding stories we tell and prioritize stories that value caretaking, compassion, and communication over vengeance and violence. Lesser explains that, whether it comes from nurture or nature does not matter:

> What I care about are the values of the feminine—the value of care as opposed to domination; the value of sharing as opposed to hoarding; the value of inclusion as opposed to tribal behavior that leads to violence and destruction. What I care about is that we stop venerating the spirit of dominance and instead elevate the soul of caring. To me, that points in the direction of women. Not all women, of course, but to the values that many women cherish and to the skills that we have developed based on those values. (207)

She adds that it will take courage "for women not merely to claim power but also to redefine it" (Lesser 112). The same is true for people marginalized by race, ethnicity, sexuality, ability, and other characteristics. Adopting the same paradigms of division and domination will not solve the problems of inequity created by those paradigms in the first place. Lesser states that we need to redefine power from its current conception as "power *over*" to now mean "power *with*." Instead of telling stories that reinforce the old paradigm of power as domination, we need new stories of power that reflect the value of power as mutually beneficial cooperation.

In conclusion, a reduction in some overt methods of exclusion and segregation and increasing diversity in college admissions has not by itself translated into equity and inclusion. Systemic inequities in education have persisted for historically marginalized students, despite the symbolic progress of increased access, because education systems continue to rely upon paradigms of division and domination. Covert methods of perpetuating inequity also continue to grow and adapt over time, while overt methods also re-emerge in the form of backlashes. Without transforming those underlying paradigms into integrative practices based in collective liberation, increasing diversity has merely meant adding some minoritized students and faculty to the margins or a few to the top of that system, rather than creating genuine equity and inclusion. Other ad hoc measures, such as adding some academic programs or community resource centers to the margins of universities, have also not resulted in systemic change but appear as symbolic progress while systemic inequities persist. Consequently, schools have remained at worst an extension of the colonial project (Paris and Alim) and sites of trauma and struggle for some that

exacerbate inequities rather than ease them (Rosa), or at best contradictory sites that both reproduce and disrupt social inequities (Nasir, Yang). This dissertation is an invitation for us to imagine what is possible beyond those limiting paradigms. Rather than seeking inclusion into pre-existing systems of inequity, my research aims to show how cultivating a new integrative consciousness and learning and teaching practices can support transforming systemic inequity. The following chapters present integrative epistemologies and pedagogies that foster both personal and collective liberation.

CHAPTER 3
Integrative Epistemologies on Interconnection and Interbeing

A human being is a part of the whole, called by us "Universe," a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest — a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole nature in its beauty. Nobody is able to achieve this completely, but the striving for such achievement is in itself a part of the liberation and a foundation for inner security.[52]
—Albert Einstein

The root of all suffering is duality.[53]
—Thich Nhat Hanh

Choosing Liberation
      Drawing from teachings in Buddhist psychology, Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh explains that all humans have both seeds of darkness and seeds of light in their *store consciousness*—a concept similar to the *unconscious mind* in Western psychology. How we think, feel, and act ultimately depends on which seeds we choose to water. Cultivating mindfulness helps us to generate awareness of our thoughts and feelings so that we can choose how to respond rather than react unconsciously. Mindfulness then operates like a filter that protects our inner world from external stimuli from easily triggering or activating seeds of darkness in our *store consciousness*. Like the parable of "Two Wolves," and original translations of the book of Genesis, this view of the human condition acknowledges the potential of light and dark, or good and evil, in everyone. Rather than a fixed condition of being inherently wicked, this view acknowledges that we can choose which traits to "feed" or "water." Mindfulness, cultivated through practices such as meditation, helps us to generate awareness of those seeds within us and others, as well as triggers and our choices in how to respond. We can choose liberation.

Mindfulness and Meditation: Diagnosis and Cure
      In a study of the human condition and meditation, author Robert Wright—a self-described secular humanist—begins his book *Why Buddhism is True: The Science and Philosophy of Meditation and Enlightenment* (2017) by describing a scene from the Hollywood film *The Matrix* (1999). The film's protagonist Neo discovers he has been inhabiting a dream world, and the life he has been living has in fact been an elaborate hallucination. His physical body is inside a pod, among many rows of people in other pods. Asleep in their pods, Neo and others are hooked up to dream lives given as pacifiers. The choice Neo faces is to keep living a delusion or to wake up to reality, conveyed by the film's famous "red pill" scene. Rebel avatars have entered Neo's dream. Their leader, Morpheus, explains the situation saying, "You are a slave, Neo. Like everyone else, you were born into bondage, into a prison that you cannot taste

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[52] Sullivan, Walter. "The Einstein Papers: A Man of Many Parts." *The New York* Times, 29 March 1972, https://www.nytimes.com/1972/03/29/archives/the-einstein-papers-a-man-of-many-parts-the-einstein-papers-man-of.html.
[53] "The Three Doors of Liberation." *Lion's Roar: Buddhist Wisdom for Our Time*, 21 June 2019, https://www.lionsroar.com/the-three-doors-of-liberation/.

or see or touch—a prison for your mind" (Wright 2). That prison is called the matrix. Morpheus explains that the only way to get the whole picture is "to see it for yourself," so he presents Neo two pills—a blue pill will allow Neo to return to his dream world, and a red pill will allow him to wake up and break through the delusion. Neo chooses the red pill (2). Wright states that this may seem like a stark choice: "a life of delusion and bondage or a life of insight and freedom" (ibid). Yet, he explains that, for Western Buddhists who saw the film when it came out, they felt this scene mirrored a choice they had made. Western Buddhists are people in Western countries who did not grow up as Buddhist but later adopted a version of secular Buddhism, stripped of some traditional Asian Buddhist elements, such as the belief in reincarnation and various deities. That Western Buddhism centers meditation and Buddhist philosophy (ibid). For these Western Buddhists, they were convinced that the world they had once seen was a kind of illusion, not a total hallucination, but a seriously warped picture of reality that then warped their approach to life, with bad consequences for them and the people around them. After discovering meditation and Buddhist philosophy, they felt they were seeing things more clearly. The phrase "I took the red pill" came into currency as code for "I follow the dharma"[54] (3). To help the actor Keanu Reeves prepare for his role as Neo, the film's directors, the Wachowski siblings, gave him three books to read. One of those books was Robert Wright's earlier book, *The Moral Animal: Evolutionary Psychology and Everyday Life* (1994). Wright surmises that a link the directors saw between his book and the film was that evolutionary psychology is "the study of how the human brain was designed—by natural selection—to mislead us, even enslave us" (3). This sets the premise for his book, which includes his participant observation reflections of the benefits of meditation and Buddhist philosophy for seeing clearly and becoming liberated from suffering caused by the mind—all of which is referred to as enlightenment in Buddhism.

Wright clarifies that our evolved brains empower us in many ways and generally give us an accurate view of reality, but other parts of the brain were developed in "natural selection," which is a blind process rather than conscious design. Natural selection is only concerned about one thing—getting genes into the next generation (Wright 3). Genetic traits that contributed to genetic proliferation flourish, while those that did not are dropped. Traits that have survived this test include mental traits—structures and algorithms—that are built into the brain and shape our everyday experience. At the most basic level, Wright states that most of the thoughts, feelings, and perceptions that guide us through daily life now are not the traits that give us an accurate picture of reality; they are the ones that helped our ancestors get genes into the next generation (4). While in the past it did not matter whether our brains gave us an accurate view of reality, since they were designed to delude us for our survival (e.g., running away from a predatory animal). These were useful under certain conditions, when it was better to assume and overreact (e.g. hearing leaves rustle and immediately running without waiting to verify if a predatory animal was indeed in the bushes about to attack). However, we are now starting to see the many limitations—and personal and collective harm—in being primarily and unconsciously controlled by those aspects of the brain. Those parts of the brain can cause people to be gripped by anxiety, to struggle with depression for days on end, to feel hopeless, to feel irrational hatred toward others or toward oneself, to feel greedy, or to feel the need to hoard and accumulate well beyond what is necessary for well-being (ibid). If one person can mindfully regulate their delusional feelings of fear, hatred, and greed and experience greater well-being and a sense of liberation

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[54] *Dharma* has several meanings, including the Buddha's teachings and the path that Buddhists should walk in response to those teachings (Wright 3).

from it, Wright asks us to imagine how much better the whole world would be if everyone could do this (ibid). Echoing James K. Rowe's essay on the political value of mindfulness, Wright states that, "if the basic sources of human suffering and human cruelty are in large part the product of delusion," then "there is value in exposing this delusion to the light" (4). He points out that delusions do not only appear as thoughts, feelings, or perceptions on grand scales like war; they can also appear as everyday illusions that add up over time to full-scale patterns of delusional living (5). Besides acting out on negative feelings, everyday delusions can drive the pursuit of pleasure – through mindless eating, sex, intoxication, earning the esteem of others, outdoing rivals – to acquire short-term dopamine hits that do not result in lasting satisfaction, spurring an endless cycle of pleasure-seeking or what some psychologists call running on the "hedonic treadmill" (7). Such pleasure-seeking acts may also be attempts to numb pain and other difficult emotions.

Tibetan Buddhist meditation teacher, Yongey Mingyur Riponche explains that "Ultimately, happiness comes down to choosing between the discomfort of becoming aware of your mental afflictions and the discomfort of being ruled by them" (qtd. in Wright 10). If you want to liberate yourself from the parts of the mind that keep you from realizing true happiness, you must first become aware of them, which can be unpleasant. Wright, himself, acknowledges that in his own process of studying evolutionary psychology, he initially experienced newfound awareness and painful self-consciousness of his mental afflictions yet without deep happiness or the ability to transform those afflictions despite being aware of them (10). In other words, he did not know the path from awareness of his suffering to liberating himself from that suffering. He began to wonder if the Buddha's teachings were saying essentially the same thing that modern psychological science says, but if Western Buddhism was also offering the way to transform suffering. Thus, Wright began his first steps in mindfulness meditation and, over the course of several years, eventually developed a daily meditation practice (11). What he discovered is that Buddhist meditation—and its philosophies—address the predicament of the human condition in a surprisingly direct and comprehensive way. In other words, Buddhism offers an explicit diagnosis of the problem and a cure (14). When the cure works, it brings not only happiness but also clarity of vision—the truth of things, or at least a clearer perception that is much closer to truth than our everyday views of them (ibid). Wright also clarifies that how people perceive of and practice mindfulness differs.

Although the concept of mindfulness has now entered the mainstream in the US, Wright notes that some people who have taken up meditation in recent years have done so for mainly therapeutic reasons. They practice mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR), a program created by Jon Kabat-Zinn, or focus on some specific personal problem. They may not realize that meditation can be a deeply spiritual endeavor and can transform their view of the world. They are near the threshold of a basic choice, one that only they can make. As Morpheus tells Neo in the film, "I can only show you the door. You're the one that has to walk through it" (14). Wright explains, from first-hand experience, that "what lies beyond the door has a stronger claim to being real than the world they're familiar with" (14). As Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh describes it,

> With mindfulness, we are aware of what is going on in our bodies, our feelings, our minds and the world, and we avoid doing harm to ourselves and others. Mindfulness protects us, our families and our society. When we are mindful, we can see that by refraining from doing one thing, we can prevent another thing

from happening. We arrive at our own unique insight. It is not something imposed on us by an outside authority. (Thich "Five Mindfulness Trainings")

My dissertation considers mindfulness—its key philosophies and its practices—for what it offers as both the diagnosis and a cure to the ways of thinking, seeing, and being that have been shaped by fear-based paradigms of division and domination for centuries. Instead of feeding the unconscious aspects of the mind driven by fear, greed, or hatred, we can choose to cultivate our evolved minds for personal and collective liberation.

Critical Mindfulness

Unlike some trendy forms of mindfulness mentioned by Wright that primarily focus on individual self-help, my analysis of mindfulness and Buddhism considers the link between personal and collective liberation, specifically how mindfulness can foster well-being and social equity through helping us to cultivate inner peace and integration, to see more clearly, and to choose our actions accordingly. Yet, this is not the intention behind all forms of mindfulness.

As mindfulness in the US has become more mainstream in the past decade, it has also been quickly co-opted for commodification purposes, in forms that diminish its potential for deeper forms of liberation and genuine social change. Thus, despite being called the "mindfulness revolution," this diluted form causes mindfulness to lose its transformative power. To capitalize on the increased popularity of mindfulness, organizations have at times referred to their mindfulness trainings as "Buddhist inspired," to leverage the credibility of a tradition that has stood the test of time for thousands of years, while at the same time reassuring corporate sponsors that their brand of mindfulness has no ties to its Buddhist origins (Purser and Loy). Two critics of this trend, Ron Purser and David Loy, state that

> Uncoupling mindfulness from its ethical and religious Buddhist context is understandable as an expedient move to make such training a viable product on the open market. But the rush to secularize and commodify mindfulness into a marketable technique may be leading to an unfortunate denaturing of this ancient practice, which was intended for far more than relieving a headache, reducing blood pressure, or helping executives become better focused and more productive. ("Beyond McMindfulness")

The practice of employing mindfulness solely for the sake of helping executives and workers to increase their productivity has been called "McMindfulness" or "corporate mindfulness." Purser and Loy state,

> while a stripped-down, secularized technique [...] may make it more palatable to the corporate world, decontextualizing mindfulness from its original liberative and transformative purpose, as well as its foundation in social ethics, amounts to a Faustian bargain. Rather than applying mindfulness as a means to awaken individuals and organizations from the unwholesome roots of greed, ill will and delusion, it is usually being refashioned into a banal, therapeutic, self-help technique that can actually reinforce those roots. ("Beyond McMindfulness")

The corporate world is not the only sector that has jumped onto the "McMindfulness" bandwagon. As Purser and Loy note, the mindfulness movement has adopted mindfulness as a universal panacea that has pervaded nearly every major industry, from corporations to book sales, education, scientific research, psychotherapy, health and wellness programs, and prisons.

David Forbes, another critic of this brand of McMindfulness, critiques the ways in which the education industry has co-opted mindfulness in problematic ways. In his book *Mindfulness and Its Discontents: Education, Self, and Social Transformation* (2019), Forbes states that mindfulness helps us to recognize the impermanence of the self and our interdependence with others, yet the way that mindfulness has been incorporated into schools often severs the roots of these Buddhist ethics. Instead of promoting human development and social justice, Forbes argues that McMindfulness covertly reinforces neoliberalism and capitalism, systems that worsen our suffering. He critiques how "education curricula across North America employ mindfulness to help students learn to succeed in a neoliberal society by enhancing the ego through emphasizing individualistic skills and the self-regulation of anger and stress" (Forbes). Instead, he argues that mindfulness educators should uncover the sources of stress and distress that stem from an inequitable, racist, individualistic, neoliberal market-based society. He advocates for a *critical, social, and moral mindfulness* that challenges the unmindful practices and ideas of McMindfulness. In addition to Forbes, Purser and Loy, there is a growing field of scholarship and public writing arising to address the problematic practices of corporate mindfulness. Much like "critical ethnic studies" developed as a response to a "post-1968 ethnic studies" that had adopted and reinforced the same limiting frameworks and practices that the TWLF had sought to transform for collective Third World liberation, a new field of scholarship called "critical mindfulness" has now emerged to shed light on the detrimental practices of "corporate mindfulness," and presents more socially just practices of mindfulness that are based in ethics for both personal and collective liberation.

Sará King recently wrote one of the first doctoral dissertations[55] on a case study of the incorporation of a mindfulness-based intervention (MBI) program in an urban middle school that focused on yoga and meditation. The teachers in the program, who were White, worked with nine students of color. One of the key findings was that this MBI program had some positive benefits but was relatively ineffective because the students felt that the program was imposed on them by the school's administrators who students noted had caused them to experience stress, anxiety, or trauma in the past. As an intervention program, it had little to no prior buy-in and was not based on community or relationship building. Neither trust nor buy-in were established prior to enforcing the program. The program was taught by staff who came from an external organization and some of the middle school's teachers who were required to implement some of the MBI practices in their classrooms. Depending on who the teachers were—including their own resources of emotional resilience that they could draw upon to do the work, and their interest and investment in these practices—students had inconsistent experiences and outcomes from the program. Furthermore, King states that the school administrators did not acknowledge systemic challenges the students may have been facing. Instead, the program was implemented

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[55] King, Sará. *A Case Study of a Yoga and Meditation Intervention in an Urban School: A Complex Web of Relationships and Resilience in the Search for Student Well-Being.* 2017. UCLA, PhD Dissertation.

in a universal "one size fits all" fashion. King argues that a *critical* yoga and meditation practice may be best for working toward the goal of healing with marginalized youth, since it allows space for recognition and addressing social justice issues. A top-down approach to enforcing an intervention program placed the blame and responsibility solely on students (King 81). Without acknowledging systemic inequities and challenges faced by the students, the program risked reinforcing the idea that the students' behavior was the only problem. King suggests that, rather than only forcing "disruptive" students to take the program, other intervention approaches could also be used, such as restorative justice models that use a community-based, collective approach in which multiple stakeholders take responsibility to shift the school's culture, as well as investing in professional development trainings for teachers and administrators on how to approach their relationships and engagement with students (King 82). As discussed in Chapter 2, the practice of pathologizing BIPOC communities and women in education—and applying deficit frameworks when enforcing their assimilation into a status quo that remains unexamined and intact—has a long history. King also critiques the possible disconnect between the backgrounds of the teachers and students. The predominance of White teachers providing mindfulness-based intervention education to students of color mirrors a colonial legacy of White teachers assigned to "civilizing" BIPOC children. Although *right mindfulness* has origins in Buddhist philosophies, corporate mindfulness strips it of its ethical and cultural contexts, which makes it easier to recenter whiteness in its co-optation, much like the covert practice of recentering whiteness in antiracist work. As David Forbes mentions in *Mindfulness and Its Discontents*, mindfulness educators should uncover the sources of stress and distress that stem from an inequitable, racist, individualistic, neoliberal market-based society. Here, the work of critical mindfulness studies is crucial for shedding light on how unmindful uses of mindfulness in education can cause further harm and reinforce systemic injustice.

Like other scholars engaging in critical mindfulness studies, King is a proponent of *critical mindfulness* practices, and believes that incorporating mindfulness into schools and communities can be beneficial if done effectively. Since *critical mindfulness* is not just an individual egoistic practice, and is oriented toward both personal and collective liberation, its incorporation in education settings must be customized with an awareness of systemic and cultural factors specific to its participants to be effective as an intervention to personal and collective suffering. The next section discusses two key Buddhist philosophies, which are often stripped from corporate mindfulness yet offer integrative worldviews that are vital for liberation.

Buddhist Philosophies of Impermanence and Interbeing

Impermanence

Impermanence is considered a cornerstone of Buddhist philosophy. Impermanence, or continual change, applies to all things in life. Since everything is impermanent, the second of the Four Noble Truths of Buddhism teaches that, the root of suffering is attachment.[56] When we grasp at or cling to things—whether material objects, feelings, concepts, perceptions, people, or a desire for things to never change or end—then we suffer and may cause others to also suffer. The Buddha had taught that to recognize and accept that all things are impermanent can relieve much suffering. Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh was particularly skillful at adapting Buddhist philosophy

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[56] Willis, Jan. "The Four Noble Truths." *Lion's Roar: Buddhist Wisdom for Our Time*, 20 January 2022, https://www.lionsroar.com/the-four-noble-truths/.

and mindfulness to modern everyday life in simple, clear, and poignant ways. He clarifies that impermanence itself does not necessarily lead to suffering.

> Without impermanence, life could not be. Without impermanence, your daughter could not grow into a beautiful young lady. Without impermanence, oppressive political regimes would never change. We think impermanence makes us suffer. The Buddha gave the example of a dog that was hit by a stone and got angry at the stone. It is not impermanence that makes us suffer. What makes us suffer is wanting things to be permanent when they are not. (Thich "Impermanence")

In this regard, the practice of mindfulness helps us cultivate the ability to look deeply beyond wrong perceptions. For example, he explains that "When we practice mindfulness of impermanence, we become fresher and more loving. Having an awareness of impermanence can help us take good care of ourselves. If we know that life is impermanent, we will cherish our loved ones even more" ("Impermanence"). In addition to sitting, walking, and eating meditation, one of the key mindfulness practices that Thich Nhat Hanh practiced and taught was mindful breathing. He stated that practicing "conscious breathing can help put us in touch with things and to look deeply at their impermanent nature. This practice will keep us from complaining that everything is impermanent and therefore not worth living for. Impermanence is what makes transformation possible. [...] Thanks to impermanence, we can change suffering to joy (ibid).

James K. Rowe states that Tibet Buddhism "offers meditative practices for befriending the reality of death. We are not destined to resentfully interpret death as domineering, or to flee from felt servility with fantasies of mastery" ("The Political Value of Mindfulness" 53). Similarly, in *No Death, No Fear* (2002), Thich Nhat Hanh explains that as a young novice monk his training in Zen Buddhism required him to sit amidst a graveyard and contemplate the decaying corpses. He admits that it was daunting at first, but the purpose of the practice was to meditate on the impermanence of all things, including the human body. In time, he came to deeply understand that life and death are interconnected. While this training that some Buddhist monks undergo may seem intense, the guided practice helps them to awaken and become liberated from a root fear of the human condition—the fear of annihilation—which is also a fear of impermanence. A deep awareness of impermanence frees one from being controlled by fear, thus allowing one to not engage in dominative acts to try to compensate for a felt smallness in the human condition. It frees one from the being controlled by an unconscious root driver that influences the way they see, think, and act. Consider the outcome of a young Charles Darwin discussed earlier in Rutger Bergman's analysis of his formulation of a theory of human evolution. When Darwin was unable to reconcile the existence of struggle, suffering, and death while observing Nature. His theory of evolution stressed competition and domination as key to survival, instead of seeing and articulating the essential trait of cooperation for human evolution.

Interbeing

Besides acknowledging impermanence, the Buddhist philosophy of interbeing also provides liberating insights. Thich Nhat Hanh wrote the *Five Mindfulness Trainings* to distill the Buddha's fundamental teachings of the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path, which can lead to healing, peace, compassion, and transformation for ourselves and the world. The first mindfulness training, *Reverence for Life*, asks us to commit to cultivating the insight of *interbeing*:

Aware of the suffering caused by the destruction of life, I am committed to cultivating the insight of interbeing and compassion and learning ways to protect the lives of people, animals, plants, and minerals. I am determined not to kill, not to let others kill, and not to support any act of killing in the world, in my thinking, or in my way of life. Seeing that harmful actions arise from anger, fear, greed, and intolerance, which in turn come from dualistic and discriminative thinking, I will cultivate openness, non-discrimination, and non-attachment to views in order to transform violence, fanaticism, and dogmatism in myself and in the world. (Thich "The Five Mindfulness Trainings").

One of the clearest and most profound examples offered by Thich Nhat Hanh to describe both interbeing and impermanence can be found in his teaching called "A Cloud Never Dies," in which he states,

When your favorite cloud is no longer there in the sky, you are sad. [...] you have to remember that 70% of our body is made of cloud. Clouds are inside and not just in the sky. Everyday you continue to drink clouds. When a cloud is no longer seen in the sky, you think that the cloud is no longer there. And you think that your cloud now belongs to the realm of non-being—yesterday, it belonged to the realm of being, but today it belongs to the realm of non-being. That's wrong perception. You think your cloud has died, but the other day we said that it is impossible for a cloud to die, because to die means from something you become absolutely nothing. A cloud cannot become nothing. A cloud can become the rain, the snow, the ice. So if you are caught by the appearance of cloud, you are not capable of seeing your cloud in its continuation. You have to see your cloud in the rain. [...] You are free from signs. And when you drink your tea, you see your cloud inside. So you are free from appearances: this is signlessness. So the person you used to be with is no longer there, and you grieve for her loss. [...] If you have the eyes of signlessness, you can see your beloved in her new form. You can see the cloud in the rain. (Thich "Signlessness: A Cloud Never Dies")

Thich Nhat Hanh has explained interbeing through a myriad of other examples. If you look deeply, he says, "you can see everything in the universe in one tangerine" (*Peace is Every Step*). This means you can see the rain, the sun, the soil, and the farmers that helped the tangerine grow into being. The philosophies of interbeing and impermanence also both incorporate the Buddhist concept of *not-self*. The concept of not-self sheds light on the gap between things as they are and our concepts of things. For example, as Thich Nhat Hanh explains, a table is a concept, but it is made only of non-table elements, such as water that grew the trees, wood, screws, and the carpenter such that, if the non-table elements were removed, there would be nothing left.

Thich Nhat Hanh presents the phrase "You are, therefore I am" as another way to cultivate understanding of interbeing, and seeing oneself and the world with compassion – rather than through fear, separation, or the need for domination. Furthermore, the notion of interbeing is not just for humans, but extends to all living things, including animals, plants, and the Earth. In his love letter to the Earth, he further exemplifies this by stating,

Dear Mother Earth,

I bow my head before you as I look deeply and recognize that you are present in me and that I'm a part of you. I was born from you and you are always present, offering me everything I need for my nourishment and growth. My mother, my father, and all my ancestors are also your children. We breathe your fresh air. We drink your clear water. We eat your nourishing food. Your herbs heal us when we're sick.

You are the mother of all beings. I call you by the human name Mother and yet I know your mothering nature is more vast and ancient than humankind. We are just one young species of your many children. All the millions of other species who live—or have lived—on Earth are also your children. You aren't a person, but I know you are not less than a person either. You are a living breathing being in the form of a planet. (Thich *Love Letter to the Earth* 102-103).

Buddhist philosophies of interbeing—and mindfulness practices of meditation to generate awareness and clear insight—allow for capaciousness in non-dualistic thinking. Besides seeing the interconnection amongst all living things, it allows the mind to hold paradox and wholeness. While the Buddha taught that the root of suffering is attachment, Thich Nhat Hanh has added that the root of suffering is duality. With the worldview and epistemology of interbeing, there is no need to divide the self into a mind split from and over the body, heart, and spirit. There is no need to make masculine dominant over feminine. No need to separate humans from Nature and for humans to "conquer" Nature. No need to divide people into constructed racial categories and no need to for one to dominate over others.

Several years ago, in a comparative ethnic studies class that I was teaching, a student of color expressed indifference about racial discrimination and said, "It's just human nature." Thus, regardless of racial formation theory or other analyses of how racialized categories were socially constructed, they said they believed it was ultimately "just human nature" to discriminate. I invited students to share their thoughts and engage in a multidirectional dialogue and to facilitate further reflection about this issue. Throughout the dialogue, it was clear that other students were not as resigned to accept discrimination—whether as individual racism or as systemic racial inequity—as just human nature. They spoke about a range of topics, including how children are not born with hate but must be taught to hate, and why systemic racism impacts people's life outcomes and well-being. We then also unpacked some nuances in the meaning of discernment, unconscious bias, explicit bias or individual racism, and systemic racism.

The dialogue was productive in that regard, and because it also showed that there was an underlying view of human nature that the texts and frameworks in this introductory class were not quite yet addressing. We had mainly been addressing the *what*, the *how*, and the *so what*—but not the *why*. As an educator who is also a continuous learner, this made me wonder: 1) Is it sufficient to say that "human nature" causes humans to discriminate? 2) Does that have to result in dominative acts or unchecked unconscious bias? and 3) Does the fact that something is human nature mean we cannot change it?

In part, working on this dissertation has entailed an in-depth exploration of and has led to some answers to those questions. Rutger Bergman also explains that another reason that veneer theories—or pessimistic views of human nature—seem to hold despite astounding evidence to

the contrary is that cynicism is easier; it allows people to not do anything. Optimism based in realism—or "new realism"—calls upon you to do something, believing that it is possible. Seeking to learn and understand fuller accounts of historical and present conditions, despite dominant narratives, requires critical thinking. Critical thinking helps us to develop policies, accountability measures, and personal and collective practices to ensure that unjust discrimination or bias does not occur. In addition, mindfulness offers a diagnosis of the root cause and a preventative cure for being controlled by the unconscious mind aspect of "human nature."

Robert Wright draws from evolutionary psychology studies to explain that the unconscious mind aspect of "human nature" that was designed to delude us has persisted in humans throughout evolution thus far because it had in the past allowed survival under prior conditions of the natural and social environment (e.g., escaping a predatory animal). However, being controlled by the unconscious mind of "human nature" – and letting it shape our ways of seeing, thinking, and being – has now proved to be causing serious limitations and harm, both at the personal levels in terms of mental afflictions and how people view and treat themselves and at the collective level in ways that people perceive and act toward others. He states that Buddhist philosophies and mindfulness meditation helps us to cultivate awareness of the "unconscious mind's" influence on our thoughts and perceptions, which often create delusions, and then allows the "evolved brain" to take the driver seat.

Some unconscious bias trainings at workplaces convey a similar concept and use the strategy of pausing, reflecting, and then acting.[57] The premise used in some unconscious bias trainings is that the brain contains two main functions of fast thinking and slow thinking. Due to past evolutionary needs, it is "human nature" to make fast decisions, in which the "fast brain" makes quick decisions based on little or even no information. It fills in the blanks to protect us from danger—real or perceived—and often assumes that those who appear more similar to us are familiar and thus less threatening. The "fast brain" works on a deeply unconscious level and is not only shaped by what is clearly happening in front of us, but is also largely influenced by social messages, stereotypes, and other codes received over the course of a lifetime. The first step of pausing thus activates the "slow brain"—another essential aspect of "human nature"— and short-circuits the "fast brain." The next step of reflection then involves deeper and more complex thinking that the "slow brain" can do but the "fast brain" cannot. That includes empathy and compassion, or putting oneself in another's shoes, and asking questions such as "Why do I think this? Is this really true?" From there, the third step of acting entails shifting one's mindset to approach discomfort with curiosity rather than predetermined conclusions (shaped by the "fast brain" and its socially influenced messages), and acting with good intentions. Robert Wright calls this a process of using the evolved brain (or slow brain) rather than the delusional brain (fast brain). Studies in evolutionary psychology and unconscious bias show that humans have frequently been controlled by the unconscious mind to the detriment of themselves and others.

Albert Einstein has stated, "Often in evolutionary processes a species must adapt to new conditions in order to survive. A new type of thinking is essential if mankind is to survive and move to higher levels" (*The Einstein Papers*). At the turn of the twenty-first century, the United Nations adopted Thich Nhat Hanh's Five Mindfulness Trainings as its code of nonsectarian

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[57] "Unconscious Biases: The Systematic Errors in Our Thinking." *Prohabits*, https://prohabits.com/blog/unconscious-biases-the-systematic-errors-in-our-thinking.html#:~:text=Our%20brain%20relies%20on%20two,of%20our%20decisions%20and%20actions.

global ethics.[58] It acknowledges these philosophies as being not singularly Buddhist doctrine but rather nonsectarian ethics. They foster inclusion, rather than division and exclusion. While nonsectarian, the *ethics* in the Five Mindfulness Trainings are maintained in this code of global ethics, unlike in versions of corporate mindfulness, which strip away the ethics to repurpose it to emphasize individualism, hyper-productivity, and competitiveness.

Robert Wright, James K. Rowe, and other scholars have posited that mindfulness offers both a clear diagnosis of and a cure for that predicament of the human condition. Yet, as Robert Wright notes, "Buddhism isn't alone in this promise of liberation. There are other spiritual traditions that address the human predicament with insight and wisdom" (14). Thich Nhat Hanh wrote the book *Living Buddha, Living Christ* (1995) to emphasize that point. As a scholar, he spent his life deeply studying the texts and scriptures of Christianity and other spiritual faiths along with Buddhism, and states that the *authentic* teachings of the *living* Buddha and the *living* Christ are similar, as are the *authentic* teachings of all spiritual traditions, which teach true love and compassion. This also parallels what some scholar-activists call a practice of "radical love."[59] Scholar-activist and educator bell hooks explains this in one of her most important essays, "Love as the Practice of Freedom," in which she recalls

> Martin Luther King's declaration, "I have decided to love," [...] emphasizes choice. King believed that love is "ultimately the only answer" to the problems facing this nation and the entire planet. I share that belief and the conviction that it is in choosing love, and beginning with love as the ethical foundation for politics, that we are best positioned to transform society in ways that enhance the collective good. (247)

Thich Nhat Hanh called Jesus the Buddha of the West, and described Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. as a *bodhisattva*.[60] The practice of *authentic* or "radical love" is based in the *lived* practice of true love and compassion. This differs from notions of "romantic love" valorized in popular culture. It also differs from religious dogma used to construct political power, which emphasize fear-based worldviews of separation, judgement, condemnation, blame, entitlement, and hatred. Accordingly, Thich Nhat Hanh explained that he was not interested in dogmatic forms of Buddhism, Christianity, or other religions, but was interested in the lived, *embodied* teachings of the Buddha and Jesus—their *authentic* teachings conveyed through their everyday actions.

To practice mindfulness, people do not have to convert their spiritual beliefs, if they have any, and become a Buddhist. Buddhism is tolerant of diversity, including spiritual beliefs. Thich Nhat Hanh regularly facilitated interfaith retreats as part of his peace activism work. The philosophy of interbeing allows us to not have to force sameness of differences to coexist in harmony. Using the metaphor of an orange, Thich Nhat Hanh explain that the seeds, skin, and

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[58] Gach, Gary. "Thich Nhat Hanh's Code of Global Ethics: The Five Mindfulness Trainings." *Kosmos Journal for Global Transformation*, 2 October 2019, https://www.kosmosjournal.org/kj_article/thich-nhat-hanhs-code-of-global-ethics/.

[59] Nichols, John. "Bell hooks and the New Politics of Radical Love." *The Cap Times*, 19 December 2021, https://captimes.com/opinion/john-nichols/opinion-bell-hooks-and-the-new-politics-of-radical-love/article_34c029bf-8f8d-5e7f-8f60-df2872af3392.html.

[60] In Buddhism, a *bodhisattva* is someone considered to be an "awakened being" who works toward creating peace and compassion in the world. It is believed that everyone has the potential to be a *bodhisattva* through cultivating awareness and committing to living in ethical ways that also support awakening, peace, and compassion for others.

flesh of an orange are all fully themselves and coexist in harmony. The seed does not have to become the skin or vice versa. If they did, the orange would not exist. Mindfulness principles are universal, while mindfulness practices are nonsectarian and can complement one's spiritual faith or secular views. There are many doors and different pathways to liberation.

Indigenous Knowledges and Pedagogies

I acknowledge that I am currently on the unceded land of Indigenous peoples, specifically the unceded territory of the Kumeyaay peoples, who have been faithful stewards of the land for more than 10,000 years and continue to be today. I am grateful for the wisdom in Indigenous people's epistemologies and their reverence for land, water, life, and people. I hope that my work may contribute to helping people becoming aware of coloniality in the present and the need for us to decolonize uses of land, social systems, and minds. Furthermore, I hope that my work as an educator may contribute to the revitalization of Indigenous cultures, knowledges, and communities living now and the future.

One of my earliest encounters with Indigenous kinship was at the age of six. One time, at a ceremony that I attended with my dad, I was fascinated by the bright colors on the dancers' clothing, the sounds of the drumming, and the presence of youth, adults, and elders mingling together. A man approached my dad. He seemed to know him, and they started speaking to each other like old friends. Since I could not hear what they were saying, my attention was drawn to the women arranging handmade turquoise jewelry on a nearby table. After a few minutes, I turned back to see my dad and the man, who was now embracing my dad's forearm with his hand, while my dad held the man's arm in the same way. Before they parted, the man said to my dad: "You and I are brothers." My dad nodded at him, like they knew each other well. I asked my dad if they were friends. He said they had just met but they talked about eating rice, ways of cooking, and various other things they shared in common. I asked, "Is that why he said you are brothers?" My dad paused and said, "In a way, we are." That moment stayed with me ever since.

Indigenous knowledges and pedagogies center a narrative practice of storytelling, and highlight the interconnectedness of all living things. Through oral traditions, stories, and land-based teaching, education using Indigenous pedagogies supports a holistic learning environment, and teaches about the relationality of people, plants, animals, and environment. In *First Nations Pedagogy* (2008) June Kamanski explains that

> Pre-Colonial educational approaches are profoundly different from those of the current mainstream educational system. Holistic (physical, mental, spiritual, emotional) growth and development of the person, Experiential learning, Oral tradition, and Student-centeredness are key elements of the First Nations pedagogical approach Further, and of vital importance, is the fact that it is grounded in Spirituality. ("First Nations Pedagogy for Online Learning")

Although Indigenous communities also had intertribal conflicts and war prior to and alongside European colonization, it was under colonization that Indigenous peoples were subjected to large-scale systemic violence through genocide, land dispossession, enslavement, state-sponsored rape and sterilization, separation of children from families, and denial of other human rights. As settler-occupation shifted from colonization to coloniality, Indigenous youth were subjected to oppressive forms of "civilization" in formal education through forced assimilation and cultural genocide. In "Decolonization is Not a Metaphor," Eve Tuck states that

In order for the settlers to make a place their home, they must destroy and disappear the Indigenous peoples that live there. 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. For the settlers, Indigenous peoples are in the way and, in the destruction of Indigenous peoples, Indigenous communities, and over time and through law and policy, Indigenous peoples' claims to land under settler regimes, land is recast as property and as a resource. Indigenous peoples must be erased, must be made into ghosts (Tuck and Yang 6).

Anthropologist Patrick Wolfe states in his theory of the "logic of elimination" that settler colonialism is a system, not a historical event.[61] Therefore, while many acts of settler colonization may have been enacted in the past, *coloniality as a system* persists in the present. That system is maintained by making Indigenous peoples into "ghosts," or relics of the past through continual erasures. This requires censoring fuller accounts of history (e.g. attempts to ban CRT or ethnic studies in education), while at the same time suggesting that settler colonization is a historical event already completed in the past.

As Tuck states, Indigenous peoples "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. For the settlers, Indigenous peoples are in the way" ("Decolonization is Not a Metaphor" 6). If stories are the glue that hold cultures, ideologies, and systems together, then the project of ensuring settler-colonial futurity requires making continual *moves to innocence*[62] (Mawhinney, Tuck) or desire for *moral innocence* by narratives and acts that insist upon *impunity or absolution* (Adler-Bell), through telling stories of Manifest Destiny and European entitlement to land and resources and other people's bodies and labor, and stories of the "uplift" of "savages"—while erasing the stories, epistemologies, and wisdom of Indigenous peoples. Yet, Indigenous peoples and communities are here now. To counteract the stories and structures that uphold coloniality in the present, Indigenous knowledges and pedagogies must be revitalized, valued, and sustained as a process of decolonization.

Indigenous educators have created the framework of Culturally Sustaining & Revitalizing Pedagogies (CSRP)[63] to support the specific needs of Indigenous communities who have survived systematic efforts in biological and cultural genocide for hundreds of years. Drawing on the work of Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies (CSP), which entails teaching theories and practices to honor and sustain the cultures and languages of minoritized students who have been

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[61] Wolfe, Patrick. "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native." *Journal of Genocide Research*, vol. 8, no. 4, 2006, pp. 387–409.

[62] *Settler moves to innocence* is a concept Eve Tuck cites as derived from Janet Mawhinney's 1998 Master's thesis, which "analyzed the ways in which white people maintained and (re)produced white privilege in self-defined anti-racist settings and organizations" (Tuck and Yang "Decolonization is Not a Metaphor" 9). See Mawhinney, Janet. *"Giving up the ghost": Disrupting The (Re)Production Of White Privilege In Anti-Racist Pedagogy And Organizational Change*. 1998. The University of Toronto, Masters Thesis.

[63] Lee, Tiffany S. and Teresa L. McCarty. "Upholding Indigenous Education Sovereignty Through Critical Culturally Sustaining/Revitalizing Pedagogy." *Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies: Teaching and Learning for Justice in a Changing World*, edited by Django Paris and H. Samy Alim, Teachers College Press, 2017.

marginalized in formal education, CSRP recognizes that, for Indigenous communities, their knowledges, cultures, and languages must first be revitalized and then sustained.

Culturally Sustaining and Revitalizing Pedagogies: Language, Culture, And Power (2017), edited by Cathy Coulter and Margarita Jiménez-Silva, is a collection of works by Indigenous scholars to counteract the legacy of formal education as a system of rule, as both products and producers of division and domination, and as total institutions. In describing the mission of CSRP, Coulter and Jiménez-Silva state that

> Today's schools compartmentalize children and curriculum. [...] Against the backdrop of the western-derived, institutional framework of schooling are cultural ways of knowing that are place-based, holistic, experiential, and connected to oral storytelling. In the current movement toward acknowledging and understanding cultural knowledge, teacher education programs need to work in collaboration with cultural communities, honoring traditions and epistemologies and seeking to revitalize and sustain (Paris, 2012) language and culture. Such initiatives inform the big picture of educational reform and enrich mainstream university teacher education programs. This book highlights the journeys, challenges and unfolding stories of transformation that reside within university/community/school partnerships focused on cultural and linguistic revitalization through schooling. (CSRP)

Indigenous *revitalization* is thus a necessary complement of decolonization. In contrast to coloniality's primary focus on ensuring settler-colonial futurity, the Indigenous Futures Institute (IFI)[64]—an international collective of artists, academics, youth, and elders across various university and community organizations—focuses on envisioning and building Indigenous futurity. Part of this entails revitalizing and valuing Indigenous communities, knowledges, and cultures in the present. Furthermore, revitalizing Indigenous knowledges requires reframing and decolonizing our minds from the dominant epistemologies of coloniality.

The concept of the Fourth World, in its original coinage in the 1970s, had derogatory connotations if seen through the lens of the three-world model in which "First World" is used to describe capitalist nations deemed as "most developed." Within that framework, the Fourth World was a classification for "the most underdeveloped, poverty-stricken, and marginalized regions of the world. Many inhabitants of these nations do not have any political ties and are often hunter-gatherers that live in nomadic communities, or are part of tribes. They may be fully functional and self-surviving but during the Cold War were ascribed Fourth World status based on their economic performance" (Liberto "Fourth World"). However, the concept of the Fourth World has also been taken up and reframed by Indigenous scholars and activists to revitalize Indigenous epistemologies and ways of knowing and being as strengths rather than deficits.

One example is Fourth World Theory (FWT). Rudolph Carl Ryser, Dina Gilio-Whitaker, and Heidi G. Bruce explain that "The conceptual framework of FWT is rooted in the dynamic and evolving relationships between people, the land and the cosmos" and "the globally shared Four Directions metaphor as symbolic of the relational connection of human experience with the land and the cosmos" (Ryser et al 50). With this framework, they blend Indigenous scientific knowledge with conventional science to explain various social, political, cultural, and environmental phenomena. Instead of adopting a zero-sum paradigm, this revitalization of

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[64] Indigenous Futures Institute (IFI), https://ifi.ucsd.edu/

Indigenous knowledges both reclaims land-based epistemologies and synthesizes it with elements of conventional science.

Furthermore, Indigenous Fourth World theories can cause us to question and re-consider geographies of power. Gary Okihiro explains,

> If divide and rule is a principal strategy of power, then synthesis can work against those expressions of power (3334). [...] Unlike the world-system of possession and dispossession, Indigenous peoples inhabit not the Third but the Fourth World. The Fourth world is without borders. It is unbounded. Indigenous people share that Fourth World Land and seas are inalienable and are managed for the common good. Indigeneity references those epistemologies and worldviews; the land/seas and people are undivided, they are related discursively and materially. Ways of knowing are eternal (time) and unbounded (space). Discursive self-determination, then, requires a decolonization of the mind to cleanse it from the polluting languages and ideologies of the colonizers (3521).

The settler-colonial gaze has enforced a view of Indigenous peoples as relics of the past, as victims, or as marginalized due to lack of sovereignty/inclusion in the nation-state. Yet, for Indigenous people inclusion into the *nation-state* was not an ideal. Gary Okihiro explains,

> Unlike post-1968 ethnic studies, which sought cultural nationalism – or inclusion in the nation-state – as the highest expression of self-determination, (3521) Sovereignty is an imperial not an Indigenous or Third World discourse and practice. Membership in the nation-state can but will not ultimately lead to liberation. Survival is a human, not a civil right (3539). Moreover, Indigenous and Third World discourses can articulate languages and ideologies not of the ruling world order. Instead of the conquest and appropriation of the environment, they teach us the verity of our kinship with the land, water, and all animate and inanimate forms. They have us view from space our true home – the Fourth World – absent boundaries or distinctions between waters, land, and nation. Our earth and its peoples are indeed one (3544).

As Eve Tuck had stated, Indigenous people have creation stories, not colonization stories, about how we/they came to *be a place* and not merely possess a place ("Decolonization is Not a Metaphor" 6). Revitalizing Indigenous worldviews and epistemologies are valuable because they can cause us to rethink liberation in more capacious ways—besides just "sovereignty" defined as inclusion into (the margins) of systems of inequity or cultural nationalism as the highest expression of self-determination. Like Buddhist philosophies of impermanence and interbeing, Indigenous epistemologies are holistic and integrative, focusing on relationality, interconnection, and sustainability. Thus, rather than fear-based drives to divide and possess land or dominate others, the view of kinship with land, water, and all living beings in a borderless world that exists for the common good can guide those embedded in a world of division and domination to live in more sustainable and socially just ways. At the same time, Indigenous epistemologies should not just be co-opted for commodification.

In *A Third University is Possible* (2017), K. Wayne Yang theorizes the Fourth World in his proposed framework for the university in terms of first, second, third, and fourth worlds.

Drawing from the project *México Profundo*, in which there are four civil societies: Penthouse Mexico, Middle Mexico, Lower Mexico, and Basement Mexico, he explains that, for the Zapatistas, "Basement Mexico is not only a site of dispossession but also a deep well of Indigenous cosmology, wisdom, and sovereignty, *un México profundo*" (Yang 33). It is the fourth autonomous form of civil society. Yang uses "fourth world university" here as a placeholder for places of epistemology that are autonomous from the university such that "fourth world wisdoms" are sovereign (34). Following Eve Tuck's argument of "refusing research" for the university's settler colonial gaze, he uses "fourth world" to assert that some forms of knowledges should refuse the university, and explains that

> Community and Indigenous knowledges are already prefigured in the academy as folk/superstitious, as unscientific, as effeminate, or in the most colonial ways as "data" to then be appropriated as objects to be reinterpreted and renarrated back to you. Therefore I am using *fourth world* to assert the value of those knowledges, without turning them into valued commodities. I am using *fourth world* to make space. (Yang 34)

Yang's point of valuing Indigenous knowledges, while also refusing to turn them into valued commodities for the university to use to reproduce or sustain inequity, parallels the challenges/importance of critical mindfulness studies. Mindfulness risks being co-opted by the university as a tool of "corporate mindfulness" to make people more productive workers for systems of division and domination.

This dissertation seeks to contribute to the revitalization of precolonial, anticolonial, and decolonial knowledges – including Indigenous wisdom, epistemologies, and pedagogies – not so that they may be commodified by the university, but to value them and to make space for them. Making that space is for Indigenous peoples to be able to revitalize and sustain for communities in education and beyond. It is for all of us to rethink how we may have internalized the settler-colonial gaze—and its paradigms of power, sovereignty, land, and claims to innocence—and how these may have shaped our ways of thinking, seeing, and being. It is for all of us to envision liberation in more capacious ways that would liberate not only the oppressed, or a single oppressed group, but also those who feel driven to divide and dominate or oppress others.

Borderlands Theory and Spiritual Activism
The question of how to sustain a liberating consciousness and practices for oneself, as well as with others, while working in inequitable systems and transforming them, is a question that various women of color feminists have explored in their creative and scholarly works. It is a question that independent scholar Gloria Anzaldúa explored in her pioneering work that refused dualistic thinking, out of which her theory of borderlands and spiritual activism was born. In her groundbreaking work *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987), Gloria Anzaldúa, Chicana queer feminist writer and scholar-activist, addressed the issue of healing the divided self in her borderlands theory and *mestizaje*, or *mestiza* consciousness. She describes the US-Mexico border as *una herida abierta* (an open wound) that mirrored an internal split of the psyche. *Mestiza* consciousness requires one to inhabit the figurative borderlands by overcoming binaries of dualistic thinking and cultivate integration of the whole self.

The power of Anazaldúa's work was that she not only presented her theories in the content of her writing; the form of her writing also embodied those theories and refused the

binaries of the divided self. Her creation of *autohistoria-teoría*, or autoethnography, was a dynamic practice of writing that engaged both the personal and sociopolitical without diminishing embodied knowledges for intellectual knowledge. Her use of both poetry and prose also disrupted the privileging of linear and masculinist modes of thinking typically required in academic work. Furthermore, Anzaldúa engaged in code-switching between different regional Spanishes, Spanglish, Nahautl, and English throughout her book, refusing to translate for monolingual readers but instead invited them to meet her halfway.

      Much of Anzaldúa's writing entailed reclaiming all the different parts of her, including those that both American and Mexican cultures had taught her—and other women, Chicanx, and queer people to reject in themselves and others. She states,

> Until I am free to write bilingually and to switch codes without having always to translate, while I still have to speak English or Spanish when I would rather speak Spanglish, and as long as I have to accommodate the English speakers rather than having them accommodate me, my tongue will be illegitimate. I will no longer be made to feel ashamed of existing. I will have my voice: Indian, Spanish, white. I will have my serpent's tongue - my woman's voice, my sexual voice, my poet's voice. I will overcome the tradition of silence. (*Borderlands/La Frontera* 81)

Although Gloria Anzaldúa's revolutionary work has been widely discussed in academia for years, Kittredge Cherry notes that "Secular scholars tend to ignore the spiritual foundation of her work, but Anzaldúa encouraged people to combine spirituality with politics to create revolutionary change. She championed 'spiritual activism' in her later work" (Cherry "Gloria Anzaldúa"). Anzaldúa mentions *spiritual mestizaje* in *Borderlands/La Frontera* yet she continued to explore spiritual activism in much further depth in her later writing.

      For Anzaldúa, *spiritual mestizaje* entails cultivating a new critical consciousness that draws on inherited spiritual traditions and involves both reflection and praxis. This reflects what Elizabeth Lesser advocates in *Cassandra Speaks* in the value of storytelling, saying that, although we may not be able to change how certain creation myths that excluded women's stories and voices began, we can change how the stories end. Anzaldúa's spiritual activism does that by writing a feminist spirituality into existence. Her theory and praxis demonstrate the transformative power of writing and narratives.

      Narratives—and their continual reiterations through multiple ideological state apparatuses (Althusser) of the media, education, and church—can function as the glue that holds cultures, systems, and ideologies together. On the other hand, writing new narratives can shed light on the stories that oppress, while also creating new liberating possibilities. Hence the desire to censor, ban, silence and suppress different voices, or a fuller account of history and the present, and sustain a collection of myths that tell "a single story"– and hence the desire to recenter whiteness in mandatory DEI, antiracist, decolonization discourse. As Sam Adler-Bell says, the intense political divisiveness between White conservatives and White liberals has been a battle of stories – a story of desired impunity versus a story of desired absolution.

      At the 2021 Sundance Film Festival panel "The Big Conversation: The Story of Us," Kimberlé Crenshaw and four other scholars discussed the competing narratives of "America" that ensued before, during, and after the 2021 insurrection at the US Capitol to try to overturn democratic election results. The two competing narrative camps surrounding the January 6th insurrection were: "This is not who we are" and "Make America great again." The former draws

from longstanding narratives of the US as a "multicultural melting pot" and a "land of equal opportunity." The latter draws from longstanding narratives of Manifest Destiny and of white nationalism. Crenshaw explains that both master narratives, though contradictory, have functioned to uphold the story of "America" throughout its history. The stories work together as glue to keep the idea of America together, and to mask systemic inequities, through ideologies of colorblind multiculturalism and normalizing white supremacy. Still, even with this longstanding history of co-existing narratives, the insurrection left many people in the US and around the world stunned at how fragile the unfulfilled project of democracy is and how views of "America" vastly differ within our national borders. Many politicians commented that the attempt to overthrow democratic election results shows that democracy must be continuously worked toward and is not complete or guaranteed.

In the weeks following the January 6th insurrection, the ethos of the nation was described as dark and heavy. Thus, when National Youth Poet Laureate, Amanda Gorman, recited her both realistic and optimistic spoken word poem "The Hill We Climb" at the Presidential inauguration on January 20, the public response, like Gorman's poem, was inspired by hope and courage to keep "climbing the hill" for social justice. She says,

> When day comes, we step out of the shade, aflame and unafraid.
> The new dawn blooms as we free it.
> For there is always light,
> if only we're brave enough to see it.
> If only we're brave enough to be it.[65]

People called Gorman's presence and poem as medicine and "lighting the way" amidst darkness.[66]

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, those who work in the healthcare industry were deemed by those in public office and news media as "essential workers" and "heroes." They certainly are and—along with janitors, grocery clerks, bus drivers, teachers, and other essential workers—deserve much appreciation. Rarely, however, did people mention poets as essential workers. Prior to the introduction of Amanda Gorman and her poetry on a national stage, writer Sandra Cisneros described poets as healers that we need. In 2020, she stated in an interview,

> I think poetry is medicine that we need right now, at this time — this dark time that we're living in the United States. I think the poets are in the profession of transforming grief to light. They're like our chamánes. And they're also in the profession of telling the truth, because you can't write a poem unless you tell your truth. It isn't a poem if it isn't a truth. (Cisneros "A House of Her Own")

Cisneros is addressing something often overlooked in both mainstream media and in education— the importance of the human spirit for our holistic well-being.

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[65] Liu, Jennifer. "Read the Full Text of Amanda Gorman's Poem 'The Hill We Climb'." *CNBC*, 20 January 2021, https://www.cnbc.com/2021/01/20/amanda-gormans-inaugural-poem-the-hill-we-climb-full-text.html
[66] Armenti, Peter. "'For there is always light': Amanda Gorman's Inaugural Poem 'The Hill We Climb' Delivers Message of Unity." US Library of Congress, 22 January 2021, https://blogs.loc.gov/catbird/2021/01/for-there-is-always-light-amanda-gormans-inaugural-poem-the-hill-we-climb-delivers-message-of-unity/#comment-273514.

Conservatives have often cited the need to preserve "European values" in backlashes to advances in civil rights and educational equity. A dominant ideology, promoted in education since the European Enlightenment, or the "Age of Reason," has been that of the divided self – intellect/mind over body and heart or sprit. Various precolonial, anticolonial, and feminist epistemologies share a common practice of actively overcoming the dualities of the divided self—or healing the split self through (re-)integration of mind, body, and spirit.

Anzaldúa's theory of spiritual activism or *spiritual mestizaje* entails the bridging of *mindbodyspirit* to heal the dividing and hierarchizing of the mind, body, and spirit—which cause both individual and collective suffering. Furthermore, spiritual activism emphasizes a continual praxis of deep self-reflection to sustain a radical, sustained critique of oppression. Thus, Anzaldúa's theory of spiritual activism shares much in common with Thich Nhat Hanh's philosophy of engaged Buddhism or peace activism, and integrative practices of mindfulness. In a doctoral thesis titled, "Shifting Toward a Spiritualized Feminist Pedagogy: Gloria E. Anzaldúa and Thich Nhat Hanh in Dialogue" (2012), Victoria A. Genetin puts Gloria Anzaldúa's spiritual activism into conversation with Thich Nhat Hanh's engaged Buddhism, noting that "exploring these theories side-by-side provides an entryway for engaged Buddhism to enter feminist dialogue, and at the same time helps scholar-activists to see engaged Buddhism as a feminist epistemology with implications for practice" (Genetin ii). Genetin then applies these engaged theories in her pedagogy, and in so doing develops a new theory and practice that she calls "spiritualized feminist pedagogy" (ibid). Genetin's study is helpful for theorizing a teaching practice that includes the spirit, rather than the paradigm of the divided self's privileging of the mind over body, heart, and spirit.

In Chapter 4, I explore the intersections of Gloria Anzaldúa's theory of spiritual activism, Thich Nhat Hanh's philosophy of engaged Buddhism, and bell hooks' theory of engaged pedagogy, and I show how these highlight the integral connection between the inner and outer work of social justice. This analysis provides the groundwork for Chapter 5, in which I introduce my theory and development of integrative pedagogy from several of my own courses, which cultivates the whole person in learning, rather than division and domination.

CHAPTER 4
The Inner and Outer Work of Social Justice

I change myself, I change the world.[67]
—Gloria Anzaldúa

You are, therefore I am [68]
—Thich Nhat Hanh

The moment we choose to love, we begin to move against domination, against oppression. The moment we choose to love we begin to move towards freedom, to act in ways that liberate ourselves and others. That action is the testimony of love as the practice of freedom.[69]
—bell hooks

Personal and Collective Liberation

Building on the feminist maxim "the personal is political," various women of color feminist writers, including Audre Lorde, June Jordan, Gloria Anzaldúa, bell hooks, Cherríe Moraga, and many others, have used autobiographical approaches to examine the impact of racism, sexism, and homophobia on their lives. Some writers have also used poetry to discover and articulate what is deeply true for them, apart from societal pressures. Sandra Cisneros has stated that poetry requires truth telling, which can be a form of medicine. June Jordan also explains that poetry is a political act because it stems from a deeply personal attunement that, in turn, can help others find their truth, guarding us against manipulations by so-called leaders. Jordan states,

> Poetry is a political act because it involves telling the truth. In the process of telling the truth about what you feel or what you see, each of us has to get in touch with himself or herself in a really deep, serious way. Our culture does not encourage us to undertake that attunement. Consequently, most of us really exist at the mercy of other people's formulations of what's important.
>
> But if you're in the difficult process of living as a poet, you're constantly trying to make an attunement to yourself which no outside manipulation or propaganda can disturb. That makes you a sturdy, dependable voice—which others want to hear and respond to. So, poetry becomes a means for useful dialogue between people who are not only unknown, but mute to each other. It produces a dialogue among people that guards all of us against manipulation by our so-called leaders. (Quiroz-Martinez "Poetry is a Political Act")

Gloria Anzaldúa's theory of spiritual activism also articulates a feminist writerly practice of using deep self-reflection, storytelling, and writing to theorize, cultivate new insights, and sustain

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[67] Anzaldúa, Gloria. "La Prieta." 1981. *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, edited by Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, 4th ed., SUNY Press, 2015, pp. 198-209.

[68] Thich Nhat Hanh. "You Are, Therefore I am." Dharma Cloud Temple 2013. *Classic Dharma Talks*. Parallax Press – Better Listen!, 2013.

[69] hooks, bell. "Love as the Practice of Freedom." *Outlaw Culture: Resisting Representations*. Routledge, 1997.

engaged social justice work. In this chapter, I explore Gloria Anzaldúa's spiritual activism, Thich Nhat Hanh's engaged Buddhism, and bell hooks' engaged pedagogy—all of which were holistic philosophies that included a praxis of deep self-reflection that informed their engaged social justice work as writers, educators, and scholar-activists in and beyond the academy. Their theories complement each other and offer insights about how to cultivate an integrative practice of liberating oneself and in turn support practices in social justice work for collective liberation.

Spiritual Activism

After writing *Borderlands/La Frontera*: The New *Mestiza* (1987), Gloria Evangelina Anzaldúa (1942-2004), who grew up in Texas along the US-Mexico border, developed her theory of spiritual activism in more depth. In her essay "Now Let Us Shift...The Path of *Conocimiento*...Inner Work, Public Acts" (2002), she describes spiritual activism as the following:

> With awe and wonder you look around, recognizing the preciousness of the earth, the sanctity of every human being on the planet, the ultimate unity and interdependence of all beings—*somos todos un país*. Love swells in your chest and shoots out of your heart chakra, linking you to everyone/everything—the aboriginals in Australia, the crows in the forest, the vast Pacific Ocean. You share a category of identity wider than any social position or racial label. This *conocimiento* motivates you to work actively to see that no harm comes to people, animals, ocean—to take up spiritual activism and the work of healing. *Te entregas a tu promesa* to help your various cultures create new paradigms, new narratives. (Anzaldúa "Now Let Us Shift" 558)

The *conocimiento*—or consciousness—of interdependence of all things serves as the basis and motivation for political practice. As an epistemology, Anzaldúa's spiritual activism is a tool for consciousness raising by offering a way of knowing that is relational, inclusive, and promotes nonbinary modes of thinking. This offers a different way of knowing than the dominant culture that use logic, reason, and exclusion and rely on an epistemological frame of the binary (Torres 202-203). As a practice, Anzaldúa explains that *conocimiento* is

> praying, breathing deeply, meditating, writing—dropping down into yourself, through the skin and muscles and tendons, down deep into the bones' marrow, where your soul is ballast—enabled you to defuse the negative energy of putdowns, complaints, excessive talk, verbal attacks, and other killers of the spirit. Spirituality became a port you moor to in all storms.

> This work of spiritual activism and the contract of holistic alliances allows conflict to dissolve through reflective dialogue. (Anzaldúa "Now Let Us Shift" 572)

For Anzaldúa, the practice of reclaiming multiple identities was not just intellectual; it necessarily also included the body and spirit. Due to her embodied self-awareness as a person living with disabilities, scholars have described the evolution of her inclusive framework of multiple minoritized identities as the development of a "crip-queer-mestiza-subjectivity"

(DeMirjyn 1). Therefore, Anzaldúa describes her theory-praxis of spiritual activism not as simply a cultural mestizaje but as *spiritual mestizaje*—the achieving of *mindbodyspirit* (ibid). This meant integration of the whole self and a notion of the Self as sacred. She clarifies that, for her, "spirituality has nothing to do with religion, which recognizes that soul, that spirit, and then puts dogma around it. [...] Religion eliminates all kinds of growth, development, and change" (Anzaldúa Interviews/*Entrevistas* 98). This is similar to Thich Nhat Hanh's interest in the authentic embodied teachings of the *living* Buddha and the *living* Christ instead of religious dogma. Anzaldúa is also in the company of numerous other women or color writers—e.g., Toni Morrison, Maxine Hong Kingston, Sandra Cisneros—who drew upon spirituality to theorize a politics of spirit and formulate a feminist spirituality. For Anzaldúa, "spirituality calls on us to reflect, meditate, and turn inward, while simultaneously 'expanding out into the world,' to expand our consciousness or awareness (Keating, "Forging El Mundo Zurdo" 522). As theory and praxis, spiritual activism links the personal and the collective because "spiritual activism requires us to turn inward, reflect, meditate (inner work) and then act to implement an idea or vision (public act)" (Anzaldúa "Now Let Us Shift" 540). Anzaldúa's spiritual activism resonates with Thich Nhat Hanh's theory-praxis of engaged Buddhism.

Engaged Buddhism / Peace Activism

Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh (1926-2022) was born in central Vietnam and, at the age of sixteen, he was ordained as a Buddhist monk. During the Vietnam War (1955-1975), he forsook monastic isolation to care for the victims of that war and to work for reconciliation among all the warring parties. Out of this chaos, divisiveness, and violence, his philosophy and practice of "engaged Buddhism" was born. As Thich Nhat Hanh describes in his own words,

> When I was in Vietnam, so many of our villages were being bombed. Along with my monastic brothers and sisters, I had to decide what to do. Should we continue to practice in our monasteries, or should we leave the meditation halls in order to help the people who were suffering under the bombs? After careful reflection, we decided to do both—to go out and help people and to do so in mindfulness. We called it Engaged Buddhism. Mindfulness must be engaged. Once there is seeing, there must be acting… We must be aware of the real problems of the world. Then, with mindfulness, we will know what to do and what not to do to be of help. (Reshel "Thich Nhat Hanh's 14 Principles")

In February 1966, Thich Nhat Hanh established his school the Order of Interbeing and its first six members—three males and three females—were ordained as monastics in Vietnam. Order of Interbeing members commit to practicing and observing the Fourteen Precepts of Engaged Buddhism, which are based in Buddhist teachings of how to stop and transform suffering using nonviolent methods. Due to its emphasis on nonviolent methods to create peace in social change, engaged Buddhism has also been called "peace activism." In 1967, Reverend Martin Luther King nominated Thich Nhat Hanh for the Nobel Peace Prize. Thich Nhat Hanh also led the Buddhist Peace Delegation at the Paris Peace Talks in 1969. He was later expelled from post-war Vietnam because he had refused to take sides as he worked for peace. He settled in exile in France, where he established the Plum Village monastery and lived for more than forty years before being allowed to return to Vietnam. Throughout his exile, Thich Nhat Hanh continued developing his practice of engaged Buddhism and mindfulness, publishing over 100 books and

speaking at thousands of events to teach others how to cultivate peace and compassion in themselves and with others. The International Plum Village tradition established by Thich Nhat Hanh now includes eleven practice centers and hundreds of local *sanghas* (community practice groups) around the world.

In an interview with Thich Nhat Hanh in 2003, Krista Tippett explains "In our time, people of many faiths are interested in the Buddhist notion of mindfulness. It is a set of disciplines for living fully in the present moment in a spirit of compassion towards oneself and others. It is a spiritual practice for many with no religious faith at all" (Tippett "Brother Thay"). Rather than "corporate mindfulness," Tippett is referring to the Buddhist notion of mindfulness that includes ethics. As Thich Nhat Hanh distilled in the *Five Mindfulness Trainings*, this mindfulness includes the Buddhist principle of a *Reverence for Life* and the philosophy of *interbeing*. This worldview helps to heal the internal suffering caused by seeing, thinking, and living as a "divided self" or being compelled to engage in dominative acts as an attempt to compensate for a felt smallness or vulnerability in the human condition.

Mindfulness is an embodied practice grounded in everyday life, which encourages living in the present moment and cultivating awareness of what is going on within and around us. Thich Nhat Hanh has introduced many different practices to cultivate mindfulness, including guided meditations in mindful breathing, mindful sitting, mindful walking, and mindful eating, as well as practices in deep listening and loving speech or mindful communication in relationships with others. Thich Nhat Hanh teaches that, to return home to the present moment, it helps to return to the body, connecting to it with our breath. In many of his guided meditations, he offers phrases to help us concentrate on connecting with our in-breath and out-breath, including the following gatha (verse), recited mentally to the rhythm of the breath:

> *Breathing in, I calm my body.*
> *Breathing out, I smile.*
> *Breathing in, dwelling in the present moment.*
> *Breathing out, I know this is a wonderful moment.[70]*

Being present with our breath and our bodies, allows the mind to be in the present moment. If disturbed, the mind will be clouded, like a glass of water with debris swirling around. If calm, we are more able to have clear insight. Meditation and mindful breathing can help settle and clear the debris of the mind. Teachings in Buddhist psychology have also explained that depression is often caused by mental fixations on the past, while anxiety is caused by mental fixations on the future. Mindfulness helps us to live in the present moment, which can alleviate mental suffering.

Mindfulness is a foundational practice of engaged Buddhism. In the 14 Precepts of Engaged Buddhism, Thich Nhat Hanh emphasizes acting with compassion and humility, essential practices in understanding *interbeing*. He also emphasizes the importance of *non-attachment*, a practice in understanding *impermanence*—a Buddhist philosophy that is helpful for befriending the human condition. Non-attachment, and acting with compassion and humility, are vital for cultivating peace and understanding. That includes non-attachment to rigid ways of thinking and concepts. In the 14 Precepts of Engaged Buddhism,[71] the second and third precepts state:

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[70] Thich Nhat Hanh. *Peace is Every Step: The Path of Mindfulness in Everyday Life*. Bantam Books, 1991.
[71] Thich Nhat Hanh. "The Fourteen Precepts of Engaged Buddhism." *Lion's Roar: Buddhist Wisdom for Our Time*, 12 April 2017, https://www.lionsroar.com/the-fourteen-precepts-of-engaged-buddhism/.

2. Do not think the knowledge you presently possess is changeless, absolute truth. Avoid being narrow-minded and bound to present views. Learn and practice nonattachment from views in order to be open to receive others' viewpoints. Truth is found in life and not merely in conceptual knowledge. Be ready to learn throughout your entire life and to observe reality in yourself and in the world at all times.

3. Do not force others, including children, by any means whatsoever, to adopt your views, whether by authority, threat, money, propaganda, or even education. However, through compassionate dialogue, help others renounce fanaticism and narrowness. (Thich "The Fourteen Precepts")

This is also vital in what Paolo Freire calls dialogical pedagogy, which is essential for creating education as an instrument of liberation instead of an instrument of domination. Rather than education systems and educators enforcing singular ideologies and practices based in division and domination, both educators and students engage in a dialogical process of continually learning with and from each other. This also applies to social justice work beyond education.

Thich Nhat Hanh lived through a prolonged period of divisiveness and war that were fueled not only by internal forces in Vietnam but also the United States. During the war, Thich Nhat Hahn spoke at events across the United States to raise awareness about Vietnamese people and the suffering they were experiencing from the escalating war to try to help (re-)"humanize" them to the American public. At one event at a Protestant church in St. Louis, a man in the audience stood up and asked with searing sarcasm, "If you care so much about your people, Mister Hanh, why are you here? If you care so much for the people who are wounded, why don't you spend your time with them?" At that moment, Thich Nhat Hanh had to practice his own teachings in mindfulness to calm the seed of anger arising in him. Rather than respond in anger, which he realized would do nothing to help American people see the Vietnamese people in a different light than what had been depicted in the mainstream US media to justify and fuel the war, he paused and practiced deep mindful breathing, until he was calm and could offer a clear-minded and helpful response. He said, "If you want the tree to grow, it won't help to water the leaves. You have to water the roots. Many of the roots of the war are here in your country. To help the people who are being bombed, to try to protect them from this suffering, it is necessary to come here" (Forest "When America Met Thich Nhat Hanh"). Jim Forest, who was in the audience that evening, recalls that the fury of the man who spoke had transformed the atmosphere in the room. Through his fury, the audience began to experience their own fury. Yet, Thich Nhat Hanh spoke with a gentle and caring tone toward the man. Forest says, Thich Nhat Hanh's "words seemed like rain falling on fire. [...] In Thay's[72] response we had experienced an alternate option: the possibility—brought to Christians by a Buddhist and to Americans by an 'enemy'—of overcoming hatred with love, of breaking the seemingly endless counterreactive chain of violence" (Forest). Thich Nhat Hanh's response referred to the conditions of the US-Vietnam war specifically. It also referred to the predicament of the human condition in general. We can choose which seeds to water. We must choose consciously. We can choose peace.

The current political divisiveness in the US has been a result of many factors – some of which include political leaders and the media feeding people's seeds of fear, anger, and hate. It also includes attachments to rigid views and singular narratives. As Sam Adler-Bell states, the

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[72] Students of Thich Nhat Hanh also affectionately refer to him as Thay, which means "teacher" in Vietnamese.

political tension between White conservatives and White liberals is a "battle of stories"—a desire for impunity versus a desire for absolution. Yet, there are even more layers involved. At the Sundance Film Festival panel "The Big Conversation: The Story of Us," scholar and writer Viet Thanh Nguyen noted an interesting aspect about the people who were at the January 6th insurrection at the US Capitol. In addition to far-right extremist groups and Trump supporters holding an array of flags, one could see also a South Vietnamese "Republic of Vietnam" flag in the crowd. While it may seem out of place, Nguyen explains that

> South Vietnamese are particularly vocal about their love for Trump, and at this rally and other pro-Trump rallies, the South Vietnamese flag appears often. In America, white nationalists and Vietnamese nationalists share a common condition: a radicalized nostalgia for a lost country and a lost cause. (Nguyen "There's a Reason")

Nguyen, who had come to the US as a child with his family as refugees from South Vietnam, explains that "lost country" and "lost cause" refer here to the American South and South Vietnam. White Southerners who subscribe to ideas of the Confederate south that lost the US Civil War hold a view of themselves as victims and a desire for redemption. This parallels a sentiment among some people from South Vietnam. As Nguyen explains,

> I had grown up with its parallel in the Vietnamese refugee community, where people dwell on their victimization by their communist enemies. The fervor of that feeling means that they find it almost impossible to consider a world that is not divided neatly into a binary: us vs. them, anti-communist vs. communist, good vs. evil, victim vs. victimizer. In such a worldview, reconciliation with the enemy is not possible. The past cannot be forgotten. The war is not over. The battle might yet be renewed, and next time, won. The possibility that their moral purity might be questioned — impossible. ("There's a Reason")

Nguyen says that, for the Southern Vietnamese, part of the draw was a shared interest in strongman politics. Unlike the Great Replacement theory being pushed by some conservative politicians and media outlets, the situation is not simply "White conservatives vs. minorities and the radical left." Studies of voting data have shown that votes from the Latinx community for Trump increased from the 2016 to 2020 Presidential elections, with most Cuban Americans identifying as Republican in 2020 (Shepard). Meanwhile, many Latinx voters were first-time voters without a political ideology set in stone. In short, the Latinx vote, like the large and diverse Latinx community, is not a monolith (ibid). The need for non-dualistic thinking is vital for overcoming notions of "us versus them" or seeing a fixed notion of the "other" as a perpetual enemy. Engaged Buddhism, which entails mindfulness, promotes non-attachment to rigid ways of thinking to foster personal and collective liberation.

Ad hoc approaches to addressing social inequity often focus on treating the symptoms rather than diagnosing the root cause and offering a cure or preventative treatment. These approaches may even adopt the same frameworks and tools as the systems of inequity that they seek to change. To explain the emphasis on nonviolence in engaged Buddhism, Thich Nhat Hanh states,

The essence of nonviolence is love. Out of love and the willingness to act selflessly, strategies, tactics, and techniques for a nonviolent struggle arise naturally… Other struggles may be fueled by greed, hatred, fear or ignorance, but a nonviolent one cannot use such blind sources of energy, for they will destroy those involved and also the struggle itself. Nonviolent action, born of the awareness of suffering and nurtured by love, is the most effective way to confront adversity. (Reshel "Thich Nhat Hanh's 14 Principles")

A philosophy of *interbeing* also helps reduce the likelihood of seeing violence or oppression as an ideal option. Gloria Anzaldúa theorized that spiritual activism requires a *conocimiento*—a consciousness of the interdependence of all beings—that then "motivates you to work actively to see that no harm comes to people, animals, ocean—to take up spiritual activism and the work of healing" (582). As Victoria A. Genetin states, "both Anzaldúa and [Thich] Nhat Hanh promote ways of knowing that are relational, inclusive, and rooted in the body and personal experience. It is this sense of interconnectedness or 'universal responsibility' that moves spiritual activists and engaged Buddhists to work for social justice at the individual, institutional, and societal levels (Genetin 3). Furthermore, spiritual activism and engaged Buddhism both promote a practice of radical self-care to sustain one's courage and compassion for engaging in social justice work. Personal liberation here is thus not only for the self; it is also for collective liberation.

Educator and writer bell hooks considered her theories and practices of teaching to be most influenced by Paolo Freire's critical pedagogy and practice of education as a practice of freedom and Thich Nhat Hanh's engaged Buddhism. hooks drew from both of them, as well as feminism and radical black love, to develop her theory of engaged pedagogy. Like Gloria Anzaldúa's spiritual activism and Thich Nhat Hanh's engaged Buddhism, bell hooks' engaged pedagogy was an epistemology, a pedagogy, and an activist practice.

Engaged Pedagogy

Brazilian educator, Paolo Freire (1921-1997), stated that education functions either as an instrument of domination to enforce conformity to the status quo or as an instrument of liberation. In such a process, education cannot be neutral. He advocated for critical pedagogy that entails a dialogical pedagogy—in which teachers are also students, and students are also teachers—rather than a banking system of education in which teacher bankers (subjects) deposit knowledge into student receptacles (objects). This creates a binary and hierarchical system in education. Freire asserted that education must also be for the masses, not just for the ruling elites. Freire wrote *Education as a Practice of Freedom* in 1967, followed by his second and best known book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in 1968. Freire, who worked primarily among the illiterate poor, developed an educational praxis that would later have an influence on the liberation theology movement of the 1970s, and eventually other educators around the world who were also interested in creating education as a practice of freedom.

Gloria Jean Watkins (1952-2021), better known by her pen name bell hooks, grew up in a working-class African American family in a small, segregated town in Kentucky. Her early experiences in education, unlike those of some BIPOC people, was mostly positive. She credits this to attending a segregated all-black school, where she experienced what she calls "learning as revolution" (hooks *Teaching to Transgress* 2). She explains that almost all her teachers were black women, who were "committed to nurturing intellect so that we could become scholars, thinkers, and cultural workers—black folks who used our 'minds'" (hooks 2). In that school,

they learned early on that their devotion to learning was a counter-hegemonic act. Although they did not articulate it, her teachers were "enacting a revolutionary pedagogy of resistance that was profoundly anticolonial" (2). Black children who were gifted were given exceptional care so that they would fulfill their intellectual destiny and thereby uplift the race. To fulfill that mission, hooks explains that her teachers

> made sure they 'knew' us. They knew our parents, our economic status, where we worshipped, what our homes were like, and how we were treated in the family. [...] My effort and ability to learn was always contextualized within the framework of generational family experience. [...] Attending school then was sheer joy. I loved being a student. I loved learning. [...] Home was the place where I was forced to conform to someone else's image of who and what I should be. School was the place where I could forget that self, and, through ideas, reinvent myself. (3)

However, hooks explains that education changed drastically after racial desegregation.

> Gone suddenly was the messianic zeal to transform our minds and beings that had characterized teachers and their pedagogical practices in our all-black schools. Knowledge suddenly became about information only. It had no relation to how one lives, behaved. It was no longer connected to antiracist struggle. Bussed to white schools, we soon learned that obedience, and not a zealous will to learn, was what was expected of us. Too much eagerness to learn could easily be seen as a threat to white authority. (3)

> When we entered racist, desegregated white schools we left a world where teachers believed that to educate black children rightly would require a political commitment. Now, we were mainly taught by white teachers whose lessons reinforced racist stereotypes. For black children, education was no longer the practice of freedom. Realizing this I lost my love of school. (3)

This new access to "desegregated" (and white dominant) education taught her the difference between the practice of education as a practice of freedom and education as an instrument of domination (hooks 4). hooks explains that "the rare white teacher who dared to resist, who would not allow racist biases to determine how we were taught, sustained the belief that learning at its most powerful could indeed liberate" (4). Despite increasingly negative experiences in education, bell hooks still held on to the idea that education could be liberating. However, during her years as a college student at a prestigious university, she was shocked to sit in classes where professors were not excited about teaching, where they did not seem to know that education could be about the practice of freedom (ibid). By graduate school, the classroom had become the place she hated, where the university and the classroom felt more like a prison (4). In retrospect, hooks states that those years in college and graduate school, though unbeknownst to her at the time, were preparing her to become a teacher. In those years, she observed and learned that "the vast majority of our professors lacked basic communication skills, they were not self-actualized, and they often used the classroom to enact rituals of control that were about domination and the unjust exercise of power. In those settings I learned a lot about the kind of teacher I did not want

to become" (5). She adds that the banking system of education, in which teachers-subjects impart knowledge to student-objects, since she wanted to become a critical thinker. Yet, that longing in her was often seen as a threat to authority. In contrast, she notes that White male students in her classes who were seen as "exceptional" were often allowed to chart their intellectual journeys. The rest of us, she explains, were expected to conform. In those days, those from marginal groups who were allowed to enter prestigious, predominately white colleges were made to feel that we were not there to learn but to prove we were equal to Whites, which often meant showing we could become clones of our White peers. An undercurrent of stress diminished the learning experience (5). This experience compelled her to imagine ways that the teaching and learning experience could be different.

During her student years, she states that feminist classrooms were a place where students could raise critical questions about the pedagogical process—those critiques were not always encouraged or well received, but they were allowed. Still, she explains that feminist classes then were only taught by White women professors. At that time, White women professors were not interested in including critical challenges from Black feminist perspectives. Thus, when hooks finally encountered Paolo Freire's work on critical pedagogy, she felt as though she had found a mentor. Combining Freire's theory-praxis of critical pedagogy with the empowering education she had received in all-black Southern schools in her youth, provided her with a blueprint for developing her own pedagogical practice.

The first paradigm that shaped her pedagogy was that learning should be fun, and the classroom should be exciting and not boring. She states, that "to enter classroom settings in college and universities with the will to share the desire to encourage excitement, was to transgress" (7). It required flexibility, and movement beyond pre-determined boundaries to adapt to meeting students where they are. Yet, she also discovered that excitement about ideas alone was not sufficient to create an exciting learning process. She explains that community is an important element – "As a classroom community, our capacity to generate excitement is deeply affected by our interest in one another, in hearing one another's voices, in recognizing one another's presence" (7). This means that the professor must genuinely *value* everyone's presence. It requires, at the start, some deconstruction of the banking system of education and the idea that only the professor is responsible for the classroom dynamics. Excitement is generated through a collective effort.

Similar to how secular scholars have covered Anzaldúa's work at length but often overlook her foundation of spiritual activism, bell hooks states that she is often known for her intellectual scholar-activism but the academic public she encountered always showed surprise when she spoke deeply about the classroom. She notes that "this is a sad reminder of the way teaching is seen as a duller, less valuable aspect of the academic profession" (hooks 12). She states that there is a serious crisis in education: "Students do not want to learn, and teachers do not want to teach" (12). To address that, hooks explains that we must confront the biases that have shaped teaching practices in our society and create new ways of knowing, different strategies for sharing knowledge. We cannot address this crisis if progressive thinkers act as though teaching is not a subject worthy of our regard. For hooks, "the classroom remains the most radical space of possibility in the academy" (12). Consequently, hooks devoted much of her life's work to developing her theory-praxis of engaged pedagogy. In doing so, hooks explains that to educate as a practice of freedom is a

learning process [that] comes easiest to those of us who also believe that there is an aspect of our vocation that is sacred; who believe that our work is not merely to share information but to share in the intellectual and spiritual growth of our students. To teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students is essential if we are to provide the necessary conditions where learning can most deeply and intimately begin. (hooks "Engaged Pedagogy" 13)

After discovering Freire's critical pedagogy and Thich Nhat Hanh's engaged Buddhism, hooks explains that she was inspired. She states that, in contrast to most professors she had encountered who are actively hostile to the notion of student participation in the shaping of the class, Freire emphasized that education can only be liberatory if we all claim knowledge and mutually labor. She notes that Thich Nhat Hanh also spoke of teachers as healers and, like Freire, encourages students to be active participants. Furthermore, Thich Nhat Hanh's engaged Buddhism emphasizes seeing and acting with compassion and humility. Accordingly, he states "my students are *also* my teachers." Furthermore, bell hooks also recognized a connection between Thich Nhat Hanh's engaged Buddhism, which entailed mindfulness in contemplation and action, and Paolo Freire's emphasis on theory-praxis, which involved both deep reflection and action in the world in order to create social justice.

Thich Nhat Hanh offered a way of thinking about pedagogy that was holistic—emphasizing wholeness, a union of mind, body, and spirit. bell hooks explains that his pedagogy helped her overcome years of socialization that a classroom was diminished if students and professors regarded one another as "whole" human beings, striving not just for knowledge in books, but knowledge about how to live in the world. She adds that progressive, holistic education—what she calls "engaged pedagogy"—is more demanding than conventional critical or feminist pedagogy. Unlike those two pedagogies, engaged pedagogy emphasizes well-being. That means that teachers must be actively committed to a process of self-actualization that promotes their own well-being if they are to teach in a manner that empowers students. She refers to Thich Nhat Hanh's emphasis on the teacher as a healer, in which he says, "the practice of a healer, therapist, or teacher or any helping profession should be directed toward his or herself first, because if the helper is unhappy, he or she cannot help many people" (hooks 15). In higher education, bell hooks notes that it is rare to hear anyone speak of teachers as healers, and even rarer to hear anyone suggest that teachers have any responsibility to be self-actualized individuals. In her experience, hooks states that

> "far from being self-actualized, the university was seen more as a haven for those who are book smart in knowledge but who might be otherwise unfit for social interaction. [...] There was little emphasis on spiritual well-being, on care of the soul. Indeed, the objectification of the teacher within bourgeois educational structures seemed to denigrate notions of wholeness and uphold the idea of a mind/body split, one that promotes and supports compartmentalization. This reinforces the dualistic separation of public and private, encouraging teachers and students to see no connection between life practices, habits of being, and the roles of professors. The idea of the intellectual questing for a union of mind, body, and split had been replaced with notions that being smart meant that one was inherently emotionally unstable and that the best in oneself emerged in one's academic work. (16)

Part of the privilege of the role of teacher/professor today is the absence of any requirement that we be self-actualized. Not surprisingly, professors who are not concerned with inner well-being are the most threatened by the demand on the part of students for liberatory education, for pedagogical processes that will aid them in their own struggle for self-actualization. (17)

Thus, hooks states that to find this in higher education would be "to stumble across a rare treasure" (17). While she states that most of her professors were not in the slightest bit interested in enlightenment but more enthralled by the exercise of power within their mini-kingdom of the classroom, she adds that it was "particularly disappointing to encounter white male professors who claimed to follow Freire's model, even as their pedagogical practices were mired in structures of domination, mirroring the styles of conservative professors even as they approached subjects from a more progressive standpoint" (18). bell hooks' critical analysis of the teaching practices she encountered in higher education were not an exceptional singular case but rather systemic. This phenomenon is still reflected in the persistent gap between diversity discourse and the practice in equity and inclusion that prevails at many educational institutions today.

Throughout her career, bell hooks listened to students express concerns that they would not succeed in academic professions if they wanted to be well, or if they preferred to eschew dysfunctional behavior or participation in coercive hierarchies. Yet, they also expressed that they did want an education that is a practice of freedom, one that helps them link what they are learning to overall life experiences. Engaged pedagogy—which promotes education as a practice of freedom—requires that students not be the only ones who confess. It also does not seek to only empower students. Any pedagogy that seeks a holistic model of learning requires that teachers also grow and become empowered in the process. That empowerment cannot happen if educators refuse to be vulnerable—acting as all-knowing, silent interrogators—while encouraging students to take risks. Doing so would be to exercise power in a manner that could be coercive. hooks explains that educators who are willing to transform curriculum and resist reinforcing systems of domination are most often the ones willing to take the risks that engaged pedagogy requires and make their teaching practices a site of resistance and a site of liberation. In other words, educators who embrace the challenge of self-actualization are better able to create pedagogical practices that engage students, providing them with ways of knowing that enhance their capacity to live fully and deeply.

Since bell hooks articulated her theory of engaged pedagogy, Thich Nhat Hanh also co-established Wake Up Schools, a non-profit organization and worldwide movement with various local community chapters that helps train teachers on how to cultivate mindfulness in schools. In training educators, Thich Nhat Hanh advised that teachers should not just be overly determined to teach mindfulness to students. First, he says, teachers should make sure that they cultivate mindfulness in themselves. Being mindful and present is the best way to teach mindfulness; otherwise, it would be better to not "teach" mindfulness at all. Thich Nhat Hanh's Wake Up Schools includes *embodiment* as the first of its three pillars for cultivating mindfulness in education.[73] This resonates with bell hooks' engaged pedagogy, in which she says the teacher must be engaged in a process of self-actualization toward union of mind-body-spirit so that they are able to also help students on their journeys of self-actualization. In the next chapter, I build

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[73] "The Three Pillars of Wake Up Schools." *Wake Up Schools*, https://wakeupschools.org/about-us/what-is-wake-up-schools/

on the epistemologies and theories of this chapter and prior chapters, and highlight methods from various equity-based pedagogies, to discuss my theory of integrative pedagogy and examples of putting them into practice to cultivate the whole person in learning.

CHAPTER 5
Integrative Pedagogies: Cultivating the Whole Person in Learning

Everything you provide as an educator is medicine. So, make sure it heals.[74]
—Linda Tuhiwai Smith

A good teacher is someone who can help you get back to a teacher within.[75]
—Thich Nhat Hanh

Reframing the Gaps / We Are Whole People

Persistent gaps between higher education admissions rates and retention and graduation rates among minoritized students continue to persist despite increasing admissions of minoritized students to educational institutions that were and/or are predominantly White institutions (PWIs). Historically, the blame for that gap was solely placed onto minoritized students, and called the "achievement gap"—measured through what education scholars Django Paris and H. Samy Alim call the panoptic *White gaze*, in which the solution for the achievement gap is framed as: "How can 'we' get 'these' working-class kids of color to speak/write/be more like middle-class White ones?" (Paris and Alim 3). This approach is perpetuated by using diversity discourse, such as DEI statements, to serve as proxy for having created systemic change. Yet, diversity discourse cannot substitute for the real work of creating learning environments that foster equity and inclusion. The gap between student admissions rates and student retention and graduation rates and well-being are a problem of systemic inequity in education, not simply due to minoritized students' "deficits." Instead of offering assimilationist methods to improve students' "achievement gaps," we must consider the DEI gaps of educational systems and how to transform them.

This chapter focuses on the work of creating learning environments that foster social equity and well-being, by highlighting learning and teaching practices from several equity-based pedagogies, including culturally sustaining pedagogies and holistic pedagogies. These pedagogies seek to support equity not just among diverse students but also between students and teachers, engaging in Freire's theory-praxis of dialogical pedagogy such that teachers are also learners and students are also teachers in the process of education as a practice of freedom. This counteracts the banking system of education or education as a system of rule. This chapter also builds on the epistemologies and theories presented in prior chapters to examine methods in cultivating the whole person in learning – both teachers and students – to reach what Anzaldúa calls achieving *mindbodyspirit*, what bell hooks calls self-actualization and well-being, and what Thich Nhat Hanh calls healing and liberation. My practice of *integrative pedagogy* draws from that work to theorize the significance of holistic education that centers equity and well-being.

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[74] Smith, Linda Tuhiwai, speaker. "An Indigenous View on This Moment of Crisis." *Race, Inequality and Language in Education* Conference, 21 October 2020, *YouTube*, uploaded by Stanford Graduate School of Education, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nC2qO0KUqP8.

[75] hooks, bell and Thich Nhat Hanh. "Building a Community of Love: bell hooks and Thich Nhat Hanh." *Lion's Roar: Buddhist Wisdom for Our Time*, 24 March 2017, https://www.lionsroar.com/bell-hooks-and-thich-nhat-hanh-on-building-a-community-of-love/.

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies

　　Early in her career, educator Gloria Ladson-Billings had begun researching pedagogical practices of educators who were successful in teaching African American students. In her search for success stories, she instead heard many teachers state it was impossible, and in the literature of "African American Education" studies, frequently found the terms "culturally deprived" and "cultural deficits" listed as the cross-references. Consequently, in 1995, she coined the term "culturally relevant pedagogy" (CRP) to describe her theory of teaching designed to foster success among African American students. By the 1990s, the term culturally relevant pedagogy had become popular in education and, by the early twenty-first century, the term was ubiquitous. Yet, Ladson-Billing states that, unfortunately, most of the practices she sees of CRP today rarely represent the practices she had defined as culturally relevant pedagogy.

　　Ladson-Billings explains that culturally relevant pedagogy entails three main components: a) focus on student learning b) developing students' cultural competence and c) supporting their critical consciousness ("The (R)evolution" 142). She found that, in most cases, all three components were corrupted in their application of CRP. Instead, student learning was translated as assimilation and narrow forms of success, and cultural competence, such as we did or read something "Black." Simultaneously, supporting critical consciousness was often distorted, viewed through a prism of whiteness at best or left out altogether at worst (142). Cultural competence was often treated as a list of "do's and don'ts" in dealing with people of racial, ethnic, or linguistic backgrounds that differed from the mainstream—which in the US is normed as White, middle-class culture and language (144). She clarifies that, in the context of CRP, cultural competence refers to the skill to help students recognize and appreciate their culture of origin, while also helping them to develop fluency in at least one other culture (145). This is different from assimilation, which gets marginalized students to learn and adopt the norms of the dominant culture while devaluing or diminishing their own. Cultural competence here emphasizes that all students have a culture, whether they are aware of it or not. It also points out that all students—even those who are members of the dominant culture—should develop fluency in at least one other culture (145). She notes that this can be hard as an educator in a context in which the social power dynamics of whiteness constitute an unmarked, invisible norm. As for the critical consciousness component, Ladson-Billings explains that education is often oriented toward standardized testing for the school's credentialing, causing students to dismiss school as irrelevant and to disengage from learning to their own detriment. Culturally relevant educators, on the other hand, work hard to help students engage in meaningful projects that matter in their actual lives and communities (146). They also help students develop a critical consciousness.

　　Throughout more than twenty-five years of research as an educator and pedagogy scholar, Ladson-Billings began to encounter exemplary educators who were effective in empowering Black students. She noted that many of these teachers, worked outside of traditional classrooms and employed their students' cultures in their classes, including youth cultures, which are dynamic and always in process. Some of those methods have been referred to as "Hip Hop Pedagogy" (149). As she began developing her first teacher education course at a university, she collaborated with these teachers who did not teach in traditional classroom settings but rather in community-based centers. She observed ways in which they employed cultures of the youth— from hip hop, spoken word, and call-and-response from church—to engage students in learning. Ladson-Billings admitted that she had the most to learn in this initial training course (150). The work of learning culture also applied to her, not only the "students" in the course.

As her teacher education course continued developing, it became popular among prospective teachers, particularly minoritized teachers, among whom she notes have diminished enthusiasm about pursuing teacher certification through traditional teacher education pathways. She states they have good reason to look elsewhere, since most research on diversity and teaching focuses on the mismatch between K-12 teachers and their students, one of which is the "incredible whiteness of (being) [among] teacher educators" (153). Ladson-Billings states that the overwhelming proportion of university-based teacher educators is White. Over the last two decades, this population has shifted from mostly male to mostly female, so White women dominate the ranks of both pre-K-12 teaching and those who prepare people to teach. She explains that some of the same problems endemic to K-12 teaching are also evident at the college and university levels. Teachers with limited perspectives are being asked to teach (or prepare other people to teach) students from backgrounds very different from their own (153). She argues that "We cannot keep admitting teacher candidates who see students of color, students whose first language is not English, and/or who are recent immigrants as defective and whose major need is to become some version of White, middle-class students" (155). In other words, she explains that teacher education can no longer be standardized according to those norms. Instead, it needs to be revolutionized.

In 2014, education scholars H. Samy and Paris Alim—along with Gloria Ladson-Billings and several other education scholars—gathered to reflect on ways to both respectfully build upon and create generative loving critiques of culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) and other asset-based pedagogies to help update them. Using terminology from hip hop pedagogy, Gloria Ladson-Billings states that CSP uses CRP as the place "where the beat drops" (Paris and Alim 5). In other words, CRP laid the groundwork for CSP to arise. Together, they coined the term culturally sustaining pedagogies (CSP) which builds on CRP and updates it to emphasize three main components. First, CSP emphasizes explicitly raising critical consciousness. They state that "relevant" does not do enough to explicitly support the goals of social critique. Thus, it is possible to have cultural relevance without social critique. This can appear in various additive forms of inclusion, such as an including a few minoritized authors' texts in a syllabi or celebrating minority heritage months, without examining unmarked, invisible norms that remain unexamined and central. To this point, Paris and Alim ask: What if the White gaze was not the predominant one? What if the White gaze itself were critiqued? In other words, they explain that CSP must engage in social critique that decenters "an ideology of White, middle-class, monolingual, cisheteropatriarchal, able-bodied, superiority" (13). Furthermore, assimilationist approaches to teaching minoritized students must be counteracted by including the languages, cultures, and ways of knowing of minoritized communities as resources and assets rather than deficits to be fixed. Paris and Alim state that "these deficit approaches viewed the languages, literacies, and cultural ways of being of many students and communities of color as deficiencies to be overcome in learning the demanded and legitimized dominant language, literacy, and cultural ways of schooling (4). Asset-based pedagogies refuse the deficit-based frameworks used in assimilationist pedagogy. CSP builds on this and treats minoritized students as already "whole," not as "broken" and in need of being fixed. Yet, Paris and Alim recognize that asset-based pedagogies have also not always critically examined the concept of culture itself.

Thus, the second way that CSP pushes asset-based pedagogies forward is by emphasizing that culture is both rooted and dynamic. This prevents some of the problems in cultural nationalism and (non-strategic) identity politics that view culture as fixed and, in the process, reproduce marginalization and oppression of minoritized identities and experiences within those

cultures. The recognition of culture as both rooted and dynamic allows for a more complex and nuanced understanding of culture as continuously changing and in-process. This allows educators to empower youth to engage with their lived realities through multiple ways of learning in the world in class, acknowledging that youth are not merely products of cultures but are also often innovators of culture and pioneers of new cultural practices.

Related to this, the third way that CSP advances CRP and other asset-based pedagogies is by incorporating self-reflection. Paris and Alim state that "we seek to move beyond [only] critiquing the dominant pedagogies that perpetuate educational injustice, and turn our gaze inward on our own communities and cultural practices as people and scholars of color" (9-10). Thus, they argue that while maintaining a generative space for educators to incorporate students' cultures as assets, we must also raise a critical consciousness of culture to reflect on the ways in which cultures, even our own, can include both regressive and progressive practices. As an example, they cite ways in which hip hop culture can also alienate students through its voicing of misogynistic, transphobic, homophobic, xenophobic, and ableist discourses (11). Rather than just glorifying culture, they argue that CSP requires us to examine the possible simultaneous liberatory and non-liberatory currents of a culture. In making space for social critique, self-reflection, and recognition of culture as both rooted and dynamic, culturally sustaining pedagogies are thus useful for countering the limitations of both colorblind multiculturalism and cultural nationalism, and in creating learning environments that foster equity and liberation. As an educator, I have seen that it is important to not only engage students as "whole" and not broken on the level of their racial, ethnic, and linguistic cultures; it is important to engage them as "whole" as in whole people, of mind-body-heart-spirit and other aspects of their lived experiences. Holistic pedagogies are valuable in this regard.

Holistic Pedagogies

Engaging Diverse Learning Styles

One type of holistic pedagogy involves teaching methods that incorporate students' different learning styles—e.g., visual, auditory, kinesthetic, verbal, textual—rather than catering to or only emphasizing one learning style. Regardless of a student's predominant learning style, studies show that we all learn well by using multiple learning styles. As basic as that may seem, most higher education classrooms still entail professors primarily lecturing to students (auditory) while occasionally reading from slides or other visual aids (visual) and learning is primarily measured through written exams and papers. This can lead to students who are primarily kinesthetic, verbal, and visual learners to not fully engage in the learning process, even if they would like to be. It can also prevent students who are primarily auditory learners from cultivating their other learning capacities.

Trauma-Informed Pedagogy

Holistic pedagogies also include trauma-informed pedagogy, which considers the whole person in learning. Trauma-informed pedagogy acknowledges that, under trauma caused by stress, anxiety, depression, or other causes—stemming from food or housing insecurity, illness, social injustice, social isolation, or other factors—the brain is in survival mode and may not function as it would under more normal circumstances, which can impede processing of information, focus, decision making, and other cognitive functions. While there is not a single definition of trauma-informed pedagogy, practices often include the following core components:

1. Build asset-based relationships with students
2. Encourage student voice and choice
3. Connect the curriculum to students' lives
4. Ensure that routines and practices are consistent and predictable
5. Include reflection and discussion
    (Zacarian, Alvarez-Ortiz, and Haynes "Meeting Student Trauma" 69-73)

Some have argued that trauma-informed practices should always be used, not just under conditions such as the global COVID-19 pandemic, which is when trauma-informed pedagogies gained more consideration from the mainstream. It is worth noting that many of the practices of trauma-informed pedagogy resemble practices in dialogical pedagogy, engaged pedagogy, mindfulness-based education, and culturally sustaining pedagogies. In other words, educators who have been working at the margins of normative formal education—or have resisted the uses of education as an instrument of domination—have in fact also been working at the frontiers of education, creating innovative learning and teaching practices to help students both heal and become empowered while facing systemic conditions that cause stress and harm. As education scholar Jonathan Rosa stated, "The fear and uncertainty triggered worldwide by the spread of the coronavirus is already a familiar experience for many U.S. students. [...] To these students, schools have long been a site of trauma and struggle, rather than safety and support—and a place where inequities are exacerbated, not eased" ("Equity in School"). Even if only momentarily, the global pandemic forced some educators and administrators to consider new, more humane teaching practices that consider the whole person, since the pandemic impacted all students, and not just minoritized students whose harm and marginalization in education has been "normalized" under systemic inequity.

Contemplative Pedagogy

Contemplative pedagogy is an emerging field of pedagogy that helps students and educators practice deep reflection in the learning process. Contemplative pedagogy draws from contemplative practices, such as meditation and mindfulness, and intentionally builds in space and activities in the course that facilitate deep reflection about the course material and activities, including both content and processes of reading, writing, thinking, group discussions, and projects. The main goals of contemplative pedagogy are to help students increase their focus and attention building, form a deeper understanding of and personal connection to the course materials, develop compassion and connection to others, and develop a practice of deep self-inquiry and awareness of their learning process.[76] Instead of just attending classes to fulfill requirements or obtain a grade, contemplative pedagogy can thus also help students to cultivate their inner lives to find greater meaning and connection to their work in the world—a practice that is central in the work of Anzaldúa's spiritual activism, Thich Nhat Hanh's mindfulness and engaged Buddhism, and bell hooks' engaged pedagogy. In *Cultivating the Spirit: How College Can Enhance Students' Inner Lives* (2011), authors Jennifer A. Lindholm and Alexander A. Astin present a five-year study that finds that spiritual growth enhances students' academic performance. Yet, while two-thirds of students in the study expressed interest in spiritual matters, more than half of them reported that their professors never encouraged discussions of spiritual matters, and that professors never provided them with opportunities to discuss the purpose of

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[76] Barbezat, Daniel P. and Mirabai Bush. *Contemplative Practices in Higher Education: Powerful Methods to Transform Teaching and Learning*, Jossey-Bass, 2014.

life. This reflects what bell hooks had described in her own experiences in higher education in which students are seeking education that is a practice of freedom, one that helps them link what they are learning to overall life experiences. Yet, as bell hooks critiques, a norm in higher education is that professors who are not concerned with inner well-being are those who are most threatened by the demand on the part of students for liberatory education, for pedagogical processes that will aid them in their own struggle for self-actualization. In the following section, I discuss how my theory and practice of integrative pedagogy developed from my experiences in education, and analyze examples from applying integrative pedagogy in several of my courses.

Integrative Pedagogy

Early Pedagogical Training & Development
      As a first-generation college student, who was simply classified by race in determining my eligibility for financial aid, I was deemed as not "underrepresented" in a public university. The terms *underserved*, *first-generation*, *low-income*, *single-parent household*, and other intersectional analyses of life circumstances were not considered in this formulaic calculation. Unlike some Asian American peers whose families pooled everything—finances and pressure— into their kid's education, that was not my experience. Meanwhile, many of my friends who were Latinx and also first-generation college students were eligible for financial aid and other support programs that had classified them as "underrepresented." Unlike second- and later generation students who could refer to their parents or siblings for mentorship and social capital in higher education, my family could not provide those resources. In addition, I often experienced pressures to balance family responsibilities with my educational career. Ultimately, admission to college without financial support meant that I had to "figure out" how to successfully complete college with structural barriers in place, while it was also assumed that there were no barriers for Asian Americans who were stereotyped as "model minorities." Those lived experiences and struggles are rendered invisible by umbrella classifications and thus often foreclose efforts to eradicate or transform social inequity. As someone who was determined to not rely on student loans, I worked two to three jobs throughout my undergraduate career to fund my education. This was certainly challenging at times. Yet, there were also some unexpected benefits.
      One of the benefits of paying for my own education was that I was more invested in it. Since I funded my own education, I could choose what I wanted to study. That does not mean that I did not face the usual pressures of immigrant parent expectations. When I declared Literatures of the World as my major in my third year of college and announced that I would not be attending medical school, despite two years of pre-medicine courses taken alongside my major courses, it did not go over well. Besides the financial challenge of navigating higher education, this meant that I now also faced disappointing my family by pursuing an education that was aligned with my interests, skills, and eventual vocation. Another barrier to education as a practice of freedom, therefore, was a lack of familial understanding and moral support, at least initially in my undergraduate years. Still, as difficult as it was, it was the right choice.
      In college, my world greatly expanded through the study of literatures from Asia, Latin America, Europe, and the United States. The study of different languages, time periods, and worldviews denaturalized any singular perspective, especially a Eurocentric view of the human condition and the world. Having attended a public high school that was predominately White with a small population of African American and Southeast Asian refugee students, that educational environment was characterized by racial tensions and exclusions of "otherness"

under an unmarked norm of whiteness. I had yearned for greater diversity in languages, cultures, and epistemologies. Thankfully, during my senior year of high school, my English and creative writing teacher – who was unconventional in many ways and considered by many students to be the best teacher in the school – greatly supported my process of consciousness expansion. In a modern fiction course, he introduced us to numerous writers of color, including Zora Neale Hurston, Amy Tan, and Louise Erdrich. This was not a norm in my K-12 experience. Furthermore, in my creative writing and speech classes, he cultivated and nurtured my talent in different genres of writing—rather than just linear, disembodied academic writing. My writing portfolios included poetry, speeches, essays, and short stories. As he had done all year, he spoke with me before I graduated to let me know that he found much wisdom in my writing. He told me that I was born to be a writer, and that my writing haunted him. Similar to bell hooks and her earlier educational experiences that were empowering, his classes showed me a glimpse of what was possible in education as a practice of freedom. That experience was a resource I would continually refer to as a student and eventually as an educator in developing my own pedagogical practice.

Unlike Amy Tan's experience documented in her essay, "Mother Tongue" (1990), a text I include in most of my introductory writing and pedagogy courses, I was fortunate that one of my high school English teachers saw my strengths in writing and cultivated that without forcing me into an assimilationist path. He also did not steer me toward math or science, presuming that I was not good at writing (in English or any language) as was the case for Amy Tan. Tan's experience is still common for many students of color, especially those who are multilingual and especially if they speak English with an accent. They are often presumed deficient in language arts, and then measured by assimilationist and deficit frameworks. That normative practice is something I became more aware of in college.

One of the several jobs I held during college at a large public university was working as a writing tutor in an office that supported diverse underrepresented students. Before working as a tutor, we had to complete an academic quarter-long teacher education course that was a university prerequisite for anyone directly instructing students. The curriculum included a range of texts on student-centered pedagogies and diversity and social justice issues in writing education. This course was not a universal model used campus-wide at the university. It was designed by the course instructor, the director of the writing program at the time, and by the department's administrators. The curriculum was intended to equip us to be more culturally aware and effective in supporting diverse and underrepresented students, since the office where I would be working as a peer educator provided academic support to all students with priority given to students enrolled in programs that provide structural and psychosocial support for underrepresented students. Yet, a theme of analysis throughout this dissertation is that theories and discourse are only effective if they are practiced.

Some of the course material may have been new terrain for the instructor, who at first did not often embody what was being taught. There was a glaring disconnect between the methods we were reading and the pedagogical practices we were experiencing. In the first month of the course, instead of student-centered learning, we witnessed top-down, one-way conversations. After discussing it with my fellow peer educators, we decided to discuss it in class. It became clear that student-centered learning was not going to happen unless we addressed the issue. Fortunately, that constructive conversation caused the instructor to shift and reflect on their teaching practices. The final half of the course was more aligned with the student-centered teaching methods we were reading and expected to implement as tutors.

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In the course, we had learned many examples of ways in which writing can be oppressive and traumatizing for students, particularly racially, culturally, and linguistically minoritized students—many of whom have already been measured by deficit frameworks for years before entering a college classroom. Besides textual study, the tutoring job also entailed hands-on training that required putting these principles into practice when working with diverse students, while also recognizing that student-centered learning means meeting each student where they are, rather than enforcing a one-size fits all model. Since the methods I learned in that course and, most of all, through hands-on experience during my job were multifold, I cannot summarize all of them here. However, some of the key effective techniques in student-centered pedagogies from the teacher education course and applied practice that I have carried with me well beyond my tutoring job, into my work as an educator of college writing courses, include the following:

- Teach that writing is a process and try to make it as empowering and engaging as possible.
- At the most basic level, never use red ink to mark up a student's paper. This creates a punitive experience of writing – and can remind students of oppressive experiences in their prior writing experiences in formal education.
- Instead, write your notes on a separate sheet of paper. To be student-centered, invite them to discuss with you what kind of feedback they are looking for and what would be most helpful to them at that stage.
- Always first include positive comments and point out the strengths of their writing before just saying what needs to be improved.
- Be as specific as possible when giving constructive feedback.
- Keep comments about a specific element in the draft rather than making overarching or personal statements, such as "You're not a good writer."
- Allow students to respond to feedback, including asking for clarification or offering different perspectives.
- Allow the student to be in the driver's seat of their own writing, and create a safe space for the *process* of writing to be imperfect, messy, and in progress.
- Allow students to learn about different writing processes and styles to discover their own, rather than promoting a singular style or enforcing yours onto them.

As a peer educator, I found that facilitating student-centered learning was rewarding for me as well as for the students with whom I worked. During my senior year in college, I supported many first-generation and students of color, who were navigating similar and unique challenges in their educational journeys. One student, a first-generation Latinx student, who regularly came to see me had been struggling in her courses ever since she had transferred from a community college that year. It was starting to chip away at her confidence, as a diligent and hardworking student, and the stress was taking a toll on her well-being. She would cry during our meetings from the overwhelming frustration she was feeling from her courses. Part of student-centered learning entails what Paolo Freire calls dialogical pedagogy rather than a banking system of education that enforces a binary of teacher (all-knowing subject) and student (receptacle object). It also entails aspects of bell hooks' engaged pedagogy in which the teacher is willing to take risks as a person committed to growth in their own self-actualization, rather than an educator acting as a silent interrogator-voyeur of students who are the only ones who must be vulnerable

and take risks. In that moment, I shared with the student some of my own challenges that I had faced earlier in my education at the university and let her know how I had navigated them. This helped her to not feel so alone, as formal education often can do by emphasizing individualism, and most of all it gave her hope. After she was able to express her frustrations, and feel empathy and support, she regained her focus and we were able to continue moving forward in discussing her writing. Furthermore, I employed other key student-centered pedagogy methods, and offered what her professors were not offering: I relayed to her the strengths that I saw in her writing. Then, we examined the sparse and partially illegible notes that her professors had written on her papers and unpacked them together. We formulated an action plan of how to address some of those issues in her next papers. We met several times, as she worked on her drafts in stages with me. A few weeks later, the student stopped by my office again. She did not have an appointment, so I was surprised to see her. She looked ecstatic and held out her paper to show it to me and said, "My first 'A' this year!" We both jumped up and down, excited for her success. She thanked me for all the support I had given her, especially at a time when she had begun doubting herself as capable and was on the verge of giving up. The effectiveness of student-centered learning here, as in many other cases, entailed a combination of theory, praxis, and embodied wisdom.

In terms of risks, my senior year of college called upon me to continue to grow, not only by balancing multiple jobs while completing my degree, but also by bringing my own writing to another level. In a class on Daoism and Chinese poetry with one of my favorite literature professors, we had to write final papers as in most literature classes. Instead of following the normal conventions of an academic paper, I wrote the paper in a poetic prose style, interspersing personal insights with theoretical research. I knew that it was a risk. When the professor returned our papers to us, he wrote a long passage at the end of my paper that said that he was torn. On the one hand, he said he had wanted to give me an "F" on the paper since I had not followed the rules of a conventional paper that he had outlined. On the other hand, he said he wanted to give me an "A+" because the form and style in which I wrote my paper embodied and conveyed Daoism in a far greater way than his rules had allowed. In the end, he said he settled on giving me an "A-." As someone who generally received "A" grades on my writing assignments, this was a lower grade than usual, but it was one of my favorite pieces of writing I had created in my college years. My work as a student-centered tutor in supporting many diverse students in finding their authentic voices, and not succumbing to monocultural epistemological norms to define their writing potential, encouraged me to live that practice even further—so that my work as an educator was not just theory but was also praxis and embodied. After that quarter, that professor invited me to start taking his graduate seminars, saying that I might not get much more out of his undergraduate courses. He became one my best supporters as I completed college and entered my first graduate school program.

When I entered my first master's degree program in Comparative Literature, I was fortunate to work with an incredibly generous, skillful, and brilliant mentor. Not only I but dozens upon dozens of students, both graduate and undergraduate, love this professor. Years after I graduated, I would encounter former students of his in other states, who like me would rave on about how amazing he is. I can easily say that he is the type of teacher and mentor who brings out the best in students. In retrospect, I am very fortunate to have met him relatively early in my career in higher education because his examples as a teacher and mentor sustained me throughout my journey in higher education, even when I no longer formally worked with him. Without that example, I may have given up on higher education long ago.

In one of the first graduate seminars that I took with him, he offered us the option to either write a traditional research paper or a non-traditional paper for our final projects. If we chose the non-traditional paper, we would have to engage in a community-engaged project. For me, this was a no-brainer and I thought at least several others would feel the same. However, when he asked to take a poll to see which routes the graduate students were going to take, nearly everyone raised their hand when he asked who was going to write a traditional paper. I was the only person in the class who opted for the non-traditional paper. My research on migration and education literature led me to discover that, at the university, there was a 30% attrition rate of first-generation college students from migrant worker families after one year of college. This startling data motivated me to want to learn why and, more importantly, how to transform that. From there, my community-engaged project in educational social justice began. After conducting interviews with students, faculty, and staff, I gained a more in-depth and multilayered understanding of why admission to a university does not automatically translate into equity and inclusion. Based on the barriers and challenges the students faced at the university, and from pressures of having to also help their families, I started to co-design a holistic mentor and academic support program for the students. Once it received a green light from administrators, I began recruiting and training mentors from the university and community, including third- and fourth-year undergraduate students, graduate students, faculty, and alumni. At the same time, I worked on building community and trust with the students themselves. There were sixty participants in the program, of whom around fifty percent were Latinx, and just under fifty percent were Southeast Asian, along with two students from mainland China and two students who were Afro-Caribbean. While utilizing research to design the program, I was also largely drawing from my former experience as a student-centered peer educator and my personal experience in having navigated some overlapping challenges as the students in my own college education experiences, to design a holistic program that took into account students as whole people with multiple needs who had to navigate multiple structural and cultural barriers. By the start of the second year, the attrition rate of the program's students had declined to zero percent. In follow-up surveys for the program, three of the students in the program mentioned that they would have dropped out of college in their first year had it not been for their mentors. Other students expressed feeling a greater sense of connection and belonging at the university, thanks to their mentors. The majority of students stated that they were doing better in their classes and getting valuable help in navigating the university in multiple areas, such as visiting professors in office hours and applying for scholarships, and now felt confident that they would graduate from college. Students also became more empowered by beginning to advocate for themselves, instead of feeling as though they did not have the right to speak up against injustices.

My master's degree advisor who attended the program's inaugural meeting was amazed at what had come to fruition. As we presented our final papers in the class, he stated that, when he had said we could do a non-traditional paper, by no means did he expect for us to launch an entire program that resulted in successfully addressing problems. Yet, I always think of this mentor as being someone who brought out the best in students, including me. He did not limit us in subtle or overt ways, and he provided generous, whole-hearted support and thoughtful insights to the work we did. I often reflected on his teaching and mentoring methods as I taught eight courses of literature, film studies, and Spanish language at the university, and later in my teaching career elsewhere.

A couple years later, I entered an MA and PhD program in Comparative Ethnic Studies, where I taught a total of fourteen courses in ethnic studies, gender studies, and queer studies,

some of which were my own courses and some of which I worked as a Teaching Assistant (TA), leading my own discussion sections. Due to my teaching experience, I was asked in my second year to teach my own courses and supervise graduate student Teaching Assistants (TAs) for my courses, some from ethnic studies and some from other departments. On a structural level, it seemed odd to teach full classes and supervise peers while receiving the same salary as a TA. On the other hand, I was now accustomed to teaching, and even training others in teaching and mentoring skills. In the third year of the program, I received the university's Outstanding Graduate Instructor award, based on nominations from students and faculty. With each course I taught, I continued to hone my skills in student-centered pedagogies while working with students from diverse backgrounds. I enjoyed teaching across three different disciplinary programs of ethnic studies, gender studies, and queer studies because doing so more clearly highlighted some of the strengths and gaps in the different canonical texts, while working in different contexts also elucidated different themes that were most prevalent in students' lived experiences. While I can say that I greatly enjoyed teaching, and was an effective educator by that point, I also recognize that it was after experiencing major losses in my personal life that required me to pause, deeply self-reflect, and ultimately grow into reclaiming life and learning as a whole person. That process of healing and self-actualization, in turn, also inspired me to develop my pedagogy into a more holistic equity-based practice that works toward fostering social equity, well-being, and liberation on a level of *mindbodyspirit*. Although my teaching practices had elements of that in my earlier career, I have since then more intentionally and more robustly developed this in my more recent classes. The outcome has entailed more deeply transformative learning experiences for students, which I will discuss in the next section.

Cultivating Integrative Pedagogy

Before analyzing specific courses and outcomes, below are some of the fundamental components of my theory and practice of integrative pedagogy. My principles of integrative pedagogy draw from the theories and pedagogies mentioned throughout this dissertation and synthesize my years of experience as both a learner and as an educator. They also draw from my research and experience as a scholar-practitioner who has built several academic support programs that provide wrap-around services that help effectively bridge the gap between numerical diversity and creating learning environments foster equity and inclusion.

These key pedagogical methods include the following.

- Build community.
    - Co-create safe space learning environment guidelines together at the start of each class. While this often includes some similar key ideas in each course (e.g. one mic, step up/step back, don't yuck my yum, etc.), it is important that these ideas include the particular voices and wishes of the students in that group. In each course, there are usually also some important unique guidelines that emerge (e.g. don't say "guys" when referring to females or mixed gender groups). It establishes the class from the start as a practice of co-creation and sets the foundation for building a community. If necessary and as the group wishes, these guidelines can be revisited and revised as time goes on.
    - Facilitate multidirectional dialogue and learning, which entails small, medium, and large group work throughout the course. This requires practicing deep listening and mindful communication. Students then are encouraged to not only

"care" what the instructor says while minimizing what classmates or they themselves have to say. Dialogical pedagogy and engaged pedagogy are a collective endeavor, in which everyone in the class is both learner and teacher throughout the course. This entails learning multiple diverse perspectives that may differ from one's own. It requires learning beyond theory to include how these concepts impact ourselves and others in everyday life, thereby reducing simple assumptions, stereotypes, and binary thinking. Furthermore, we do several peer writing workshops in each writing course. Students get the opportunity to learn how to both receive and give constructive feedback and develop a supportive relationship with their writing process and those of others. In most courses, students have at least one group project and/or presentation in which they are partly evaluated by how they work together as a group. Finally, students have the option to attend both group and individual office hours. Individual office hours are for confidential matters and if they need to discuss anything in more depth. Group office hours, like in-class discussions, involve multidirectional dialogue and students hearing from and being able to respond to each other to help each other's understanding. All these methods offer alternatives to the individualism, competition, and dualistic thinking that often prevail in formal education systems.

- o Create a safe and constructive space. *Safe* means students are allowed to be authentic in who they are, meaning they can ask questions, and make mistakes, without feeling as though they will be shamed or ignored for doing so. They can also share emotions, including positive and difficult emotions – as long as these are not just projected at others in disrespectful or unmindful ways. *Constructive* means that the space is not about being so safe that we must avoid all taboo subjects or any form of discomfort in growing beyond one's pre-existing understanding of others, themselves, and the world. We also commit to challenging ourselves to grow in our thinking and consciousness. In addition, I often ask students to write down their own commitment to helping co-create a safe and constructive learning space at the start of each course. Like the group guidelines, this helps them to see that they are an active participant in co-creating the course and have agency.
- Incorporate meaningful opportunities for contemplation.
  - o To facilitate the growth of students' inner lives, allow for meaningful contemplation in various course activities. These can be informal and ungraded. The benefits are that it allows the students to pause, look deeply, and process what they are learning. Most importantly, it allows them to make personal meaning and make connections to what they are learning as it pertains to their lives and communities. One of the practices I use are weekly reflections. At the end of each week, I ask students to write down a reflection about something they have learned. They can keep it anonymous or include their names. In this exercise, students are invited to contemplate what they found to be most interesting or relevant to them. They are also invited to share feedback and ask questions (e.g. I'm still struggling to understand what intersectionality is). Keeping this exercise informal and ungraded, and allowing students to keep it anonymous if they wish, gives them a low-stakes method of asking further questions, integrating meaning

into their learning process that they may have not been able to do yet in the other activities, and providing feedback to the course. I then integrate themes from their reflections into the next classes, which reinforces the awareness and practice that they are actively co-creating the course.

- o These contemplative practices help students to develop metacognition of their learning process – how they are engaging with their learning, how they feel, how to develop insights, and why it matters to them. Mindfully being attentive to their own thoughts and feelings also encourages them to develop a greater ability to pause and reflect when listening to others, rather than just reacting.

- o Another exercise I use to support students in their writing process is to carve out time in various classes for them to free-write their ideas. They do not have to turn this writing in at all; it is solely for them. However, they can use this exercise as a reference if they would like to refer to it later as they continue writing, or discuss their ideas in office hours and/or with a peer writing group. This exercise is often done at the start of a group discussion, which allows students who are more introverted to have time to process their ideas, rather than always just asking students to share their ideas on the spot, a practice in which extroverted thinkers and communicators tend to thrive.

- Engage different learning styles.
  - o Besides being mindful of introverted and extroverted communication and thinking styles during a course, I also engage with diverse learning styles. Instead of just relying on speaking (auditory), I regularly incorporate visual aids and kinesthetic methods. Verbal learners also learn best by talking through ideas, so group work can also be helpful in that regard. Although auditory learning is usually practiced by a professor lecturing to students, I also give students opportunities to read their own writing and the writing of others aloud. This gives them opportunities to *hear* what is being said instead of just quietly reading to themselves. Kinesthetic methods entail gives students opportunities to physically move around the room and engage their bodies, such as writing at the board or utilizing different spaces of the room, and to learn by doing. Kinesthetic learners learn best by doing, which includes teaching what they have learned. As a trained facilitator of Theater of the Oppressed (TO) techniques, I also employ TO in some classes, where students opt in, especially in cases in which students may be having difficulty grasping an otherwise abstract concept. The use of TO techniques can also help denaturalize a Western epistemological norm of prioritizing disembodied intellect as superior and separate from the body, heart, and spirit. It cultivates or revitalizes students' access to other knowledges and ways of knowing and being.

- Connect the personal and the collective.
  - o Students work in various groups during the course, not only as individuals, which helps them to generate more capacious and inclusive views and nuanced understanding of issues.
  - o As a result of learning with and from others throughout the course, students deepen their empathy and compassion for themselves and others, while developing constructive skills of contemplation, deep listening, mindful communication, and cooperation to build transformative solutions.

- Our discussions and exercises in class regularly involve connecting the personal, interpersonal, and structural levels in studies of culture. Students are invited to incorporate personal experiences into their writing and our class conversations to make the learning meaningful and relevant.
- At the same time, students cultivate a critical consciousness of social justice. In some courses, we take field trips to local organizations to learn how the theories and concepts we are discussing in class are applied in practice by community members, what challenges and successes they have had, and why it matters. In other cases, I invite guest speakers to visit our classes to discuss these issues.
- Students are given opportunities to engage in community-based projects that are relevant to their lives and their communities.

These are some of the fundamental methods of my integrative pedagogy. In the following section, I explore the application of this pedagogy in several different courses.

One of my final classes taught at the university of my program was in the Gender and Women's Studies (GWS) department and was a writing course called "Women-Identified Voices in Writing." The class had thirty students who were diverse in terms of their racial, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds. All students identified as female. Some had prior experience in feminist theory and activism as GWS majors or minors, and some were brand new to the course materials and concepts. Most of them were interested in the course because they wanted to better understand how gender ideology shaped the world, especially their lived experiences. Texts included an array of creative and scholarly works in feminist and cultural theory, including works by Gloria Anzaldúa, Audre Lorde, Adrienne Rich, Toni Morrison, and Fae Myenne Ng. The two main goals of the class were to introduce students to an array of diverse writing styles, and especially how women of color writers have challenged existing cultural and epistemological norms that oppress and silence women, people of color, and queer communities. The goals were to help students develop metacognition of gender, sexual, and racial ideologies and different uses of cultural rhetorics to create more empowering alternatives. The exercises and projects were also intended to help them develop their voices in their own writing, as they developed skills in writing across different genres, and make meaningful connections between the personal and collective.

This was a class I taught after having experienced major losses in my personal life. Life had required me to embark on a deeply spiritual journey for healing and transformation. I was fortunate to find support in that process outside of academia, with a community of educators and artists, who tended to the whole person of mind-body-spirit in their work and in the creative process, which entails living in the questions as much as living in a state of answers or already knowing, which can happen while advancing in higher education, thereby hindering creativity, curiosity, growth, and self-actualization. As a result of more deeply tending to my own healing, wholeness, transformation, and creativity, I was what bell hooks might call even more equipped to help others in their journeys of healing, transformation, and liberation. I tried to bring this to my courses in ways that I had not yet done in the past. The general question I asked before starting this course was, "What would a course look like if students knew they were loved?" Although I never articulated the word "love" to students in the class, the question drew from bell hooks' *radical love* and the *authentic love* Thich Nhat Hanh describes in the lived teachings of Jesus and the Buddha. Thich Nhat Hanh has also said that "understanding is love's other name" (Thich *How to Love* 10). This question about how to teach as a practice of freedom and as a

practice of radical love was genuine. I did not know what the answer would be, or if there would even be a clear answer by the end of the semester. However, more than in any class I had taught before, the outcomes were deeply transformative and evident rather quickly.

During one of the class exercises, I invited students to take turns reading the texts out loud. It was an exercise in engaging different learning styles, as well as allowing them to hear their own and each other's voices more often in a classroom setting and feel comfortable doing so. As they read, I closed my eyes to focus on listening to their voices. Once they finished, I noted how rich and beautiful the diversity of their voices sounded. I saw one student begin to wipe tears away from her eyes. I did not want to put her on the spot but held space for people to breathe for a few moments. Later in the class, the student wanted to share that she was moved to tears because she realized that she had been taught through messages her whole life that her accent was a deficit, and it had caused her to feel ashamed of it and thus discouraged to speak in all her classes. She mentioned that I was the first educator to show her that her accent was a part of her richness in cultural and linguistic dexterity. After she expressed this, students of different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds shared that they could relate to her experience. After that class, many of the students who had been "quiet" or perhaps afraid to speak due to their accents or their family's multilingual backgrounds began speaking regularly in class. Thankfully, they did so since their input added so much depth and diversity of experiences to the course.

Another aspect of the course involved facilitating a safe and constructive space. Two of the most outspoken students in the class were two senior students who called themselves feminists. One student, "Mary," was Black and one student, "Jill," was White.[77] They each brought different perspectives to the discussion that were valuable. Yet, the area where they often collided was regarding race. Jill was aware of the oppression she experienced as a female, even from her own mother and grandmother, whom she described as earlier waves of feminists who imposed their views on her. However, when it came to racial difference in experiences, she said she just could not "see" this. This offended Mary and some other students of color in the class. Initially, Mary's reaction was to try to speak over or shut down Jill for her seemingly willful ignorance and complacency with her blind spots. Meanwhile, Jill would also want to shut out others if she felt aggressively imposed upon, perhaps due to her experiences from her mother and grandmother, and would start to speak louder and more forcefully without listening. While these kinds of tensions in classes are uncomfortable, I also believe that – if handled skillfully – they can be productive and transformative. In one class discussion, Jill said something that set off Mary, who had been increasingly annoyed by Jill's earlier comments. In that moment, I saw that things could go badly if I did not intervene. So, I asked Mary and Jill and the whole class – to not shame those two students or make them feel singled out – to take a moment to pause. I took a deep breath and exhaled to demonstrate. I saw some other students do the same. From there, I reframed the increasingly tense discussion into a question. I first acknowledged Mary, and her sense of frustration. I also asked her to consider how allowing others to first express a point of view, even if misguided, can allow us to better understand where they are coming from so that we can also better respond to it. I then acknowledged Jill, and let her know that sometimes it can be hard to see things outside of our personal experience, and it can be a natural reaction to want to defend oneself if feeling attacked. I asked the whole class to remember the community learning environment guidelines and consider how we can continue to co-create a safe and constructive learning space at that moment. I let students know that not everyone has to

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[77] These names are pseudonyms to protect the identity of students.

be best friends or agree on every issue, but we do need to practice developing skills of civil dialogue – and deep listening and mindful communication – if we are to learn and grow. In time, Jill was able to not immediately go into a defensive mode or shut down at the idea that racial differences might grant her some privileges and blind spots, even while she experienced gender oppression. Meanwhile, Mary saw that she did not need to talk over Jill to ensure she was heard. That was one of the more challenging moments in the class, because I did not want Mary to feel as though, like in so many other cases in education, her experiences and voice were not valued. At the same time, I did not want Jill to just feel shut down altogether from speaking her views and lose the opportunity for others to help share different views and experiences to help her expand her consciousness. That was probably the most pivotal moment in the class. I would assess it as mostly successful because Mary felt that she had an advocate, but also saw she could develop more skills than just attacking her then perceived opponent. Jill also felt she had an advocate, while also eventually saw that she had more to learn about some blind spots that she had. By helping the class take a pause, breathe, and ask reframing questions, the other students were also able to calmly contribute to the conversation. It was not a case of students of color just ganging up on Jill. Furthermore, from a calmer state, Jill was able to open up more and hear the different voices in the class, not as an attack against her, but as them just stating the truth of their experiences. This practice demonstrated to students how to navigate through "discomfort" of difficult conversations, without devolving into "us versus them" thinking, or unmindful speech and non-listening.

Later in the course, in another conversation, Mary shared in class that in her other classes and student group activities, she sometimes did not want to speak because she felt that – as a Black female – people expected her to speak and represent the entire Black race. In that regard, she said that she felt like speaking in certain moments was not an empowering act but rather... she paused because she was not sure what to call it. I suggested "An act of social death?" Her face lit up and she said "Yes!" I added, "In those kinds of moments, you are not being seen and heard for who you really are but are fulfilling a preconceived notion of what you are because of assumptions of race." She said, "Yes, exactly!" and then continued to elaborate on what that felt like for her. What I appreciated about that moment is that it showed trust in the learning environment, and that she felt that she could also be vulnerable in the space. She did not always have to be attacking/defending. It allowed for a fuller expression of who she was, as well as a more nuanced awareness and expression of the complexity of lived experiences.

A first-year student in the course who was White and had a learning disability had been used to being overprotected by her mother who often tried intervening in her courses and life in college. At the start of the course, the student thus approached being in the class in the same way that she had experienced with her mother – she felt entitled to special treatment and exceptions without any boundaries. While being attentive to the special needs of extended deadlines and other aspects that the student required, I was also aware of how the student needed to grow in ways that her accustomed state of always being overprotected may not have allowed. In other words, I had to assess ways in which her specific needs required support and ways in which she also needed to be challenged to grow. Again, it was a fine line to balance. Instead of just giving her a break for not completing her first two papers, which is what she expected, I invited her to still turn them in with a partial grade reduction. I let her know that I would follow the guidelines on her note from the student disability resource office. However, beyond that, if she wanted to receive more credit than the work she had done, she could do the optional extra credit assignment that all students have the option to do. In this class, she saw that she was going to be

treated with equity in the support that she needed but not necessarily granted extra privileges. She persisted and not only turned in her late papers but also did the optional extra credit, which turned out to be her best writing yet. She had grown more empowered than she had been under her former view – or her mother's view – of herself as someone living with a disability. After the end of the semester, the student put a note in my mailbox that said, "Thank you so much! Your class really pushed me and helped me to grow."

As that course came to an end, I knew the course had been different from other courses that I had taught. Yes, it was generally effective. We had achieved our learning objectives. We had covered much material and students grew in their writing skills, listening and communication skills, feedback skills, critical consciousness, cross-cultural awareness, compassion, and collaboration skills. Beyond that, students had transformed on a deeper level. On the last day of the course, as we wrapped up, I let the students know that I would step out fifteen minutes early so they could confidentially complete their course evaluations. I do this in every course. At that moment, however, the normally lively and bustling class came to a sudden silence. You could hear a pin drop, like everyone was holding their breath at once. I did not quite know what that meant. I reassured students that I was available by email and in office hours should they have further questions. I wished them well on their finals and their educational journeys. Then, I walked out. The silence was new. At the end of my prior courses, students usually would break out in a loud applause, occasionally even with a standing ovation. This time, it was like a feeling of sadness had swept over the students and left them speechless. I did not know what to make of it. As I made my way down the hallway to leave the building, I heard sounds start to emerge from the classroom. Someone said "Aww..." and then several students said, "I know!"

Later that day, I received an email from a student who had regularly visited my office hours. Her email was a thank you note that started by stating "I can't believe this class with you is over!" She then explained that when I had left the class, that is when the reality finally had hit her and all the other students. She said some students had even started crying, but she told me that they all then spoke about how much they had loved the class and grew from it. She went on to share ways in which the class had empowered her, as someone who grew up amongst all males in her family, to start questioning on whose terms she was living her life. She felt that the class had given her the tools to develop her voice and apply that not only to her academic work but also to her life as a whole.

In the weeks after the class ended, I proceeded to hear from more students. One student who was a first-generation Latinx student had run away from home at age sixteen, after surviving sexual assault by multiple family members, and lived in a homeless shelter. Her past and her strength floored me. She was now involved in mentoring former survivors of sexual abuse, while also juggling the challenges of navigating higher education without any family support. She had visited my office hours often to talk about her writing and her life story. I was the first person in education she had shared this with, and who allowed her to find healing and strength in being honest about her lived experiences. I think I may have been the first person in education to relay to her how strong and beautiful her spirit was, to not only not break down from everything, but to even transform that pain and suffering to help others. I encouraged her to keep going. She had grown in confidence and poise throughout the semester. It was wonderful to see her smile and radiate joy after many harrowing years in her life. A week after the class ended, I was in my office working. I was not expecting any students since there were no more assignments. I heard footsteps coming down the hall that softened as they approached my office. After a while, I

heard a voice quietly say, "Amy...?" I turned and looked outside my door. It was the student, waiting outside. I invited her in. She said she wanted to give me a card to thank me for the impact I had made in her life. I told her that it was an honor to have been a part of her journey, and how she is such an inspiring person who is going to also make a positive impact in the lives of many others. Before leaving, she placed her hand over her heart, as her eyes filled with tears, and said, "You will be with me forever."

Later, I also received a message from Jill who wanted to let me know that the stories I shared in class inspired her to finally find the courage to pursue her own path. She said she realized that the reason she had been so angry for so long was that she had been living under her mother and grandmother's control but wanted to forge her path as a woman and as a feminist. She said she finally changed her major to GWS instead of what her mother had planned for her and felt so much happier. She added that the class was the best class she had taken in her four years of college, because it taught her skills and tools that are helpful for academic work, but most importantly she learned skills that apply to navigating real life. In addition to achieving academic student learning outcomes, this feedback from students also reflected growth in self-actualization as whole people, of *mindbodyspirit*.

A couple months later, I received the students' course evaluations. The pedagogical question that I had begun with at the start of the course, "What happens in a course if students know they are loved?" was now more fully answered in the students' comments. Although I had never used the word "love" in the class, many of the students' comments did. They said, "I loved this class!" or "Amy is amazing! I love all her free-writing exercises." None of the comments conveyed that the class was easy, an assumption one could make if using the Enlightenment epistemological framework of the mind split over heart and body. Instead, one student wrote, "Each week, I felt like my brain was going to explode...in the best way possible. Amy really challenges us to think outside the box." Another student stated, "Amy doesn't just teach feminist theory. She lives it." Most importantly, students conveyed how their consciousness had expanded and they had grown in confidence and were now speaking up more in other classes and other areas of their lives. Like bell hooks, I believe that the classroom is still one of the most radical sites of transformation, especially when using equity-based and holistic pedagogies that cultivate the *mindbodyspirit* of the whole person in learning.

A few years ago, like a full-circle moment, I returned to my alma mater, where I was hired to rebuild and then manage the writing tutoring program where I had once worked as an undergraduate student. Although the program was still intended to serve underrepresented and underserved students, it had severely dwindled down to bare bones over the prior decade. The former program director, who had been the instructor of the prerequisite teacher education course that I had taken in college had left a few years after I had graduated. In the years since, the program had different directors with varying approaches. Furthermore, due to tensions in politics that had permeated the department's relations among staff, the department had become isolated on the campus and stagnant in its research and pedagogical training for supporting increasingly diverse student needs. As a result, the once thriving student-centered writing program that I had experienced as a college writing tutor was now just barely operating.

At first, that saddened me, since I had gotten so much from my student-centered pedagogical training and practice when I had worked there almost two decades earlier, when the program was thriving and growing. As I met with students, alumni, staff, and faculty in and outside of the program to learn more about its recent history, I heard from some staff who had witnessed the program's different iterations and eventual stagnation. Some of them considered

the years that I had worked there as an undergraduate to be the program's "golden era" and one of its best forms. After I had graduated, I had thought the program would have continued growing or at least sustaining that quality of student engagement and support. Therefore, in seeing its current state, I wanted to help revive and build the program again to its full potential, especially since the university's student population had now tripled in size and there were even more first-generation students, and more culturally and linguistically diverse students than before. Despite the university's rapid-scale growth, however, writing support for diverse students at the university had not evolved at an equal pace to its numerical expansion.

This time at the university, it was my job to design teacher education courses and train peer writing tutors in student-centered and equity-based pedagogies. Here, I drew from my program development experience at different universities and various K-12 settings, my years of teaching experience, my research in pedagogies, and embodied wisdom. The biggest challenge in having to rebuild a program with little structural support, however, was having to cover multiple full-time jobs and roles over a prolonged period—and support many students, some of whom had been deprived of reliable mentorship for their past three or four years there. In other words, the challenge was doing the heavy lifting of program building– often with systemic barriers in place for the program and the students – and the holistic work of helping mentor students in their academic, professional, and self-actualization journeys. This experience showed me how important it is for educators to also have ample structural support, and equity and inclusion, in order to effectively carry out the work of providing that for thousands of diverse students each year. Despite these challenges, the program still made an indelible impact for students.

Over the course of two years, I taught six academic quarter-long (ten weeks) teacher education courses for college students who, as peer educators, were supporting culturally and linguistically diverse students in developing their critical writing and reading skills, either in one-on-one tutoring sessions or in group workshop settings. Many of the peer educators were first-generation college students themselves from underrepresented and underserved communities. Both the training course and the community built at the program were as important for them as it was for the students with whom they would be working. Each course entailed from five to twelve students, most of them underrepresented and first-generation college students, while two were also transfer students from community colleges. Unlike regular courses, these courses were high-touch since they involved hands-on training rather than just text-based conceptual learning. In the two years of rebuilding and innovating the program, with limited structural resources, we had hired and trained twenty-one tutors and six workshop facilitators. The program served over 1,400 students per academic year. The strength of the program was its social justice foundation, and its people and diversity, and strong sense of community both in the program and across campus with partnerships. Even without ample structural resources, the program was of high impact. Unlike some other writing centers, the peer educators did not treat the students they supported with a one-size-fits-all approach. Students who came to our writing program often shared having felt traumatized after having visited some writing centers in which tutors had said to them, "Don't you know this already?" Despite the rapidly increased diversity in admissions numbers, equity and inclusion in pedagogies and practices had not shifted to reflect and support the diverse student body. Assimilationist and deficit frameworks for cultural and linguistically minoritized students were still commonplace. However, at this program, our team began bridging the gap between diversity in admissions and practices of equity and inclusion. Each quarter, the program received hundreds of qualitative surveys from students who expressed that they not only got the technical help they were seeking but also felt they were supported and treated well in the

process. As a result, the program continued growing by word-of-mouth recommendations by students and faculty across campus each academic quarter.

In terms of content in the teacher education course, we covered many of the equity-based pedagogies discussed throughout this dissertation, including Paolo Freire's critical and dialogical pedagogy, bell hooks' engaged pedagogy, culturally sustaining pedagogies, and pedagogies for working with multilingual students, and holistic pedagogies such as engaging different learning styles and working with students dealing with trauma or other challenges that impact their academic performance. We covered different forms of writing, rhetorics, and epistemologies, including works by Gloria Anzaldúa, Amy Tan, Kimberlé Crenshaw, and Patricia Hill Collins.

Throughout the courses, the peer educators engaged in self-reflection and worked in a variety of different groups, fluidly serving as both educators and learners in each class meeting. Different learning styles were engaged in each class. Their experiences as whole people—of *mindbodyspirit*—were acknowledged in the learning environment, in which they were allowed to share struggle, joy, anger, and optimism as was authentic to their lives in the moment each week. This helped students to experience a safe and constructive learning environment, and it helped them to build community with each other, as they saw each other as authentic and relatable colleagues and friends, not primarily as individuals competing against each other, which is prevalent at universities that instill competition among students.

The peer educators were also encouraged to self-reflect in contemplative writing exercises to develop a greater awareness of and more supportive relationship to their inner life and find deeper meaning in what they were learning. This helped counteract some of the mechanical and robotic engagement that students can develop at universities where the pressure to learn for earning grades and maintaining GPAs is intense.

Furthermore, being peer educators emphasizes a dialogical and engaged pedagogy in which learning is a collective endeavor. A key element of integrative pedagogy is also that learning is multidirectional, not a top-down banking system. Therefore, students became adept at learning from viewpoints different than their own through various group discussions, group projects, and peer writing workshops. They regularly had to "teach back" course material which served to help them become more accustomed to being educators, not just students, in the program. In the process of teaching back course concepts, students/peer educators also had to demonstrate and engage with different learning styles, such as visual, verbal, auditory, and kinesthetic. Learning these pedagogical tools not only helped them as peer educators in tutoring work; they shared that better understanding of their own learning styles and how to facilitate them also helped them in their courses as students.

Integrative pedagogy, which facilitates connecting the personal and the collective, is especially important in a program with social justice as its mission. In one class, after we had read excerpts of Patricia Hill Collins' *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (2009), a male Latinx student commented that the text was "relevant" to him. When asked to elaborate why, he explained that, prior to reading that text, he had assumed that most texts he had read were told from an objective or neutral perspective. He said that reading *Black Feminist Thought* made him realize that many of those texts were not neutral but were in fact telling a story from a male, heterosexual, and most cases White point-of-view. This is a fundamental element of my theory and practice of integrative pedagogy—that students learn metacognition skills, as well as critical thinking and compassion and empathy skills, by engaging with different epistemologies and worldviews that can help denaturalize a singular epistemology as the entire reality or most important perspective. This was also

important for that specific context, in which several other programs at the university had been charged in student protests for perpetuating antiblackness in their practices. Integrative pedagogy is not intended as an ad hoc or stop-gap approach to PR crises of systemic inequity. It is a holistic and preventative approach to social inequity. As Gloria Ladson-Billings explains of her intentions for culturally relevant pedagogy and later culturally sustaining pedagogies, it is important for students to not only value and learn about their own cultures but to also become fluent in at least one other culture besides their own. This is vital for the twenty-first century, and even more so as minoritized students already are or will be the majority at many public schools. Assimilationist and deficit frameworks are not only oppressive, but they are also severely limiting in the enforcing of monocultural and monolinguistic skills and ways of thinking, writing, and being in the world.

Integrative pedagogy also supports students in *mindbodyspirit*, helping center holistic well-being in students' learning. In another teacher education class, I had noticed that peer educators were increasingly stressed about their busy schedule of classes and all their various final exams approaching. Rather than ignoring it and steamrolling ahead, I offered students an option to begin with a brief mindfulness breathing and meditation exercise. All of them agreed. Afterward, I saw students visibly change in their dispositions. Some of them looked more peaceful than I had ever seen them before. Most of all, they were fully present. In experiencing relief from intense anxiety and worry about the future, they were able to focus on what was happening in the present moment and enjoy being present. Weeks after that class ended, one male peer educator from that group told me that they had not felt that calm in years. As a pre-medicine student with never-ending exams and highly competitive courses based on curved grading scales, he realized then that his mind was often racing ahead to the next thing that needed to be done. A female peer educator expressed a similar outcome, sharing that the experience encouraged her to start meditating on her own. The greater self-regard and self-care practices that peer educators developed during their time at the program was a gratifying outcome to see, since the personal and the collective, and well-being and social justice, are interconnected.

A strong sense of community was felt at the end of my last in-person teacher education course before the onset of the pandemic. The peer educators collectively shared some of the learning outcomes at the end of the course. One peer educator stated that the class helped her to stop hating herself for the first time in years. As with the GWS class taught at another university, I had never mentioned the word "love" in this class. Yet, perhaps, she felt the experience of radical love and authentic love through the asset-based frameworks, the culturally inclusive texts and teaching practices, the community building, and the cultivating of students as whole people of *mindbodyspirit*. She said the class was a light she looked forward to coming to each week. Most of all, she expressed that she had felt increasingly disappointed by many of her other professors who had a cynical view of life. They would critique things but then not do anything about it. She mentioned that one of the most inspiring things for her in the class was that I facilitated them in their critical thinking skills and could critique rigorously like her other professors, but then she said, "You also do something about it and build solutions." In this regard, I am reminded of theories of deconstructive work and knowledge, which has its limitations. Constructive work requires a whole different set of faculties of the human spirit, ethics, and epistemologies.

Another peer educator stated, "You know how a lot of places on campus say they are a 'safe space' for students? Well, this is probably one of the only places on campus that I can say

where I have truly experienced a 'safe space.' Every week, we were allowed to be vulnerable and share our struggles and triumphs with each other, all while learning and growing." At that point she began to tear up and said, "I don't know if I'll ever get to experience that again." To this I reminded her that she was not just a student but now also a peer educator. Now that she has experienced it, I encouraged her that she is even more equipped with awareness and tools to also create it with others. At that point, she looked encouraged and others chimed in with reaffirming support. She was not alone in this. Other peer educators were with her on a journey of self-actualization, of personal and collective liberation. A whole community had been built.

We had a 100% retention rate of our peer educators and high-impact success of both peer educators and students served in the program. Many peer educators described the program as a "home" on campus – a place where they felt welcomed, included, nurtured, and empowered. Many of the students who graduated from the program have since gone on to start graduate school, medical school, study abroad, or begin their careers in various fields. I am honored to have been a part of their journeys.

Rather than presenting a singular, prescriptive way of teaching, my theory of integrative pedagogy emphasizes a dynamic, learner-centered practice that is continually evolving and is necessarily customized according to the context of each class and group of participants. When I am teaching, my own mindfulness and contemplative practices help me to be more fully present with students. Even though I have a set of fundamental goals and methods for each course, a presence in *mindbodyspirit* allows me to draw from the various tools needed and most relevant according to the context and group with which I am working. My master's in arts advisor once invited me to guest teach one of his classes. He later conveyed to me that my guest class caused him to reflect for an entire month. Most of all, he said the influence of my teaching had swept across the entire class and showed up in students' artwork. He invited me to their final project showcase to see for myself. I was stunned and indeed saw the impact from student to student, in each of their different artistic styles. He mentioned that my teaching reminded him of an impactful teacher he once had as a graduate student. He said, "Whenever you see teaching like that, it shows you that teaching is truly an art form in and of itself." I loved that. In some ways, teaching is a skill and a science, but it is also an artful practice. For me, the best way to describe teaching is that it feels like jazz. You have an array of instruments you can play, and you know how to play music, but the song you ultimately create depends on the other players and you in dialogue. It is music in every case, but it is also a unique song every time. It requires you to be both grounded and on your toes, ready to facilitate and co-create.

I am deeply grateful for the many wonderful and diverse students whom I have met and worked with over the years. I have learned so much from their diverse voices, ideas, questions, and lived experiences. I have become a better teacher because of them. They have shown me time and again the immense learning, growth, healing, empowerment, creativity, and cooperation that is possible when education is cultivated as a practice of freedom—when the *mindbodyspirit* are allowed to flourish. They have made this journey in education worthwhile.

EPILOGUE
An Integrative Path Forward in Liberatory Education

As you enter places of trust and power, dream a little before you think.[78]
—Toni Morrison

Peace and happiness are available in every moment. Peace is every step.[79]
—Thich Nhat Hanh

This year, I am delighted to begin working as faculty at a community college for its emphasis on access to education for students from a wide range of racial, gender, socioeconomic, and age backgrounds. In the past decade, some community colleges, like some community-based learning centers and K-12 schools, have evolved more quickly to serve the needs of their diverse student populations. I am happy to be joining a team of colleagues dedicated to continuous learning and student-centered teaching, and who practice equity and inclusion not only with students but also with colleagues. It affirms that these kinds of learning environments are possible when the right intentions and practices are in place. Rather than being at the bottom of an educational eco-system, many of these "peripheral" sites of community-based learning have been pioneers in innovative equity-based pedagogies and are situated within a larger sociocultural landscape of collective awakening and social transformation.

Liberatory education in the twenty-first century is not confined to formal institutions of education. Holistic education is offered at sites like the Omega Institute and various community-based learning centers. Local and international community collaborations, like the Indigenous Futures Institute, value epistemologies and scholar-activism happening among intergenerational Indigenous communities both in and outside of the academy. Researcher Brené Brown has been bringing her pioneering work in raising understanding about vulnerability, courage, and shame to the larger public to help transform workplace cultures to become more inclusive, brave, and humane. To create socially just and sustainable futures in this century will require a multilayered movement that fosters cooperation and sustainability. This dissertation has aimed to present integrative epistemologies, pedagogies, and practices for cultivating liberatory education—or education as a practice of freedom. It is an invitation for students and educators to join me in envisioning what is possible beyond just partial inclusion into preexisting systems of inequity. We must cultivate new ways of seeing, thinking, being, and interacting. It is time to let go of paradigms of division and domination and prioritize mutually beneficial cooperation and empowerment. We can choose love. We can choose peace. We can choose liberation.

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