WHAT WILL BE REQUIRED OF US?

TEACHER ACTIVISTS THEORIZING

JUSTICE ON STOLEN LAND

by

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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Title: What Will Be Required of Us?
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This work is about how we can heal from settler colonialism. Education is often thought of as the answer to social problems (as Nelson Mandela said, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world"). In the context of the US nation-state such liberatory claims are undermined by the weaponization of schooling for purposes of assimilation of peoples and elimination of cultures. Within their classrooms, in the halls of government, and in the streets, teacher activists are fighting *against* oppressive and violent schooling practices and *for* students, for democracy, and for the very future of all of us on Turtle Island.

Teacher activist identity formation is not well understood, nor is the role of activist collectives in the nurturing of new activists, so this study asks teacher activists to reflect on the ways they became activists and how they have tried to spark new teachers to become activists. A small group of non-Native activists formed a Teacher Inquiry Group (TIG) to consider these questions and also to wrestle with the concept of decolonization of teacher activism, and the possibilities of working with Native education activists to envision a future in which education contributes to self-determination for individuals and for all peoples.

The results of our work together point not to one definitive answer; there is no "how to" pamphlet for decolonizing teacher activist work. Instead, we unveil additional questions that might need to be addressed before we can begin to envision a more just and sustainable future for all.

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Dedicated to the memory of my sweet Mama

Barbara Jones (1943-2014)

She always knew I was a writer but I'm pretty sure this is not what she had in mind.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The landscape of public education in the United States is fraught with disagreements about its purposes, methods, and content. Even the very basic definitions of education, learning, and schooling are hotly contested. What is learning and how can it be measured? What does it mean to be educated? What does *public* mean and who are schools for? Schools are often understood as a place where "American Democracy" is nurtured, but I agree with theorists such as Pearl (1971), Apple (2001), and Stoecker (2017), that U.S. formal education in fact *undermines* democratic practice and reproduces existing social stratification. I apply the concept of settler colonial logics in this research to help us understand how and why U.S. schooling practices are in fact antithetical to the existence of a true functioning democracy. Settler colonialism as defined by Veracini (2011, 2014) is a specific formation in which settler colonists, past and present, seek to occupy stolen land in the absence of a "disappeared" Indigenous population. (In contrast to extractive colonists, who theoretically are temporary residents, and whose mantra is 'you, work for me' the settler colonizer's might be 'you, go away') (p.1). In the U.S. nation-state we see manifestations of settler colonial structures all around us, though we may not comprehend them as such. Settler colonial theory helps explain Senator Elizabeth Warren's claim to Native "blood." It sheds new light on the persistence of white heteropatriarchy in everything from "bathroom bills" in North Carolina schools to the persistence of white male leadership at the top of some of our most progressive political movements and activist groups. Settler colonial logics may even be involved in Pauline Lipman's neglectful (non) treatment of the Native history of Shikaakwa (now

known as Chicago) in her excellent work on neoliberalism and analysis of rights to the city (Lipman, 2011). Teachers and students certainly see settler colonialism every day in textbooks, in scripted lesson plans, in free downloads of "activity sheets" that depict cartoonish Indians and Pilgrims sharing a special meal in November.

To fully engage the questions asked in this research requires an understanding of schooling as emerging from this particular historical framework, *and* its ongoing manifestations in our current contexts, *and* of the ways schools are used as a tool of the settler colonial project of domination and dispossession. I apply the term *settler colonialism* as a broad umbrella, encompassing multiple structures of power that have been and *continue to be employed* by white settler colonists to maintain privilege and advantage for themselves, while reinforcing the conditions that create lack of opportunity of others. I conceive of the U.S. imperial project and the "elimination of the Native" (Wolfe, 2006) as the "original sin" upon which the nation state, and its state-run system of public education, has been built.[1] Settler colonialism always "covers its tracks" (Wolfe, 2006, p. 3); U.S. public education is a useful tool of domination *and* erasure.

Settler colonialism surrounds us in our schools, but is rarely acknowledged, much less named and contested. It is hardly ever given a furtive sidelong glance. It is built into the very bricks and mortar of the buildings – the fact that we assume education must take place within these walls is telling in itself. The arrangement of rooms along straight

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[1] This project's focus on stolen land does not intend to make less of the crime of stolen labor and the wrongs of chattel slavery. My focus here is on the uses of school as an assimilative and coercive tool used to erase Native peoples and their cultures. The schooling strategy for enslaved Africans and for their descendants has mainly been to deny educational opportunity. Indeed, "… settler colonialism is built upon an entangled triad structure of settler-native-slave" (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 1) in which none of the three can exist without the other.

corridors, the ordering of children by year of birth, then alphabetically by last name, then by "reading level." These are all arbitrary practices; they are social constructions that have nothing to do with learning. The emphasis on learning while sitting still, of sitting in desks and chairs, of walking in boys' lines and girls' lines and waiting in lunch lines – the very concept of the cafeteria – all of these come from settler-colonial imaginaries of what "order" means. When we begin to look closely, and critically, at schools, we understand that order means *control*: control of bodies and control of minds; control of emotions and imaginations. The settler-colonial school controls what may be known; what ways of knowing are deemed legitimate, and what ways of expression are intelligible. The work of schooling upon the minds of students is epistemic violence, which silences Native histories and present existence. "Aboriginal students experience a daily barrage of epistemic violence. They are silenced by this devaluing of tradition, which is directly connected to the emphasis on individualism and the privileging of scientific/technological achievement. Students are told that the past is dead, irrelevant, and remote. Phrases like 'You can't live in the past' are an indirect affront to indigenous [ways of knowing and being in the world]" (Marker, 2006, p. 496). Western schooling is a site of "profound epistemic, ontological, cosmological violence. This violence is not temporally contained in the arrival of the settler but is reasserted each day of occupation" according to (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 5).

This dissertation seeks solutions to persistent education issues and problems among the people that best understand teaching and learning in public schools: teachers themselves, specifically teachers who are active in their communities, participating in efforts to frame and reframe the work of public education. I argue, along with many

educational theorists and practitioners (e.g. Ponder, 1971, Collins, 2009), that schooling

has never been and can never be a site of political neutrality. Far from being a

dispassionate or neutral institution, or a nurturing cradle of democracy, U.S. public

schooling is an important tool, in service of a political project whose legacy since at least

1492 has been one of misery, suffering, conformity, and obedience. Settler colonial

structures are part of the fabric of public schooling and have been since Boston Latin

School was built on Wampanoag and Massadchuesett homeland in 1635. This project is

about those who resist this horrific status quo: the teachers who, in spite of being

mandated to uphold this oppressive structure, dare to challenge it. Different groups of

teacher/citizens are involved in different aspects of public schooling and different activist

projects, including but not limited to the development of culturally sustaining and

revitalizing pedagogies, struggles over the content of curriculum, the teaching and rights

of immigrant students and emergent bilingual students, dismantling the school-to-prison

pipeline, and even the content of school lunches. My project has room for all of the

activist work that teachers do, and space to explore the possibilities, limitations, and

means to point the way to new futures.

The political work of teacher-citizens is a crucial component to a reclamation of

public schooling by and for the public. Teachers are far from apolitical and impartial

conveyors of inert or objective knowledge. When they/we[2] have the capacity to speak out

in public ways about education injustices, they/we can make changes happen. Around the

country, teachers are increasingly speaking out in various ways in favor of their students

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[2] I will use a variety of pronouns to refer to individual teachers and to various groups of teachers. My use of they/we here and elsewhere is indicative of my membership in the group I call "teachers" and also "teacher activists."

and in support of public schools as necessary to democracy and to the common good. We have had some wins, but our impact has been limited. Increased knowledge and understanding of activist teachers' activities, motivations and commitment over time will help teacher educators as well as community leaders and policy makers better support teachers' efforts. By grounding education problems, and the limitations of various education "reforms" in the settler colonial theory, then bringing an Indigenous Feminist lens to my analysis of teacher activist identities, collectives, and coalitions, I hope to illuminate the vast potential of teachers as change agents, and to point the way toward the future development of that potential.

Western social science research has largely failed us in our attempts to find us a way forward out of the settler-colonial web in which we are stuck and struggling. There are many brilliant teachers, scholars and activists doing inspiring work all over the U.S. nation-state and around the world, and they all know that there is no "one right answer." To some extent or another we each must find our own answers, in our own particular situations: our classrooms, our offices, our communities. But as we struggle against overwhelming forces of white|dominant cultural hegemony, we also need to work together to find the answers. This study explores the stories of teacher activists in Eugene, Oregon, in an effort to learn how they became involved in activism and advocacy work, and what inspires and sustains them. It asks, "what will be required of us" as we try to work in solidarity with Native educators and activists as well as other peoples who have been consistently relegated to the margins of education. A small group of six teacher activists participated in critical inquiry group activities (Navarro, 2018) for six weeks, where they examined their own activist work in light of shared readings (see

Appendix A). Using an Indigenous Feminist lens to frame the analysis of the group's work, this project contributes to a robust future vision of teachers' community involvement. By working together in a process of focused inquiry and self-reflection, we (I include myself as the researcher as a participant in the group) came to better understand the contextual factors that contribute to the development of a resilient corps of teacher activists, and we explored ways that non-Native education activists might work in concert with Native teachers and education activists to advance the ideals of liberatory democratic education for all children. We also found settlers' limits to that solidarity.

Grounding the problem of oppressive schooling within the conceptualization of settler colonial studies provides a provocative socio-historical framework for examining the structures and functions of public schooling, and for understanding the context in which teachers develop (or don't develop) their activist identities. Before we began, I suspected that most U.S. teachers (educated as we were, and employed as we are, in the very same system we seek to change), are limited in our imagination of what the future of public education could be. We, too, have been carefully taught that the status quo is natural and inevitable, from the fantasy of manifest destiny to the racist hierarchy to the wealth disparities we all live with today. As one colleague put it in a friendly discussion of our work, "We can only imagine what we can imagine." Hence, we are limited in what kinds of activism we undertake by the narrow parameters of what *is*. The study seeks to understand how we non-Native people might begin to recognize and start breaking down the barriers between what is and what *might be*. It explores interactions between settler colonial structures and activist identities, and then invokes an Indigenous Feminist approach to envision a more beautiful future for schooling and for humanity as a whole.

Statement of the Problem

Historically, the popular discourse around U.S. public schools refers to them as a public good: as a tool for individual advancement, and as the crucible of democracy and the hope of the future. But how can this be true? Founded as it was on racist and settler-colonial assumptions, and capitalist logics, our public education system cannot live up to the high-minded rhetoric. Some would argue (e.g. Hochschild, 2003) that the U.S. system of public schooling is not "broken" as many politicians and policy makers would have us believe – but that it is doing an excellent job of reproducing the status quo of our stratified society (Anyon, 1980). It is a system set up according to racism and settler colonialism to meet the needs of a settler state for uniformity and conformity. It defines and outlines what I conceive of as a narrow and constraining "path of correctness." It tolerates very little deviation. The legacy of this far-reaching and deep cutting system is a swath of destruction through all our lives and communities, characterized by broken hearts and unrealized dreams for students of all backgrounds. Settler colonialism limits us all by its proscriptive demand for sameness; it denies possibility and shuts down imagination. It deprives us of our full humanity, and everyone suffers. Under this model, no one is able to reach their human potential. Those of us *outside* the settler colonial conception of "successful" are disavowed; those who do become successful by western standards (i.e. rich/famous) are perceived to be outliers among their group, such as the artist who is able to sell paintings for tens of thousands of dollars, or the "articulate" (i.e. white-sounding) black man who wears a suit and becomes a U.S. President or a CEO. These exceptions are what dominant culture members point to as proof that "anyone can succeed" if they only are willing to "work hard enough."

A clear example of the incarnation of settler colonial influence in today's public schools is high-stakes mandatory testing, which highlights an extreme emphasis on objectivity, efficiency, productivity, and conformity. An examination of the past 100 years of the history of "intelligence testing" reveals its close connections to the eugenics movement and the need for dominant|white|western values to assert and reassert themselves, in different forms as needed. From avowed eugenicist Lewis Terman's work on the original Stanford-Binet, though the development of the paper-and-pencil "Army Alpha" and "Army Beta" during World War I, through the modern incarnation of the SAT and AP exams by The College Board, testing has been used ruthlessly to sort the "good" and "intelligent" (mostly white and affluent) people from the rest of the population.[3] Those who are not able to demonstrate their proficiency with multiple choice tests or five-paragraph essays have been subject to violence (e.g. being sent to the trenches of Europe in the 1910's) and exclusion (e.g. not being considered for college admission or scholarships). Decades of research (e.g. W. Au, 2016a; 2016b; 2009; White et al., 2016) exposes the bias of the modern testing regime toward those with dominant culture mindsets, and/or those with wealth, access to resources, and other benefits of privileged positions in society, and yet standardized tests continue to be applied to all students, in accordance with settler colonialism's emphasis on "objectivity" (or the fantasy of objectivity) and its demand for efficiency.

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[3] See Stephen Jay Gould's (1981) classic *The Mismeasure of Man*, a book "about the abstraction of intelligence as a single entity, its location within the brain, its quantification as one number for each individual, and the use of these numbers to rank people in a single series of worthiness, invariably to find that oppressed and disadvantaged groups – races, classes, or sexes – are innately inferior and deserve their status" (from the back cover of the first edition).

The discourses of competition and accountability around public schools are crucial ingredients in maintaining this status quo. The focus on individual achievement, competition, and accumulation, coupled with narrow definitions of financial and employment outcomes as "success" are all part of a system set up to serve this goal of social reproduction. The result, contrary to the stated ideals of "diversity" and "democracy," is generations of people who do not know how to live a good life and how to participate in their communities. When all emphasis is on competition and consumption, individuals are cut off from each other, from their place on the earth, and their communities – even their own immediate families. They are not able to think well, or to be creative and happy. According to Merculieff, one cannot be *fully human* under these conditions. "Real human beings are those who are profoundly connected, in spirit and with themselves. They are individuals who feel they are part of a whole and not separated" (Merculieff & Roderick 2013, p.12). The regimented schooling of conformity and subservience that most of us experience in the U.S. also results in what Eve Tuck (2013) calls "shallow participation" in which students (and the adults they will become) are invited to "take part in something in very defined and determined ways. That is, people can answer, but not contribute to the framing of the questions" (p. 13). Settler-colonial schooling practices may produce voters; civics classes may produce citizens who know what the three branches of the U.S. government are, and yes these are important. In the current incarnation, however, most public schools will not be able to teach students the critical thinking skills and community mindset that they will need to be deeply participatory citizens and community members. In most of the U.S. education/schooling

system, this is the end goal: the production of "docile workers and consumers" who will take their place in the capitalist economy and not ask too many questions (Pearl, 2015).

Too often, the work of education research is to develop "interventions" that will "help" more individuals to reach a miserable finish line. In the process, even well-meaning interventions are put to work forcing all students in to the mold of white|Western schooling. Popular (and financially lucrative) school-wide behavioral intervention projects are proud of their effectiveness in shaping all children's behavior to fit the dominant culture's norms of school behavior…walk, sit, be quiet, raise your hand. The content of curriculum (e.g. Common Core State Standards) and the style of its delivery also fit neatly into the western linear model of "progress." Any different ways of knowing and different forms of knowledge are excluded. Knowledge understood or produced outside of this model is ignored or usurped. It follows that many modes of expression are also discounted, when there can be only one way to "measure" what students have learned and what they know. If the only way to demonstrate or assess learning is through standardized testing, other ways of understanding student learning are ignored or disbelieved. The entire project turns on the erasure of difference; it is an exercise in hegemony. Even the most well-meaning "reforms" and "interventions" risk being co-opted into the overarching logic of sameness, since they are mostly born from the same logic of white western science as objective and the norm by which everything – and everyone – are compared.

Development of policy and expenditure of public funds (e.g. grants from the National Science Foundation or the Institute for Education Sciences) as well as private foundation dollars (e.g. "gifts" from Eli Broad or Bill Gates) reinforce the central goal of

figuring out what is wrong (different) and finding ways to fix (conform or erase) it. This approach overwhelms and devastates the relationships among students and among teachers, between students and teachers, and between the school and the community. Even those who on the surface seem to comply easily and happily, while they may experience a relatively smooth ride along a "path of correctness," are denied the opportunity to be fully human (Merculieff & Roderick, 2013). If these folks are members of majority and/or dominant culture groups, they may learn that they are deserving, and that they accomplish what they do through hard work and innate intelligence. They are "good at school" and are rewarded for their behavioral compliance as well as for their performance on standardized tests, report cards, and other less formal assessments of school success. Under this system, though, they must also learn that others are *not* inherently good, are somehow deficient and *less* worthy. They come to understand that those who suffer are deserving of "failure."

Those who refuse to, or are not able to, comply with the demands of the system may suffer feelings of alienation from school, even from a very early age. They are often denied access, sidelined, pushed out, and segregated. Those who act on their feelings of anger and shame are diagnosed, labelled, belittled, and removed. Students who remain silent, withdraw and attempt to hide within the system are also punished in various ways. The job of schooling, then, is to force all students in to the mold of white Western being and knowing. Since the publication of "A Nation at Risk" (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) every U.S. President has added to the rhetoric that frames schools as "failing" (Clinton) and in need of drastic reform measures (Bush, GW). The so-called "reformers" of the late 20th and early 21st centuries undermine the very virtues

of democracy, opportunity and democracy that they profess to champion. Their narrow

neoliberal definitions of accountability and student success (Lipman, 2011) are circulated

in the dominant discourse, codified in law, and enabled through public funding.

Teachers Under Attack

Teachers and the teaching profession are under attack by neoliberal forces that

restrict creative teaching and undermine teacher professionalism with "teacher-proof"

curricula, standardized testing, and severe under funding of the schools (Aronson,

Anderson, Ellison, Barczak, & Bennett-Kinne, 2021; Edling, 2015; Kumashiro, 2012).

"The perception about the magnitude of this problem [of "bad teachers"] negatively

affects the status of the teaching profession, drives models of teacher preparation and

teacher recruitment efforts, and often influences legislative policies. Yet for all the talk

about bad teachers, we have no reliable indicators about how many of these teachers

actually exist, nor do we even have agreement about what characteristics make a 'bad

teacher'" (Holmes, Berliner, Koerner, Piepgrass, & March, 2018).

Teachers are by and large people who want to help young people learn and grow,

people who love teaching. Many of us refer to it as our "calling." The majority of K-12

teachers are white American women[4] who have grown up in the U.S. public schools, and

have been largely compliant with the demands of the "path of correctness." Now they

find themselves in a position that asks them to uphold the same system. Fasching-Varner

& Mitchell (2013) state that most of the pre-service teachers with whom they work can

articulate only vague rationales for wanting to become a teacher. They articulate an

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[4] The most recent data from the *Digest of Education Statistics* indicates that in the 2015-2016 school year 76.6% of all teachers are female and 80.1% are white (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017).

"abstract liberal idea of 'helping kids'" (p.360), but that will not be enough to sustain teachers against the oppressive demands of the system, once they see how it impacts their students, especially poor children and students of color. Fasching-Varner & Mitchell (2013) further argue that future teachers must be "provided opportunities to understand the hegemonic nature of U.S. schooling" (p.360). Fullan, (1993) likewise calls for teachers to become "change agents" and concurs that though teaching is a moral profession – perhaps even a calling – teachers often become disheartened by their inability to make a large impact, and feel frustration at the lack of outlets for their larger ethical and political commitments. Fullan, (1993) tells us that becoming a change agent requires four skills: "personal vision-building, inquiry, mastery, and collaboration," but there are precious few places within U.S. schooling that allow for, much less encourage, such work.

Quinn & Carl (2015) have explored the ways that teacher activist organizations contribute to the development of professional agency among teachers. They provide examples from Philadelphia of how a teacher activist group known as the Teacher Action Group (or "TAG Philly") provided opportunities for teachers in the group to develop Fullan's four skills, but notes that participation in the group might be "limited in appeal to teachers that share ideologically similar viewpoints" (p. 755) especially those perceived as more "radical" or "political." Drawing on Navarro's (2018) conceptualization of a "community of transformative praxis" this study convened a small group of self-identified teacher activists to engage in a collective and individual process of what Paulo Freire would call conscientizaçao, or raising critical consciousness (for individuals within the group and supported by the group) around issues of decolonization,

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education, and activism. Navarro (2018) draws from Freire, critical race theory (CRT) and healing justice (Jacob 2013; Ginwright, 2016) to frame teachers' social justice work (in his case in the classroom) as "a collective and individual process." In the present study, we focused on the activism that occurred *outside* of the classroom, but the concepts of praxis, transformative resistance, and healing justice were equally salient in our discussions.

Participants were non-Native activist/teachers. The group included participants who are engaged in different kinds of activism, which we thought of as defined in terms of day-to-day behavior, group membership, specific actions / activities (how they teach, writing, speaking, etc). A brief pre-meeting questionnaire (see Appendix B) asked them about how long they have worked as teachers, how they are involved in community activism around education issues, including what organizations they belong to and/or are involved with, and activities they may have participated in recently (e.g. sending a letter to the editor, an op-ed, communicating with a legislator or a school board, etc.). In-school activism included teaching for social justice or speaking up against standardized testing at staff meetings. In the 1990's, some participants even designated their school as a "racism-free zone." Not every teacher is able to participate at this level, depending on the political climate in their schools. Some teachers might be active in local school board elections or be involved in lobbying state legislators on education-related bills. Some may be working on a national level, or involved in global education issues. Teacher activism happens in numerous ways.

Drawing on activist identity theory from fields other than education [e.g. Macintyre's (2017) conceptualization of the "warrior" and the "empathic activist" in

environmental research] we find tools to understand teacher activist identity. Helms's (1984, 1990; 1995) work on racial identity development from the field of counseling psychology provides insight as to the challenges and development of a white racial identity that would allow white teachers to overcome barriers to participation, including the lack of vision around a just and equitable education for all children. Utt & Tochluk (2016) echo the call from Jupp & Lensmire (2016) for a "second wave of White identity studies" that emphasizes dialogue and reflection "as a way to take respondents' life histories and common sense understandings seriously while also getting [teachers] to think differently along the lines of humanities education and intellectual development in the tradition of Deweyan growth" (p. 471). We must be able to critique and resist neoliberal "school reform" efforts even as they are embraced by "nice white liberals" in attempts to "help" and "fix" *other people's children* (Delpit, 1995, 2012) to help them better conform to the needs of settler colonialism, racism, and the nation-state. We *must* think of a future beyond standardized test scores and the empty rhetoric of the "achievement gap."

More than non-teachers, citizens who are also teachers may be constrained in their activism by relationship to the institution that they are bound to uphold. They/we[5] may either be quickly shut down, or more gradually ground down by the hegemonic system. We need more of them/us to resist and to demand that *the system change* to meet

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[5] My own work and personal/political commitments span the divide between teacher, activist, and researcher [and also *motherscholar* following Matias & Nishi (2018)]. I also embrace my insider/outside role as the researcher on this project and also a member of the teacher activist collective (Chappell & Dunbar, 2021). Hence, throughout the project I refer to teachers, activists, teacher activists, and members of the TIG variously as they and/or we, their and/or our, and them and/or us.

the needs of all children, rather than trying to change the children to fit the mold of schooling. Yes, we need teacher/activists to fight for teacher professionalization, to lead resistance to neoliberal reforms (including standardized testing), but we need *more*. We need to understand the limits that settler colonialism puts on our imaginations. We (settler teachers) need to heal from settler colonialism too, so that we can visualize a more just and beautiful future for all of us. The work with teacher activists within the TIG helps us understand how teachers become activists and how they sustain their commitment to the work so that our teacher education programs, along with community partners, can support them. This work can help teacher activists become engaged in "deep participation" (Tuck, 2013a), to participate in framing the problems (Maton, 2018) as we understand them from our vantage point within the system, and asking the questions that urgently need asking. Resisting mandates as they come down to us is important, but, as author and activist Naomi Klein (2017) titled her recent book, *No Is Not Enough*. We must be always looking toward the future and making the future we want for our next seven generations, being proactive creators of possibilities, rather than always struggling to prevent a dystopian nightmare, even as we are teetering on the edge of it.

Indigenous Feminism is a productive framework for inspiring research and activism. It engages with problems of settler colonialism and heteropatriarchy in ways that allow a deep analysis of the problems at hand, and allows –in fact *requires* – deeply engaged praxis. One does not simply "do" Indigenous Feminism, it is a mode of being, a way of walking on the land, of living in the world. As a white settler woman I undertake this work seriously and humbly, with an open heart, vulnerable to making mistakes, and open to my own learning along the way. From my position of relative privilege, I seek to

take up this work as an ally, and part of my responsibility is to work with other non-Native persons (in this case teacher activists) to bring Native Feminist frameworks to our work. Use of this paradigm, with its focus on liberation, rather than amelioration, points to the future of freedom for all people.

Purpose of the Study

Settler colonial theory tells us that colonization is not an isolated historical event, but an ongoing process; an enduring structure (Wolfe, 2006). U.S. schools are part of this assimilation machine; just one of the structures designed to maintain a system that crushes spirits and limits futures. Even interventions with good intentions and policies; even policies and practices that claim to be working toward social justice, can be usurped by settler colonialism, often without the well-meaning teacher's or researcher's awareness. Using a settler colonial framework to frame the problem, including ideas about colonization of the intimate spaces of our lives (Stoler, 2001, 2006), this study traces the history of oppression that undergirds our education system, and exposes the inherent contradictions between the professed American ideals of freedom (Foner, 1999) and the ways in which settler colonialism continues to hide itself in plain sight (Pratt, 2018; Rana, 2010). Given this, my work contributes to the literature on settler colonialist logics *still* at work in *all* public schooling. My hope is that this project will illuminate some of the atrocities of schooling that are less obvious than the tragedy of the "Indian Boarding Schools." [6]

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[6] Though not well-known in most of the U.S. and rarely discussed in American schools, the violent removal of Native children from their families and communities, and their interment at residential "schools" is well-documented. Though the exact numbers are unclear, it is estimated that – between the 1870's and the 1960's – tens or even hundreds of thousands of Indigenous children were removed, often forcibly, from their homes by

Within this settler colonial context, the study explores how teachers become teacher activists (their origin stories), why they do the work they do, and how they sustain their commitment, by hearing their stories. This line of research weaves together the literature of racial identity development theory and activist identity development. An increased understanding of teacher activism can contribute to further cultivation of courage in our teacher education efforts. By bringing Indigenous Feminisms to bear on these issues, the study will contribute to the development of positive, future-oriented teacher activism, which informs the work of activists and the development of hope. To clarify the relationship between settler colonialism, Indigenous Feminism, and teacher activism, and to provide a conceptual map for the work of the Teacher Inquiry Groups, I have developed a graphic organizer (Figure 1; also see Appendix C): *The Teacher Activism Triad*. The triangle form depicts the overlapping interrelationships between each of the angles. The line and accompanying text between the Teacher Activism corner (TA) and the Indigenous Feminism corner (IF) shows where I propose much of the necessary *healing* work of teacher activists will happen. If this work is to be done between education activists and the Indigenous community, I wonder as a researcher, teacher, activist, and ally: what is the work that I/we need to be doing to facilitate this healing

government officials and Christian organizations under the banner of the Bureau of Indian Affair's "Civilization Division" (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998). (Missionaries established schools to assimilate Native children as early as the 1700s but here I am focused on the government-run and mandatory schools as precursors to the compulsory attendance public schools of today.) Ongoing testimony from the unwilling participants in this project, and from their children and grandchildren, brings to light the horrors of a school designed to "kill the Indian and save the man." This work does not intend to minimize or deflect awareness from the boarding schools and their survivors, but to point out that the settler colonial project has informed, and continues to inform, education practices in much more subtle ways as well.

process? Western science and its research methodologies have no recipe for healing from colonization (Jacob, Gonzales, Chappell Belcher, Ruef, & RunningHawk Johnson, 2020) so I take up Indigenous Feminism as a theoretical framework and a methodological approach to this process, this process of *healing*.
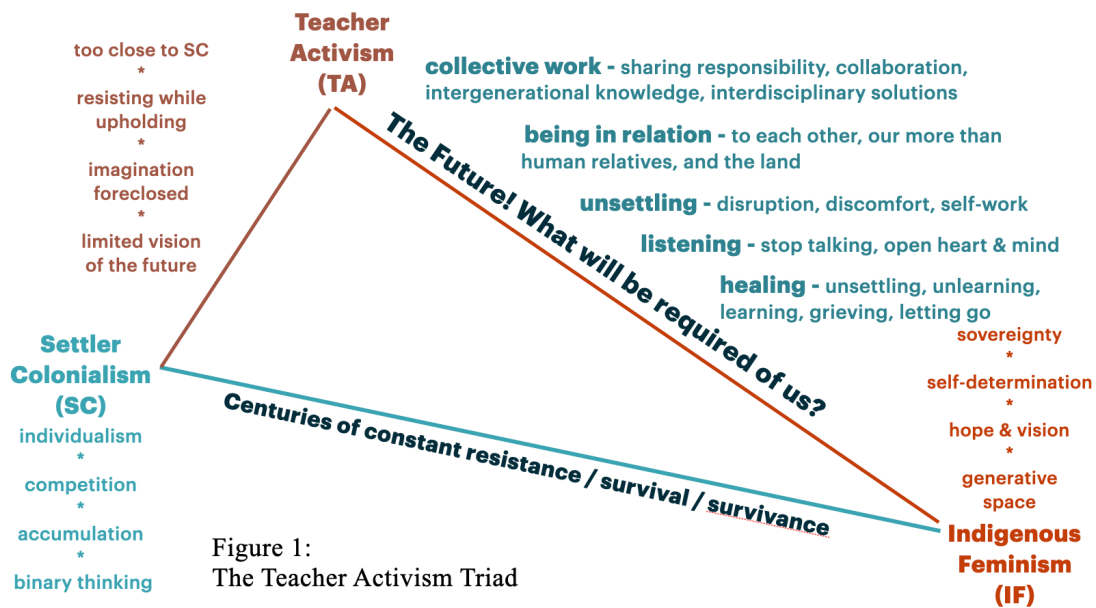
Figure 1:
The Teacher Activism Triad

This dissertation began with three broad research questions:

a. How do teachers come to be activist teachers or teacher-activists? How do teachers begin their activist work (what are their "origin stories"?)

b. How do teachers develop and sustain an activist identity? What role does the activist group have in individual's growth and resilience?

c. How might the work of non-Native teacher activists change by engagement with theories of settler colonialism, Indigenous Feminist methodologies and other ways of knowing and being; resisting and surviving?

The study opens up numerous directions for future work, and for interdisciplinary

collaboration. Because of its focus on the work of (predominately white) teacher activists within the historical and cultural landscape of the U.S., it adds to understanding of public schooling as part of the larger phenomenon of settler colonialism. Questions about activism and participation may lead to further work on the role of schooling in a modern nation-state that identifies itself as a democracy, while raising further questions about the role of teacher educators – and of the teachers they train – in shaping teachers' work and teacher activist engagement. This project builds on theories of activist identity formation by focusing exclusively on teachers, and points to ways that activist identities can be nurtured or foreclosed.

Indigenous methodologies call upon the researcher to be answerable and accountable to her community, making this study open to contributions from participants as to the purpose and outcomes of the work. In this, I aim to hold my own community of white teacher settler activists answerable to what we learn through participation in our Teacher Inquiry Group. At the same time, I am answerable to the participants and to all teacher activists, to produce something honest and useful in our work. I am always answerable to Indigenous Feminism and to Native people for whom this project hopes to be a contribution to Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination.

Scope of the Study

This research is characterized by an ethic of community involvement and an insistence that the work itself and its results are useful to community members. Its seeds have been planted through my ongoing engagement with my home community over the past several years. A small localized study will be limited in some ways, given the

problems we are facing and the equally prevalent resistance efforts. However, the Pacific Northwest has many important places with histories of teacher insurgence, from Seattle students' 1966 boycott (Clark, 2005) to more recently, Portland middle school teacher Chris Riser's walkout with students and the resulting backlash (Kenoyer, 2018). Indigenous activism (e.g. SB 13 *Tribal History/Shared History* in Oregon, the development of the *Since Time Immemorial* curriculum in Washington, resistance to the use of caricatures of Native peoples as school mascots) is ongoing alongside activism by mostly-non-Native teachers (e.g. the Opt Out movement; "Too Young To Test") as well as direct action to demand increased funding for public schools.

A small group of self-identified teacher activists, including myself, participated in a series of six meetings, forming a critical inquiry group (Navarro, 2018), where we discussed and struggled over big questions around teacher activism's possible futures. Participants were recruited through contact with their organizations. An introductory email (Appendix B) included informed consent information[7], scheduling information, and an online survey that participants completed prior to the first group meeting. The group convened at a popular local coffee shop, in a neutral and quiet space, were recorded using audio and I transcribed the conversations later. I asked participants if I may attend their events and/or meetings where I was be able to observe their work first-hand, and take notes and some photos.

As part of the invitation to participate in the research, participants were offered an opportunity to share examples of their work, either from the public domain (news articles about their communities, fliers for events, Op-Eds and letters to the editors, other public

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[7] In the spirit of community activism and activist research, participants did not wish to use a pseudonym to remain anonymous.

writing, articles, etc.) or their private archives (notes, photos, sketches). Additional time spent gathering materials or otherwise in communication with the researcher outside the interviews occurred at the discretion of the participants.

I analyzed data using Indigenous Methodologies and an Indigenous Feminist frame to understand how the interpretation and presentation of the data will address the research questions, and how the research will be disseminated. Indigenous research methodologies inform this project at every step; an emphasis on being in-relation to each other, to our students, and to place and land will inform all the group's activities. If we are to engage in the work of "unsettling" our thinking about teacher activism, we must also be willing to embrace a level of discomfort as we participants wrestle with what is required of us as activists in a colonized place, within and against settler institutions. Finally, this is not a research project separate from community. Its results must not be filed away to gather dust, but should be available to the community to engage, to question, to critique and to build upon. Anyone can take up the idea of the Teacher Activism Triad and work with it in their own communities, or on non-education issues: public health, environment, human rights, etc. As Indigenous Methodologies also insists upon answerability to the community; I have taken steps to keep respondents involved in the production of knowledge by creating multiple avenues of participation as outlined above, as well as opportunities to provide feedback during each phase of the work (e.g. data analysis, writing, revisions, etc).

Positive and sustainable social change will require more than bandages that cover up or temporarily stop the flow of [metaphorical and literal] blood. It will require us to look deeply, carefully, and honestly at the roots - the buried and hidden roots - of

injustice, to assume a radical[8] stance toward the future, and then to imagine and build something better. Indigenous feminist analyses allow me to participate in this process, opening up spaces that Western research paradigms close off, giving access to new possibilities for the future. Where the Western logics of accumulation and "progress" are dualistic, linear, and limiting, Indigenous feminism is expansive, and allows for "reinvisionings" of oppressive systems, including social science and education (Cannella & Manuelito, 2008).

At a time when neoliberal reforms of public education are reducing children to widgets and teachers to factory floor automatons, Indigenous frameworks for teaching and learning are "life-seeking" alternatives (Cajete, 2015, cited in Tuck, 2013). Through life-seeking work we are able to create better alternatives, which may ultimately displace the current emphasis in public schooling on conformity and productivity/employability. "Neoliberal logic can be characterized as being caught … with no sources for solutions outside the spectrum [a false binary of state control v market freedom]. To seek solutions to social problems that lay beyond this spectrum is seen as unrealistic and irrational. As impossible" (Tuck, 2013b). On the contrary, Indigenous feminisms *make possible* new and unique spaces to create and share knowledge, to do truly collaborative and potentially transformative research and teaching. Within the creative contours of Indigenous Feminisms we are free to explore the use of artistic expressions to theorize our lives and

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[8] In describing her project of Radical Resurgence, Nishnaa'beg scholar Leanne Betasamosake (Simpson, 2017) defines radical as "a thorough and comprehensive reform". She uses the term radical to mean "root, to channel the vitality of my Ancestors to create a present that is recognizable to them because it is *fundamentally different* from the one settler colonialism creates. I am not using the term to mean crazy, violent, or from the fringe …." (p. 48, emphasis mine).

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to imagine futures that are not visible from within the colonial/neoliberal construct of binaries.[9]

Summary

This project grows out of a long history of public school educators' political involvement in their communities and points toward a future of increased teacher activism and increased effectiveness. With a contextual understanding of settler colonialism, and analysis grounded in Indigenous Feminisms, this work can open up future possibilities to create anti-colonial educational opportunities for students and teachers alike to create a more nurturing divergenic curriculum and praxis and work for a more just and beautiful future for all of us. My goal at every phase of the project is to work in community with teachers and teacher activists to remain "steadfast in answering" to the community of teacher activists and to the participants in the present study, who I think of more as co-researchers as we explore these new possibilities together.

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[9] Authors Octavia Butler (1993), and Marge Piercy (1976), playwright and artist Virginia Grise, 2017), quilter and painter Peggy Ball (Morrill, 2017), and theater artist Taylor Mac (Mac, n.d.) provide examples of these possibilities.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Since the establishment of the United States American nation-state, political leaders have made it clear that an educated populace would be necessary to make the democratic ideal a reality. Cook & Klay (2014) call George Washington "the leading thinker among the founders on educating youth in ways that could enhance the likelihood of success for a fledgling democratic republic" (p. 47). Thomas Jefferson famously wrote, "If a nation expects to be ignorant & free, in a state of civilisation, [*sic*] it expects what never was & never will be." He goes on to explain (less famously) that, "The functionaries of every government have propensities to command at will the liberty & property of their constituents. There is no safe deposit for these but with the people themselves; nor can they be safe with them without information. Where the press is free and every man able to read, all is safe" (Jefferson, 1816).

The founders' romantic vision of liberty and justice for all did *not* include Native peoples, Blacks whether enslaved or free, any women, nor white men of the working classes. The benefits of citizenship and the responsibilities of democracy were exclusive to themselves and their landowning brethren. All of U.S. history has been a battle for others to secure their rights and liberty (Foner, 1999; Zinn, 2015). Even so, those early invocations of the importance of education to democracy continue to inspire and lend moral support to many educators, researchers, and activists in our[10] pursuit of

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[10] Throughout the manuscript I refer to educators, teachers, education activists, and activists in general as *they, them,* and *their*, and/our *we, us*, and *our*. As a part of the community that informs my research I embrace our collective identity but also recognize that at times (especially when writing about the Teacher Inquiry Group that gathered for

enlightening public education for everyone. Unfortunately, when we invoke Washington and Jefferson as role models for our democratic aspirations, it feels a bit like leaning on a flimsy cardboard cutout. The words are there but there is no substance behind them.[11] The same can be said over 200 years later, of the rhetoric of recent U.S. Presidents (Lee, 2010; "President Signs landmark No Child Left Behind education bill," 2002; *The New York Times*, 1999).

The founders' notion of *freedom for some* and their enactment of *democracy by the few* makes the application of these ideals to our current public schooling problematic at best, impossible at worst. To rely on their "wisdom" requires a split in knowing (Rana, 2010), or an "unknowing" (Vimalasery, Pegues, & Goldstein, 2016) of history. It demands a deep denial of current reality. These are incompatible with the ideal of an enlightened citizenry. This paradox, in which expressed and revered American values are in diametric opposition to American society's beliefs and actions, both informs and inspires my investigation of teacher activism.

To fully engage the questions asked in this research requires an understanding of schooling as existing in a particular historical context, and of the ways schools are used as a tool of the settler colonial project of domination and dispossession. I apply the term *settler colonialism* as a broad umbrella, consisting of multiple structures of power that

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this project) it would be disingenuous to center my own voice. Speaking from my standpoint as the researcher and author of the paper, I use *I, me,* and *my*.

[11] Or if there is substance, it is not what we have been led to believe, what we have been expecting or fervently hoping for. For a full account of his plan for public education system, in which "geniuses" may be selected from the lower classes of whites to continue their education past grade school at the expense of the state, see *Notes on the State of Virginia* (Jefferson, 1787) (p. 243-249)

white settler colonists have relied upon for the last five centuries, to maintain their own privilege and advantage for their children, while creating - and reinforcing - the lack of opportunity for others. Accordingly, I conceive of the U.S. imperial project and the "elimination of the Native" (Wolfe, 2006) as our *original sin.*[12] It is the cracked foundation upon which the nation state, and its state-run system of public education, is built – and employ the literature of settler colonial studies.

The current study rests upon an understanding of public schooling as existing *within* and functioning *as a tool of* the settler colonial project in the U.S. nation-state. Throughout American history, all marginalized groups have, in one way or another, fallen victim to the insatiable needs of settler colonial logics and structures. Whether the tactic is outright slaughter of people, the destruction of their homes and food, or the more insidious devastation of lifeways and erasure of culture, "American settler colonialism— continues to self-consciously assert itself" Pratt (2018). Settler colonialism is more than anti-Native; it encompasses multiple incarnations of racism, sexism, heteropatriarchy, ableism, language elitism, xenophobia and unrealistic nationalism; all of these are asserted and reasserted through state education practices and structures.

Throughout the enigmatic and often tragic history of the U.S. there have been those who resisted. A second area of literature that has bearing on this work is that which seeks to understand the phenomenon of activism and activist identity development, in general and in education settings. A brief review of the history of teacher resistance (which runs parallel to, and often intersects with and disrupts the settler colonial history above) brings

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[12] Along with chattel slavery. Of course the two have always been intimately entwined (McCoy, 2014; Tuck & Yang, 2012).

us up to date on education activist trends in the United States and sets the stage for an exploration of the literature on teacher activism and the work of activist groups. Literature from social psychology, identity development, Critical Race Theory, and group dynamics all come to bear on this project.

There is a lot of ugliness, historically and currently, in our education system, but there is reason for hope as well. Rather than approaching this project solely from a place of critique, and risk falling into deficit thinking about teachers and teacher activism, I combine liberatory democratic imagination (and its possibilities for a different kind of citizen participation), with concepts from Indigenous educators' decolonial and future-oriented work, to come to a kind of radical futurity for public education. This approach speaks back directly to dominant settler colonial logics and structures in an attempt to disrupt the norm, and also points toward a future in which everyone can achieve their potential as a whole human being.

Settler Colonial Schooling, Then and Now

According to Wolfe (2006), settler colonialism is "a structure not an event." It did not begin and end with Columbus or Jamestown or Plymouth Rock. It is here and all around us all the time. The structure needs constant maintenance while at the same time it must remain invisible. It is made to seem permanent, impenetrable and inevitable. Settler colonialism uses its own structures and logics, along with those of capitalism, to justify the destruction of the earth and extraction of its resources. White settler-American conceptions of "progress" by which the pollution of the water and air is excused also circumscribe our narrow idea of "success" in terms of power and material accumulation. According to Stoler, "Domains of the intimate … are strategic for exploring two related

but often discretely understood sources of colonial control; one that works through the requisition of *bodies* – those of both colonials and colonized – and a second that molds new "structures of feeling" – new habits of heart and mind that enable those categories of difference and subject formation" (2006, p. 2). Spaces of learning are places to instill these "new habits" and schools become venues for competition and conformity. Settler colonial history and theory provide a productive framework for thinking about the history of public education in the United States.

Settler colonial logics are present in every aspect of life in the United States, from birth to death (Stoler, 2001). Formal schooling is one of the most powerful tools used to accomplish the "double aim of eliminating Indigenous tribes while constructing a society and culture that can preserve and promote the interests and power of the colonizers" (Pratt, 2018). Public education is an American-normative project, and its development can be thought of alongside the evolution of settler colonialism in this country. Settler colonialism in public schools adapts to meet the task of the time, just as anti-black racism does (Rosiek, 2019; Rosiek & Kinslow, 2015) and has taken different forms according to what is needed to do its work *and* cover its tracks. From early and obvious incarnations of settler colonial schooling, (e.g. Native boarding schools or laws forbidding slaves to read and write) to the more modern and stealthy suppression of non-western knowledge and ways of knowing through dominant culture and settler colonialist curriculum content and pedagogy – all of these are the work of settler colonialism. "Colonial discourse is also evident among proponents of evidence-based education as diverse ways of knowing are not tolerated and a distortion of other ways of knowing is continued. Colonial

discourse promoted a monoculture of the mind to maintain control over knowledge production" (Shahjahan, 2011, p. 189).

Education is one of the many "ways intimate matters and narratives about them figured in defining the racial coordinates and social discrimination of empire," according to Stoler (2001). She goes on to point out that, "Common to all was a fashioning of moral policies that shaped the boundaries of race. Each points to strategies of exclusion on the basis of social credentials, sensibility, and cultural knowledge" (p. 832). Compulsory schooling has been a powerful vehicle for these strategies, as it exists at an intersection of public institutions with what in many cultures is considered private family business – the nurturing and raising of young people, teaching them about their culture and preparing them to take their places in their communities. In the U.S., state-sponsored schooling has been an ongoing process of colonizing students' minds, bodies, and spirits, preparing them to take their places in a settler colonial world. I borrow from Anyon's (1980) theorization of schooling as having a "hidden curriculum of work," that is, a process of teaching students to take their places in the class/caste societal order – whether they would become highly paid executives or those who would clean their pools. Through this lens I see our current system of education as sorting and preparing students to unquestioningly accept the settler colonial order. There are countless examples of settler colonial logics at work in schools; they are large and small, little-known or considered newsworthy, historically distant and painfully current.

"Kill the Indian and save the man."

Perhaps the most blatant and horrific example of the colonizing use of schools is the "Indian Boarding Schools" which intended to "civilize" Native American children.

While a complete review of the actions and damages of boarding schools visited upon thousands and thousands of Indigenous children is beyond the scope of this literature review, it is important to go into some detail in order to connect the more benign-seeming settler colonial structures in schools today to these more brazen practices in the genealogy of American schooling.

Government officials and Christian missionaries cooperated and conspired to forcibly remove Native children from their families, and to take them to live at residential "schools" often forcing them to travel long distances. There, they forced them to wear settler clothing and hairstyles, and forbade them from engaging in any of their own cultural practices, including playing the games they knew with their friends. "…the central mission of these schools was literally to 'kill the tribe'—to destroy indigenous (*sic*) languages, cultural practices, even traditional clothing and food—in order to assimilate individuals into the life and ways of a different tribe: European-descended American culture" (Pratt, 2018; arguing against Anderson, 2014). Many students died; we do not know how many. As I write this, children's bodies are being discovered in the Canadian provinces of Saskatchewan (The Canadian Press, 2021) and Ontario (APTN National News, 2021), buried in anonymous graves outside their "schools."

"[T]he boarding school as an institution is symbolic of American colonialism at its most genocidal. Boarding schools did, after all, align federal authority with the zealotry of religious missions, and suppress Indian cultures in an English-only way while opening the door to alienation from land and the extension of everyday Anglo-American culture into the lives and souls of Indian people" (Brenda J. Child, 2018, p. 38). Many school policies today echo the boarding school rules of the past, such as rules against

"ethnic" hairstyles, or ritual haircutting for Black men and boys as they enter a mentorship program for "fatherless boys" (J. M. Jackson, 2016). The impulse of white teachers to "rescue" their students of color, including the fantasy of taking them home to their "better" neighborhoods and schools, is part of this legacy. The banning of certain music, clothing, ways of speaking, and then mandating that students learn a Eurocentric curriculum in order to "succeed" in order to close a perceived "achievement gap" – all of these are reiterations – echoes – of boarding school practices.

"A Ruling Class Education"

At the other end of the spectrum of colonial education practices is the what Meier calls "schooling for ruling" (2009). This ruling class education was (and still is) provided to a tiny fraction of the population. "Only the leisured had time for the tough intellectual work—and networking—that democracy rests on. Only males were included because women were presumed not to think well outside of hearth and home" (p. 45). Girls and young women were trained separately to play a supportive role; even the most privileged female person could be denied basic human rights. Collins (1986) cites "John Gwaltney's (1980) interview with Nancy White, a 73-year-old Black woman" as illustrative of this phenomenon:

> "My mother used to say that the black woman is the white man's mule and the white woman is his dog. Now, she said that to say this: we do the heavy work and get beat whether we do it well or not. But the white woman is closer to the master and he pats them on the head and lets them sleep in the house, but he ain't gon' treat neither one like he was dealing with a person" (p. S17).

Today, many things have changed, but still this ruling class education is elusive for most citizens Meier (2009, p.45) estimates that only ten to twenty percent of young people have access. Many U.S. leaders, including Presidents, CEOs, innovators and "thought

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leaders" are educated at expensive private schools (including private higher education institutions) but also at elite public schools (also including colleges and universities) around the U.S.

Level the Playing Field

Beginning in the 1830's more young people gained access to a public education, in accordance with the idea that schools must be available to everyone to "inculcate nonsectarian Christian moral values and to educate every citizen to participate in a democracy" (Marshall, 2012). The founder and hero of the common schools (and superintendent of Massachusetts' public schools at the time) Horace Mann called public school "the great equalizer" (1848), claiming that it prevented poverty and allowed everyone to attain the education necessary to citizenship participation. It was an exercise in nation-building (Meyer, Tyack, Nagel, & Gordon, 1979) and cultural conformity (Kaestle, 1983). Like other settler-colonial-inspired projects, it called for uniformity rather than diversity in thought – hardly the hallmark of true democratic practice.

Educate to Assimilate

When the Industrial Revolution catalyzed the growth of urban centers in the U.S. during the early 19th century, one response to help "manage" the influx of diverse new immigrants to big cities was public schooling. Compulsory attendance laws were passed during this time, in an effort to curb crime; it was a sort of early "keep 'em off the streets" strategy. Tyack's (1974) history of urban public schooling tells the story of the neverending quest for the "one best system" of public schooling that will efficiently "Americanize" young people new to the U.S. They were forced to assimilate, with English-only lessons, behavior modification programs (including the still-ubiquitous

factory bells and row-and-column seating), and even lessons in "proper hygiene." Lessons in American political traditions and citizenship were mandatory. And still, while the poor and ethnically diverse were being forcibly "uplifted" by public schooling, the children of the elite were attending selective schools, many of them private, where they would receive the kind of education that each of us would hope for our own children, including arts, humanities, leadership and critical thinking, and freedom to explore and find one's own passion.

Sort and Segregate

Even as many schools were warehousing the majority of students for assimilation purposes, education researchers were looking for new "scientific" ways to determine just *who* would be worthy of the best education had to offer. Lewis Terman, Robert Yerkes and their colleagues "contributed greatly to the idea that IQ was hereditary and fixed, thus establishing the justification for the use of standardized testing to sorting and ranking human populations by race, ethnicity, gender, and class, according to supposedly inborn, biologically innate intelligence" (Au, 2016A, citing Gould, 1997). Stoler (2006) connects Terman's goals to the logics of settler colonialism: "Racial thinking secures racial designations in a language of biology and fixity and in the quest for a visual set of physical differences to index that which is not "self-evident" or visible – neither easy to agree on nor easy to see" (p.2).

Shahjahan's (2011) critique of over-standardization and its partner "big data," as modern colonial tools, tells us that "evidence-based education also espouses a certain conception of educational practice and policy which does not tolerate diversity…. It perpetuates a standardized curriculum (i.e. a standardized form of knowledge), student,

and teacher subjectivity, through the culture of high-stakes testing and accountability" (p. 191). The pervasive emphasis on high-stakes testing and accountability culture in the current neoliberal climate in Canada, Britain, and the USA leads to standardization of everything, and the objectifying of everyone involved in K-12 education. This striving toward sameness ensures the alienation of entire groups of students

"Precious Knowledge"

Alongside battles over intelligence and testing, there are also ongoing disagreements about the content of schooling, i.e. *What* should children be taught? Common Core State Standards (CCSS) (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices Council of Chief State School Officers, n.d.), written and disseminated from the federal level, are currently in use across the U.S., and the Pledge of Allegiance is still assumed to be mandatory in many schools (or is treated as such). Most mainstream social studies texts exclude, erase, or minimize any history that doesn't assume "white history" as the default.

This curricular violence of elimination was challenged at the local level in Tuscon, AZ when 1998 the district developed a Mexican-American studies program. State lawmakers passed a statewide ban on such programs two years later. The ban was rationalized as an attempt to "protect" those in dominant cultural positions (the white settler colonial persons and groups) from what they may perceive as a threat toward themselves. By this logic, the white settler powers-that-be must not suffer the inclusion of any stories or histories which might upset their fragile self-concept (based on the belief in their inherent superiority). The resistance from white lawmakers and citizens to the Tuscon program, to Ethnic Studies in general, and most recently to the concept of Critical

Race Theory (CRT) is what Sonia Horsford (2016) calls "social justice for the advantaged" – a right to freedom *from* the Other.

Tribal History; Shared History

In the Pacific Northwest, a similar struggle surrounds the adoption of accurate and inclusive Native histories and heritage. In Washington, in 2005, House Bill 1495 was signed into law, *recommending* that schools teach Native sovereignty and history to all students in the state's K-12 schools (An act relating to teaching Washington's tribal history, culture, and government in the common schools, 2005). It allowed for the creation of a comprehensive curriculum about the State's tribal history and culture, as well as questions and struggles around sovereignty *and* current challenges of Native peoples. Tribal leaders worked with state representatives to create "Since Time Immemorial: Tribal Sovereignty Curriculum" (B. L. Smith, n.d.). The curriculum was made available free for anyone to access, and includes teacher resources, videos, and lesson plans for Kindergarten through high school. Five years later, a jointly-produced report on the state's progress implementing the curriculum found that few schools and school districts were using the curriculum provided. It also made recommendations to increase the numbers of students being taught, including providing professional development and support to classroom teachers as well as principals (Washington State, 2012). In 2015, SB5433 amended the language of the original bill from "encouraged" to "required" (Walker, 2015).

In Oregon, *Senate Bill 13* (2017) similarly requires Oregon schools to teach all of their K-12 students a curriculum including tribal history and sovereignty, including "culture, treaty rights, government, socioeconomic experiences and current events" in a

manner that is "historically accurate, culturally relevant, community-based, contemporary and developmentally appropriate." Advocates for the bill emphasized the importance of a true history to all of Oregon's children; as the future leaders they must be accurately and fairly informed of the issues all of our people face, hence the title "Tribal History/Shared History." As Sabzalian, Morrill, & Edmo, (2019) remind us, though, settler colonialism constrains even our best work: "Even progressive reforms are constrained by what Lomawaima and McCarty (2006) refer to as the "safety zone," a framework of ideologies and institutional practices that constrain and manage what the state considers "acceptable" or *safe* Indigenous cultural difference (p. 38). Indigenous teachers and education leaders have been working for a very long time "to forge zones of sovereignty within public schools" (Sabzalian et al., 2019) in Oregon. They continue to press the state and its public institutions to accept their responsibility to provide spaces for Native self-determination within education spheres. Because of their relentless effort, the schools of Oregon will be able to offer a more responsible education about Indigenous peoples and issues to *all* students in K- 12 schools (Jacob et al., 2018, emphasis added).

Leave No Child Untested

The material detritus of Lewis Terman's eugenics project of a century ago is still with us. Millions of students are sorted each year by the "SAT Suite of Assessments" sold by the College Board (a direct descendant of the Army Alpha test) and they are being tested earlier in their school careers, with the "PSAT" offered as early as 8th grade for some students. According to the College Board's 2016 tax returns (IRS Form 990), "Over 4.24 million students took either the PSAT/NMSQT or PSAT 10 in the 2015-16 school year;

this represents 50.6% of all U.S. sophomores and 46.1% of all U.S. juniors taking either assessment in 2015-16" (ProPublica, 2016).

Further, "1.68 million students [seniors] in the class of 2016 took the SAT … at least once through June 2016" (ProPublica, 2016). They also are taking the test more often, as they try to improve their scores. "The practice of using the best SAT score serves to discriminate in favor of more advantaged groups, as these have lower costs of retaking, retake more often, and so get higher maximum scores across attempts (Krishna, Lychagin, & Frisancho, 2018, citing Vigdor and Clotfelter (2003). Each administration of the test costs $64.50, before adding on extra score recipients and "official" practice books. An additional $18 purchases the "Questions and Answers Service," by which, "you receive a copy of the SAT questions, your responses, the correct responses w/scoring instructions, and information about question type and difficulty" (Fulciniti, 2018).

The College Board also offers Advanced Placement (AP) testing in dozens of subjects. According to a press release, "More than 1.17 million students in the class of 2017 took 3.98 million AP Exams in public high schools nationwide" (The College Board, 2018).[13] That's an average of 3.4 AP tests per student, at a cost to families of $93 per test. Millions more take high-stakes standardized tests mandated by states, using assessment instruments purchased from either the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) or the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and

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[13] It may interest some to note that the purpose of the press release was to demonstrate how more students were "succeeding" on the tests: "…up from 1.14 million students in 2016 and 691,437 in the class of 2007. When it comes to performance, 711,518 students scored 3 or higher on at least one AP Exam in 2017, compared to 423,067 in 2007."

Careers (PARCC) and its middleman Pearson Inc. Regarding SBAC, Redd (2015) estimates that these "Summative tests [have been] delivered to more than 7 million students in 18 states." Jackson (2014), in a report written for PARCC, says that their tests had been administered to "over 1 million students in nearly 16,000 schools" (p. 3) during the 2014 field testing alone. Stern (2006) argues that standardized tests "were [are] geared toward the absorption and internalization of norms, in terms of content as well as form" (p. 327). This demand for assimilation and conformity, plus the tests' reliance on the fantasy of their own "objectivity" has made standardized testing an essential part of settler colonial schooling for generations.

In each of the examples briefly explored above, binary logics of conformity and assimilation v. divergence and exclusion act within and through public schooling to perpetuate and support the existing structure of settler colonization in the U.S. The system must be constantly propping itself up and continually justifying itself; it is always changing in order to accomplish its work. Pratt (2018) describes settler colonialism as a "complex, purposive agent with a double aim of eliminating Indigenous tribes while constructing a society and culture that can preserve and promote the interests and power of the colonizers." Ideals of efficiency, individualism, materialism, competition, and consumerism dominate the educational landscape, but have taken on different forms over the years in order to stay relevant *while* also remaining hidden.

In the 21st century, political leaders continue to repeat the tropes of the past. At the ceremonial signing of his signature *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) legislation, President Bush touted the U.S. commitment " to make sure that every child — and all of us on this stage mean every child, not just a few children … every single child, regardless of where

they live, how they're raised, the income level of their family, every child receive (*sic*) a first-class education in America" (2002). President Obama told high school students in his second annual "back to school" speech, "Your life is what you make of it. And nothing -- absolutely nothing -- is beyond your reach, so long as you're willing to dream big, so long as you're willing to work hard. So long as you're willing to stay focused on your education, there is not a single thing that any of you cannot accomplish, not a single thing" (Lee, 2010).

In espousing these beliefs, Americans – from the White House lawn to the local soccer field – ignore and erase the many ways that public education has *not* lived up to its various lofty aspirations; *when in fact it has consistently failed to do so*. Such thorough forgetting or *colonial unknowing* (Vimalasery et al., 2016) allows dominant culture white people to avoid reckoning with the disparities in educational provision between white settler children and everyone else, including Native Americans, new immigrants, and the descendants of enslaved people. Hence, we / they have not had to face our complicity in a white supremacist system that provides a wholly different educational experience for the children of some than it does for the rest of us, just as it did in Jefferson's time. Our Democratic dreams allow us to avoid waking to the harsh anti-democratic reality of schooling in the U.S. This is the work of settler colonialism – or what Aziz Rana (2010) has called the "two faces of American Freedom." Any glimpse of this system in the bright light of clear thinking might force a settler citizen of the U.S. nation-state to ask: "Is democracy *actually* for everyone? Who is truly included when we say that all are equal? What does freedom really mean? What is my role in all this?" Such recognition

requires a painful reckoning, and those in positions of privilege engage in multiple forms of logical and emotional gymnastics to avoid it.

The Two Faces of American Education

The constant repetition of the virtues of American democracy entwined with individualist capitalist ideals of competition and market-based success masks a long history of the education system shortchanging countless numbers of students, contrary to its own rhetoric. The reality of the United States formal / public / compulsory education project is this: from the first boarding schools which sought to "kill the Indian" in young Native children, to the Eugenics projects of the 1920's, and up through our current high-stakes testing regime, the educational project is and has always been about assimilation, sorting, coercion, punishment, and exclusion. How is it possible for a system (or a nation) to think of itself, and to be *thought of* around the world as a beacon of freedom, democracy, and self-determination, while at the same time *acting* in ways that are constraining, authoritarian, and restrictive? Tuck & Yang (2012) theorize settler "moves to innocence" employed by members of the oppressor group deny their complicity (or at least minimize any annoying feelings of guilt). Horsford (2016) suggests that dominant group members are able to maintain innocence by distorting the concept of freedom into a sort of freedom *from* the Other (e.g. *Parents Concerned v. Seattle*, 2012).

Rana's (2010) framework of "the two faces of American freedom" is helpful in the ways it defines and exposes the workings of settler colonialism's logics. It gives us a way to describe and understand the "two faces" of public education, and how they influence the structures of U.S. schools, and how settler colonialism in education covers its own tracks. The one face, in which politicians, school leaders, and "the average person

on the street" speak of equity and achievement for all, of hard work and unlimited opportunity and social justice, works to hide the actions of the other, which espouses the white settler colonial dominant narrative of success, and harbors deep belief in white supremacy. This second face is the one that creates and enacts damaging policies, writes curricula of erasure, and constructs phenomena such as "the achievement gap" and "intelligence."

According to Wolfe (2006), the concept of "settler colonialism" is different from the concept of colonialism, a term we use to describe the history of British imperialism, of which the North American colonies were but a small part. We in the U.S. tend to think of the British as evil colonizers, "The Redcoats," while our history books identify "us" (the white settler invaders) as the brave, scrappy colonists who valued freedom over all. We identified with "The Rebellion" when Star Wars offered us "A New Hope" (Lucas, 1977). We think of our still-relatively-young nation as fiercely independent, the land of the free and the home of the brave; where "all men are created equal." But Belich (2009) frames the original colonies as a "new metropole" from which an *American* empire was launched. This gives us a new point of reference as we begin to think with the "two faces" concept. I envision one face looking back toward the British "motherland;" it understands "American freedom" in relation to its former oppressor. The other looks westward, (wearing the rose-colored lenses of manifest destiny), and understands "American freedom" as freedom for settlers to roam, to make their fortunes, to work hard and make something of themselves, as rugged individualists. Neither face of American Freedom can see the other, and neither can see the tragic reality that American

exceptionalism is in fact *impossible* but for the theft of people and land and labor, and is therefore distinctly *un*exceptional.

To apply this "two faces" idea to the history of U.S. education and to more current events is the next step. We must wonder: "Is it possible that the perpetrators of educational violence actually saw themselves (and still manage to see themselves) as heroes or saviors?" Richard Pratt and his colleagues may have truly thought that they were "saving" Native folks from themselves; Terman and his people may have sincerely believed that their program would make the world a better place. Looking back it is hard to imagine, but certainly possible. For a current example of a two-faced hero, take Bill Gates. Though he is now an international "thought leader" on education issues, he was at one time just student who was unfulfilled by the traditional school offerings. He was allowed to take time from his regular classes to experiment with early computers that his school purchased with money from parent fundraising efforts. He was able to take time off for internships and to start a business. Gates attended Harvard University but left to devote all of his time to his new venture, then known as "Micro-Soft."

In the late 1960's and 1970's the idea of a "personal computer" in every home put Gates firmly outside of mainstream thought, but even as he rebelled against his ruling class education, he was still learning to rule. Future rulers are allowed to be innovators. He may have been thought of as "weird" or "crazy" or at least a nerd, by some, but he went on to have enormous financial success, which allows the adult Bill Gates a position from which he can shape the education experiences of millions of American young people. Using his philanthropic influence and his access to sites of power and policy-making, he has encouraged high-stakes standardized testing for millions of children in the

U.S., demanding that they prove that they (and their teachers) are complying with white settler colonial norms. (While his own three children go to an elite private school, where no such punitive programs exist.)

The idea of American superiority and the narrow script of what is acceptable behavior are so deeply ingrained in all of us that they seem natural and inevitable. It is difficult to even imagine a world different from the one that settler colonial efforts have wrought over the last 500 years on this continent. Those who dare look outside the "path of correctness" for fulfillment or possibility are belittled and shamed, characterized as "weirdos" or "crazy" or just as "losers." Those who dare to imagine the future as peaceful, sustainable, and just, are discounted as fools and dreamers. Unrestrained individuality and creativity are looked down upon (unless of course that creativity leads to success by settler colonial standards, such as fame and/or money).

There are still those who inspire us, from nationally known figures such as Cornel West, who told the audience of a Harvard Graduate School of Education podcast the difference between cheap schooling and true education: "I'm not talking about something that is just formal and institutional, I'm talking about soulcraft; I'm talking about the shaping of the kind of human beings people are" (Weber, 2018). Another example is Diane Ravitch, who very publicly changed her stance on high-stakes testing and has devoted herself to resistance ever since (Ravitch, 2010). Finally, no review of hopefulness would be complete without the words of Jeff Duncan-Andrade, who invites us to "hope audaciously" against the odds (2009). In our own communities we may find inspiration and hope among our peers, the "regular folk" who take up causes of justice and continually speak truth to power. Some of these are teachers in our communities, or

maybe retired teachers, who embrace an activist identity and commit to helping make our schools *and hence the world* a better place.

Teacher Identity and Professionalism; Agency and Activism

This project is inspired by the many individuals and coalitions who are pushing back against dominant model schooling. These are teachers, parents, and other community members from all racial and ethnic backgrounds and classes, including dominant-culture White folks. The study focuses on non-Native activists who are working in a particular social and political context; one in which Indigenous education activists are also working very hard to bring about positive change. In both Oregon and Washington, Indigenous teachers and activists have advocated successfully for the adoption of legislation that requires public schools to teach accurate, place-based Native histories, *and* current tribal sovereignty to *all* students. In Eugene and across the Pacific Northwest, active groups of teachers from multiple racial and ethnic backgrounds resist the oppression of punitive high-stakes testing. These are part of a long history of teacher activism, and just one incarnation of current trends in teacher resistance.

Teacher Activism Through the Ages

Though she is often thought of as the "mother of social work," Jane Addams was also one of the first U.S. education activists (along with her contemporary Anna Julia Cooper). Within her settlement house model, "Hull House" in Chicago, Addams and her colleagues enacted a different form of education, one that included everyone from birth to old age; that honored the traditional knowledge of new immigrants, respected children's need to play, and advocated for the community's health and safety needs. Back east, Cooper wrote and spoke widely about educational issues, particularly in reference to the

hope that education would provide intellectual and spiritual uplift for Black people. She was a school principal at the M Street School in Washington, DC, and even started a school for adults out of her home, Freylingheusen University.

Today's teacher activists are descendants of these brave and brilliant women. Teachers are involved in advocacy through union work, grassroots organizations, and political efforts from local elections up through federal policy-making. The work of teacher unions has always been fraught with internal debate and conflict as to what the role of the union should be. The two largest teacher unions, the AFT (American Federation of Teachers) and the NEA (National Education Association) have long histories that demonstrate the need for unions to adapt to changing circumstances and to the needs of their constituents. Dating back in their original forms to 1917 and 1870, respectively (R. Henderson, 2002), teacher unions have at certain times and certain places been involved in collective bargaining, lobbying at the state and federal levels, and organizing for change locally. The NEA in particular shied away from being labeled a union *per se*, but early on opted to be a professional "association" that organized to support not just teachers, but administrators and college faculty. According to Henderson's (2002) overview of the history of teacher unions, the NEA was hesitant to act as a labor union, but they acted more as a "political action committee" similar to what we would recognize as a PAC today. The NEA even began lobbying the federal government to provide education funding to the states after World War I. The AFT was less reticent to advocate directly for teacher compensation and benefits; the New York

City local won its first bargaining election in 1961, and recognized the right of members to strike in 1963.[14]

Today's AFT and NEA national and state organizations are seen as one of the most powerful political players in many large cities, as well as on the federal stage, where their endorsement of presidential candidates is seen as vitally important in the election. At the same time, they work to hold the federal government accountable to teachers and students. Randi Weingarten reacted recently to President Biden's decision to go ahead with standardized testing in 2021 (amid a global pandemic where many children have not been in a classroom for over a year) with a kindly worded press release to President Biden, stating, "it is a frustrating turn to see the administration ask states to continue requiring assessments during this tumultuous school year. While its plan does offer the option for testing modifications and waivers for accountability requirements, which is a start, it misses a huge opportunity to really help our students by allowing the waiver of assessments" (American Federation of Teachers, 2021). Some states took up the resistance on their own. Connecticut's state affiliates of both AFT and NEA issued a joint letter to President Biden which was a bit more pointed: "Even under the most optimal testing conditions, federally required standardized testing does not provide teachers with actionable information to help their students. At best, the tests only tell what we already

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[14] It is interesting to note that teachers in California and Oregon won the right to participate in collective bargaining in the early 1970's according to Pete and Larry, two participants in the TIG. Eugene teachers went on strike in 1978 and again in 1989. The Eugene Education Association, the AFT local, organized a "walkout" (not a strike) along with locals all over Oregon, on May 8th, 2018. They were joined by many students, community members, parents, and folks associated with the University of Oregon College of Education.

know – that inequities based on race, income, language acquisition, and bias exist in educational opportunity" (Leake & Hochadel, 2021).

In addition to teacher union activism (or sometimes instead of) many teachers have formed their own grassroots organizations. Five of the seven members (including myself) of our TIG belong to one such group, "CAPE" (Community Alliance for Public Education). This group spun off from a Eugene Education Association (EEA) subcommittee on human and civil rights. CAPE's motto is "educating the public about public education." It hosts events for the public, such as informational sessions, movie screenings, and guest speakers (who have included Wayne Au, David Berliner, Jesse Hagopian, Diane Ravitch, and Yong Zhao, in addition to local teachers and activists). Our members work with parents and teachers to influence local education and policy-making, and with state legislators to encourage law and policy that serve and support students, teachers and families in social-justice oriented actions. We write letters, and a weekly column called "Democracy in Education" in our local paper. CAPE is also a member of "OPEN" (Oregon Public Education Network), a consortium of activist groups from around the state. On the national level, NPE (Network for Public Education), NYCoRE (New York Collective of Radical Educators) and BATs (BadAss Teachers) engage a wide network of teachers in every state to insist that public school policy meets the needs of students and teachers, with the recognition that teachers' working environments are children's learning environments.

Teacher Activist Identity

Teachers in the U.S. are mostly well-meaning and care about children and their learning. Teaching has been thought of as a moral calling (Fullan, 1993) and when we

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speak to teachers and future teachers we hear many hopes about service and helping kids, and "making a difference" (Fasching-Varner & Mitchell, 2013). Some teachers engage in resistance within their own classrooms, "teaching against the grain" (Cochran-Smith, 1991) and "reclaiming their time" (McGregor, Belcher, & Fitch, 2019) with and for the students in their own classrooms. This in-the-classroom view of teachers working for social-justice tends to frame teacher activism in terms of individual agency (Quinn & Carl, 2015) and/or teacher professionalism (Hilferty, 2008; Whitty, 2008). Teacher education and professional development along these lines focuses on supporting teachers to work better with students who are different from themselves (e.g. Emdin, 2017; Matias, 2013; Moore, Michael, & Penick-Parks, 2018; Utt & Tochluk, 2016). Some (though by no means all) teacher education programs and anti-racist professional development activities ask teachers to examine their own social positions and to challenge deficit perspectives that denigrate communities' funds of knowledge and students' capacities as learners (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2014). The downside to teaching resistance in isolation in one's own classroom can be frustration and burnout (Farber, 1991), or a demoralization so profound that many teachers are leaving the profession altogether (Santoro & Berliner, 2018).

At some point in their careers, many diversity-and/or-equity-oriented social justice teachers will come up against policies (whether local, state, or federal) that directly contradict their commitments to their profession and to their commitments to social justice (Sleeter, 2005; Valli & Chambliss, 2007). A new form of teacher activism is enacted when teachers begin to conceive of themselves as change agents *outside* of their classrooms (Oakes & Lipton, 1999). Many of them take up this call, in many

different ways. Some will become active in union work, in order to defend the profession as a whole. Others will become active in their own communities, working on school board campaigns or speaking up at board meetings. A few teachers will undertake activist work in solidarity with underserved communities on immediate problems and on long-game efforts at deep social change (Oakes & Lipton, 2006; Shirley, 2002; M. R. Warren, 2001; L. Wells, Anyon, & Oakes, 2010).

Teacher Activist Collectives

A long arc of research suggests the power of collaborative efforts that bring community members and educators together in pursuit of educational improvement (Anyon, 2006; A. T. Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Mediratta, Shah, & McAlister, 2009; M. R. Warren, Hong, Rubin, & Uy, 2009; Wells et al., 2010). The evidence is in news reports from around the country over the past several years showing that teachers in Chicago (Davey & Yaccino, 2012), Seattle (Bryant, 2015; Hagopian, 2018; Noor, 2015), West Virginia (Goldstein, 2018), Oklahoma (DenHoed, 2018), Arizona (Associated Press, 2018) are involved in a wave of teacher activism that some have called "The Red State Revolt" (Pearce, 2018).

Teacher agency is most often thought of and written about as a within-classroom phenomenon (e.g. L. Anderson, 2010) or frames teachers as subjects of reform, and as reacting to challenges, (Pyhältö, Pietarinen, & Soini, 2014) rather than taking a pro-active stance. Athanases & DeOliviera (2008) use teacher narratives to paint a picture of new teachers "advocating for equity" for the students under their care, by making changes to curriculum or programming, and offering extra support to students and families. At the same time, powerful networks and the possibilities that reside within them are subject to

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transformation through individuals' own actions; from this point of view, "agency is the dynamic face of networks" (White as cited in Emirbayer & Goodwin, 1994, p. 1437).

While this form of teachers exercising agency is necessary and commendable, neither "advocacy" nor "equity" are long-term solutions to the deep inequities that are built in to our structures of schooling. Furthermore, in this time of standardization and deskilling (Apple, 1985), teacher professionalism and respect for educators are hampered by the dominant discourse focus on efficiency and utility (Parkison, 2012). Powerful networks of teachers and the possibilities that reside within them are subject to transformation through individuals' own actions; from this point of view, "agency is the dynamic face of networks" (White as cited Emirbayer & Goodwin (1994) in Emirbayer & Goodwin, 1994, p. 1437). Fullan (1993) called for "a new conception of teacher professionalism that integrates moral purpose and change agentry, one that works simultaneously on individual and institutional development" (p. 13). Teacher activism outside of the classroom makes it possible to advocate for *all* students, not just "my kids" (Quinn & Carl, 2015), defend the profession as a whole, and work together with and for our communities. The successful efforts in the Pacific Northwest of coalitions of Native educators and allies is a beautiful example. Certainly the inclusion of Native history and culture, and curriculum that acknowledges Native people's ongoing presence on the Turtle Island is a good thing for Indigenous students. But Indigenous teacher activists have also included non-Native allies in the work, and they understand that a true and accurate understanding of sovereignty and survivance is beneficial and necessary, for *all* students (Oregon Senate Bill 13 Tribal History/Shared History, 2017; "Since Time

Immemorial: Tribal Sovereignty in Washington State," n.d.; B. L. Smith, n.d.; Washington State, 2012).

As a teacher activist myself, I am interested in the following broad research questions:

a. How do teachers come to be activist teachers or teacher-activists? How do teachers begin their activist work (what are their "origin stories"?)

b. How do teachers develop and sustain an activist identity? What role does the activist group have in individual's growth and resilience?

c. How can Indigenous Feminist methodologies and analyses inform the work of *non-Native* teacher activists and activist groups, and reveal new possibilities for the future of public education?

Theoretical Framework

The neoliberal discourse of the past 30-plus years makes it seem that our current state of social stratification is inevitable and maybe (depending on your position) desirable (Lipman, 2011). Our public education system is not only unable to resist corporate encroachment, it is complicit in its creation and sustenance. Schooling is closely aligned with market ideologies of competition and financial success, and acts through regimes of standardized testing, privatization, and public shaming, to "convince the American public to view social inequalities of race, class, gender, ethnicity, and sexuality as natural, normal and inevitable" (Collins, 2009, p.7). As I have maintained that settler colonial logics are at the root of the shortcomings of democracy in the U.S., and the source of much of the evil in our current public education system, I turn to radical democracy and decolonial work to point my own work forward and to stave off despair.

Our collective democratic imagination is limited by the settler-colonial and racist foundations of the U.S. nation-state. We are always turning away from the truth of our nation's founding. Our civics courses teach little more than the three branches of government; we memorize the presidents and state capitals and we sing along to Schoolhouse Rock to learn the Preamble to the Constitution. Within schools and textbooks, as well as on popular media, democracy is framed as a magical phenomenon that needs no maintenance (except perhaps by the occasional superhero). Voting is touted as the ultimate privilege of the democratic state. Even histories of activism and resistance are cleaned up and over-simplified. Just ask any college student the refrain from Dr. King's speech at the Lincoln Memorial. They will likely parrot "I have a dream." Then follow up with a question about the "main idea" they took from *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*. You will get many blank looks.

The ideals of American independence (life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness) is conflated with subjugation of others through chattel slavery, and with genocidal "removal" of the original inhabitants of the land (who are called "merciless savages" in founding documents. The fantasy that slavery (and therefore racism) is over, coupled with pervasive settler forgetting about Native people and the crimes against them, makes impossible any enactment of true democracy based on citizen experience and deep participation. Scholars of history, law, and political science (e.g. Foner, 1999; Mills, 2015; Sirvent & Haiphong, 2019; Stoler, 2001; Zinn, 2015) recognize the inherent conflict embedded in the conceptualization of American exceptionalism, but their voices are drowned out by mainstream media and popular histories. Competing on your bookstore shelves you may see David McCollough's *The Pioneers*: *The Heroic Story of*

the Settlers Who Brought the American Ideal West (2019) next to Jeffrey Ostler's

Surviving Genocide (2019) or Sirvent & Haiphong's *American Exceptionalism and*

American Innocence (2019).

These analyses, read together and through democratic theory from John Dewey to

Art Pearl to Thayer-Bacon (2013) clearly connects the settler colonial fantasy of

innocence to the impossibility of justice. Yet we have not given up. There is continual

resistance, in the form of marches, teacher strikes, Black Lives Matter, NoDAPL

resistance at Standing Rock, to name a few. For this project I resist the framework/s of

critique and deficit thinking, in order to advance audacious hope, possibility, and futurity.

Employing a conception of radical democratic practice, made possible within an

Indigenous feminist / decolonial worldview, the aim of this project is to understand the

work of teacher activists and their coalitions, and help them better understand their own

practice/praxis, always with an eye toward a more just and beautiful future.

Democracy Always in the Making

Because formal education's stated purpose and animating responsibility is

preparing each generation of new citizens, schools are inherently political. They are

always contested and possible sites of democratic struggle. But we are hampered in our

efforts by the overarching logics of settler colonialism. How can democracy thrive in an

environment that emphasizes conformity, unthinking obedience, and preparation for

participation in a capitalist oligarchy? Democracy must rest on the participation and

knowledge-creation of the people. Where do we find radical possibilities? For this

project, I draw from theorists from multiple disciplines, from education and sociology, of

course, but also from political science, history, psychology, philosophy, and critical race theory (CRT).

Education philosopher John Dewey provides a theory of active, engaged *learning* through experience to inform the ongoing *practice* of democracy; Brazilian activist and teacher Paulo Freire advocates for knowledge created through dialogue and *conscientizaçion* as a vital starting point for the work of social change. American sociologist Patricia Hill Collins invites us to address critical questions of knowledge and its relationship to power. What counts as knowledge and who has the power to decide which knowledges count? Indigenous teacher, activist and author Eve Tuck recommends deep participation (Tuck, 2013a) among her theories of change. Each of these brings a vital piece to my own framework.

In *Democracy and Education* (1916) Dewey expands on his ideas of the purposes of education, always coming back to the primacy of *experience* as the building block for knowledge creation, as well as for personal and social fulfillment. He wrote that growth is not linear, and that it need not be incentivized, but that humans possess, from infancy until death, the potential and capacity for growth in multiple directions (Dewey, 2016, pp. 29-31). He rejected a pre-determined course of schooling imposed upon youth, and discouraged the use of systems of education that would emphasize social efficiency *over* the learning impulses of the individual (Dewey, 2016, pp. 63-64; 82-83). Dewey's faith in the individual's potential to learn from experience runs throughout his writing, especially on education. This idea that people and situations are always developing is found in Dewey's pragmatic conception of experience, knowledge, and education. He wrote "again and again of the reach of experience, its depth and its inferential power"

(McDermott, 1973, p. 249). According to McCune (2012), "…a Deweyan vision of human flourishing at once involves facilitating the functional creation of individuals that can adapt to current conditions and making current conditions functional for individuals—we are to make society work for its members, too" . Dewey's idea of appropriate social efficiency "is attained not by negative constraint but by positive use of native individual capacities in occupations having a social meaning … social efficiency means neither more nor less than capacity to share in a give and take of experience" (Dewey, 2016, p. 83).

Freire sought to teach democratic processes by modeling democratic teaching. He insisted that educators can enter into their students' realities in order to know them and help the fight to transform them. Together, people can explore experience as a way to reveal realities and explore solutions. The radical educator, he said, "does not consider himself or herself the proprietor of history or of all people, or the liberator of the oppressed; but he or she does commit himself or herself, within history, to fight at their side" (Freire, 2000, p. 39). "No genuine learning can occur unless students are actively involved, through praxis, in controlling their own education (here 'praxis' is understood in the sense employed by several schools of Marxist thought – 'political practices informed by reflection' Aronowitz, 2012).

Freire's early work was sometimes criticized for what we today would call a "savior complex." Some view/ed the literacy project as a paternalist or even colonialist undertaking by relatively privileged people, imposing their ideas on the poor. Cavalier (2002) states, "Contradicting his own convictions about the mutual roles of teachers and learners and the freedom of the human subject, Freire's theory involves manipulation of

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the oppressed by elitist outsiders" (citing Facundo, 1984 and Ohlinger, n.d.). Indeed, "the technique of *conscientizaçion* depends greatly on an equality that seems difficult to establish. Without equality, dialogue cannot take place, and therefore the revolutionary qualities of a pedagogy of the oppressed are lost" (Borelli, 1972, p. 632).

Collins recommends "visionary pragmatism," an understanding of social change that maintains that knowing and doing – experience and action – are intertwined and embedded in our social existence. This acknowledges the complexity of any behavior in and of itself, as it is guided by "principled stances" on one hand, and on the other hand by "pragmatic choices in specific social contexts" (Collins, 2011, p. 108). Such visionary pragmatism is compatible with democratic possibilities and with "democracy always in the making" (Benson et al., 2017; Thayer-Bacon, 2013). Along with Anna Julia Cooper, who wrote in 1892 that diversity [of race, ethnicity, language, and thought would be necessary for a thriving society (Cooper, 1998)], current education theorists such as Patricia Hill Collins (2009) and bell hooks (1994) understand that diversity must not be a mere afterthought to democracy, and definitely will not be a coincidental or accidental *result* of democracy, but a necessary and foundational ingredient. According to Thayer-Bacon (2013) a "transactional relational view of democracy does not assume universality. It is located in the contingent, local every day world of diverse people and their values and beliefs" (p. xix).

Indigenous Feminisms

"Native feminist standpoints … must not only challenge social stratification and systems of domination, but must also challenge anthropocentric assumptions that privilege humans as the apex of creation." (Sabzalian, 2018). Furhermore, "there cannot

be feminist thought and theory without Native feminist theory. The experiences and intellectual contributions of Indigenous women are not on the margins; we have been an invisible presence in the center, hidden by the gendered logics of settler colonialism for over 500 years" (Arvin, Tuck, & Morrill, 2013).

Native Sovereignty and Democracy … incommensurable?

The work of creating a true democratic "state" may result in no state at all. Radical democratic practices are at odds with what we currently recognize as U.S. democracy. Thinking with and through this project requires participants to engage with the tensions between the needs of individual persons and the prevailing western view of "The Individual" – the human individual – as the beginning and ending point of justice work within a truly functioning democracy. The concept of the individual under the state "insists upon the primacy of human beings as individuals under the state with greater and lesser human rights" (Patel, 2016, p. 86). The rights that the founders delineated in the Declaration of Independence include individual rights to property, to the franchise, rights of each person to free speech, to practice his or her choice of religion, to engage in a free exchange of ideas through the press and other forms of writing. This emphasis on individualism, and the neglect to mention the rights of nature or responsibility to other humans and non-human relatives, makes the *good of the whole* secondary, and obscures the responsibility for the collective (except as the "collective" state serves individual needs and protects individual rights). Tribal autonomy is the ability of communities and tribal nations to have control over existing land bases, natural resources, and tribal national boundaries. Autonomy is also linked to the ability to interact with the U.S. and other nations on a nation-to-nation basis. Self-determination is the ability to define what

happens with autonomy, how, why, and to what ends, rather than being forced to ask permission from the United States. Self-determination rejects the guardian/ward relationship currently in place between the U.S. government and tribal nations. Knowledge of these current relationships allows researchers ways to better analyze interactions between Indigenous students and the institutional structures. Hopefully, these analyses may lead to a reconceptualization of the parameters for engaging Indigenous students within institutions. Finally, self-identification is the ability and legitimacy for groups to define themselves and to create what it means to be Indian. As such, self-identification may or may not reject the ''sign'' Indian—or that which signifies what a ''real Indian'' is or looks like (often an ecology-loving, bead-wearing, feather-having, long- haired, tall, dark man or woman)—and its meanings to others (e.g. see Vizenor, 1994, 1998; Vizenor & Lee, 1999)" (Brayboy, 2005, p. 433-434).

My vision for the future does not include the state as we now know it, but for now we are working within its boundaries, both physical and metaphysical. Rather, Indigenous Feminist theories inspire me to look beyond commonly held Eurocentric definitions of democracy, of justice, of individuality and of personhood as an individual phenomenon with inherent individual "rights," but emphasizes relationality, group processes, and responsibility for each other, non-human relatives, and the earth.

According to Tuck and Yang (2012) "Decolonize (a verb) and decolonization (a noun) cannot easily be grafted onto pre-existing discourses / frameworks, even if they are critical, even if they are anti-racist, even if they are justice frameworks" (p. 3). Both mainstream Marxist theory and "whitestream" feminism retain their emphasis on individual rights, rights as property, and property as ownership, making it difficult to

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imagine a democracy that centers Indigenous thinking, sovereignty, and self-determination. Indeed, many of the efforts of the settler state to erase Native populations involved "granting" citizenship to individual persons, placing the male person as the head of the household, and dividing up Native communities' land into individually owned plots.

Is it possible for democracy and Native sovereignty to exist at the same time on Turtle Island? Perhaps.

> "A good example of this is the Zapatista struggle in Mexico. The Zapatistas are not anti-modern fundamentalist. They do not reject democracy and retreat into some form of indigenous *(sic.)* fundamentalism. On the contrary, the Zapatistas accept the notion of democracy, but redefine it from a local indigenous practice and cosmology, conceptualizing it as 'commanding while obeying' or 'we are all equals because we are all different'. What seems to be a paradoxical slogan is really a critical decolonial redefinition of democracy from the practices, cosmologies and epistemologies of the subaltern. This leads to the question of how to transcend the imperial monologue established by the European-centric modernity" (Grosfoguel, 2008, p. 137).

In the work with teacher activists we came up against the question of how – or if – teaching and learning in our current system will ever be able to attend to each of our students in a way that accepts and nurtures their individuality without the western emphasis on individualism.

The Learning Spirit: Individuality for Teachers & Learners

> "Learning is then a lifelong enterprise eventually yielding to a self-directed path. It is also found in collectives, schools, and communities where a sense of vitality, energy, vision, and purpose prevail; when it is nourished, the difference can be seen in the hope, inspiration, and purposeful activity it generates. As teachers, we can provide the learning contexts in which students can unfold their own learning spirit and connect consistently to the inner forces of that self that can improve their chances for living authentically and optimally on their life journey" (Battiste, 2016).

A problematic example emerged from the TIG discussions. Teacher activists fought to establish a racism-free zone in their school, without acknowledging the school's

location on stolen land, nor the settler colonial assumptions that underlie interventions such as conflict resolution which emphasize addressing harms to one individual (a violation of their individual rights) by another individual (See Appendix D for excerpts from the TIG discussion about the racism-free zones). In this, the project is at risk of becoming about the impact of racism *only* on students of color – on the infringement of racist behaviors on the *rights* of *individual* students of color. An un-settling anti-colonial intervention in this same school might invert the analysis of the problems in the school, or to "reverse the gaze" (DuBois, 1898; Patel, 2016).

Answerability for the Settler / Researcher

"We, at least in part, want others to join us in these efforts, so that settler colonial structuring and Indigenous critiques of that structuring are no longer rendered invisible. Yet, this joining cannot be too easy, too open, too settled. Solidarity is an uneasy, reserved, and unsettled matter that neither reconciles present grievances nor forecloses future conflict" (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 3).

In addition, Leigh Patel's analysis of education research and her cautious optimism for its possible future as a tool for change, informs my direction as a teacher and a researcher. As a non-Native person who wants to contribute to the overall pursuit of justice within the US nation-state, I am always at risk of falling back into the ways of being and thinking into which I have been socialized. My place is never completely "settled." I wondered if the same would be true of other educators and education activists, and how we might heal from the injuries of settler colonialism in order to better participate in justice-seeking, life-seeking work.

The emphasis on the consciousness of individuals, reflecting on their own

thinking and understanding, also neglects to emphasize the work of the collective in political activism. Indigenous Feminist praxis, on the other hand is an interdisciplinary and intergenerational project that is a "project of reconfiguring" (Patel, 2016, p. 5) that requires education to "rethink itself as answerable to learning, knowledge, and living beings' needs" (p.5).

My work requires "an imagination that conceptualizes … scholarship as associated with public reasoning and engagement to generate wider knowledge" (Motala, 2015, p. 25). This push and pull, negotiating difference and change (and then continually re-negotiating) is an expanding of our understanding and thinking about the work of teachers and activists and activist/teachers beyond the current constraining of questions asked and the narrowing of what answers are considered valid and intelligible. Indigenous philosophy and Indigenous Feminist work give us the tools to resist these restraints and the confining boundaries of the *path of correctness*.

I see the work of Indigenous Feminist writers, scholars, and activists as existing in *productive tension* with radical black feminist thought (Collins, 1990; Combahee River Collective, 1978; Dotson, 2018; Lorde, 2007) and the work Chicanx/Borderlands feministas (Perales, 2013; Pour-Khorshid, 2016; Pulido, 2018; Putnam & Skocpol, 2018). The spaces of intersection with queer theory are also exciting places to work (Lara, 2013, 2020; K. Wells, 2017). The tension may at times be an awkward tension – not unlike an awkward silence as compared to a comfortable silence (or perhaps an electric silence?). We learn through disequilibrium, through discomfort, through crisis (Kumashiro, 2005) and we work together to make the world a better placer through conflict. In the words of educator and philosopher Anna Julia Cooper, "Progressive peace in a nation is the result

of conflict; and conflict, such as is healthy, stimulating and progressive, is produced through the co-existence of radically opposing or racially different elements" (Cooper, 1892, in Lemert & Bhan, 1998, p. 122). Braided closely together at times, struggling to stay together at others, forward and backward through the generations, BIPOC women have always been and will always be our teachers. To borrow a brilliant phrase from Arvin, Tuck, & Morrill, (2013): BIPOC, queer, disabled, young women, and Elders do not "need permission to be included in feminist thought or writings" (p. 14). Arvin et al. (2013) "view the work done by both early and contemporary Native women scholars, artists, and activists, often completed without substantial institutional support and with significant personal cost, as intellectual gifts. Without them, our uphill battle would be even steeper and lonelier and our own thinking less rich. Gifts like these come with a kind of responsibility—a responsibility that is less a burden than a desire to continue to create a future for Native feminist theories to thrive" (p. 11).

Whitestream feminism, on the other hand, is limited by its association with whiteness and its unwillingness to identify itself as such. Grande (2003) defines "whitestream feminism" as "a feminist discourse that is not only dominated by white women but also principally structured on the basis of white, middle-class experience; a discourse that serves their ethno-political interests and capital investments" (p. 14).

Indigenous Futurities

In contrast to the "specialization, standardization, compartmentalization, and systematicity that are inherent features of western bureaucratic forms of organization" (Kawagley & Barnhardt, 1998), Indigenous philosophies underlying teaching and learning "connect humans to the environment and to each other, and which generate

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principles for living a life which is sustainable, respectful, and possible" (L. T. Smith, 2012, p. 109). Reading the problems of education through an Indigenous Feminist lens allows us to think beyond the settler-colonial conception of academic "accountability" (as opposed to response-ability and answerability) and the conformist goals of schooling structures. "Collectivist, reciprocal ways of being and living in respectful and honest relations are of utmost importance as we [within academia and schooling] have increasingly denounced our connectedness, spiritualities, and possibilities in the name of competition, efficiency, individualism, measurement, and profitability (Cannella & Manuelito, 2008, p. 54).

The resulting alienation and separation can be thought of in terms of the "two faces" conceptualized above. Neoliberal economies of efficiency and "scale," the introduction of "market freedom" into the public education sector, and the promise of "school choice" seem to provide new opportunities for students, and increased power for parents. The discourse around charter schools, vouchers, and even standardized testing seems rather compelling at first glance. After all, who doesn't want freedom, choice, best practices, and "what works" for their children? Who in their right mind would argue that we need *lower* standards? This is the "Face of American Freedom" and we tend to like what it says. Meanwhile the other face, the Face of American Empire, is working, as it always does, to consolidate land and capital into power. When legal frameworks are put in place in attempts to rectify wrongs in education, the policies and rules that are developed in response give rise to practices that further punish marginalized communities for perceived deficits. Rather than lifting up poor communities, students and teachers of color, and Native peoples, these policies and practices have left too many of us

increasingly vulnerable to the encroachment of for-profit corporate schools and punitive systems of "reform."

At a time when neoliberal reforms of public education seem to be crushing the heart and the life out of teaching and learning, Indigenous frameworks for teaching and learning are "life-seeking" alternatives (Cajete quoted in Tuck, 2013). Through life-seeking work we are able to create better alternatives, which may ultimately displace the current emphasis in public schooling on conformity and [conformity as?] employability, and employment as success. "Neoliberal logic can be characterized as being caught … with no sources for solutions outside the spectrum [state control v market freedom]. To seek solutions to social problems that lay beyond this spectrum is seen as unrealistic and irrational. As impossible" (Tuck, 2013b). On the contrary, Indigenous feminisms *make possible* new and unique spaces to create and share knowledge, to do truly collaborative and potentially transformative research and teaching. Within the creative contours of Indigenous feminisms we are free to explore the use of artistic expressions to theorize our lives and to imagine futures that are not visible from within the colonial/neoliberal construct of binaries.[15]

According to Winona LaDuke, "The women's movement is in a good position to take on structural change…. The fact that we are women and we are intimately related to the forces of renewal and life means that we are much closer to an optimism in our understanding of things than are many men in this society" (LaDuke, n.d.). However,

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[15] Authors Octavia Butler (1993) , and Marge Piercy (1976), playwright and artist Virginia Grise, 2017), quilter and painter Peggy Ball (Morrill, 2017), and theater artist Taylor Mac (Mac, n.d.) provide examples of these possibilities.

solidarity across difference within feminism has been difficult to come by. Cannella &

Manuelito (2008) explore the intertwined contributions of "a range of feminisms from

diverse locations [that have] introduced issues of voice, representation, text, and ethics to

the conceptualization and practice of qualitative research" (p. 45). By seeking allies

across differences, within the academy and outside of it, we have greater potential to

build new alternatives.

Native feminist projects undertake academic *and activist* work. The use of

Indigenous feminist methodologies allows us to enact change in schools in ways that

resist the decontextualized, supposedly "objective" research framed by deficits and bent

on *intervening* and *fixing*. They make it possible to focus on the fine web of relationships

within the community and the schools, and to understand the positive actions we need to

take to facilitate change. This work points to the "possibility, slight as it may be, that

Indigenous epistemologies … can lead to a different schooling experience and produce a

different kind of learner. Possibilities such as this open up new potential paths in

educational research that relate to Indigenous epistemologies and schooling, but we have

to recognize them amidst the usual concerns raised by educational research and

evaluation" (L. T. Smith, 2005). One way that new opportunities, new hope, what Smith

called "new vistas" in education research and praxis, can be recognized, is they must be

characterized by a focus on Indigenous self-determination. When she articulates *The*

Indigenous Research Agenda Smith (2012, p. 121) in terms of the ocean tides, identifies

four directions for research, and concentric circles symbolizing "movement, change,

process, life, inward and outward flows of ideas, reflections, and actions" (p. 120) and

one central goal: self-determination (Figure 2; see also Appendix E). In all of my work I
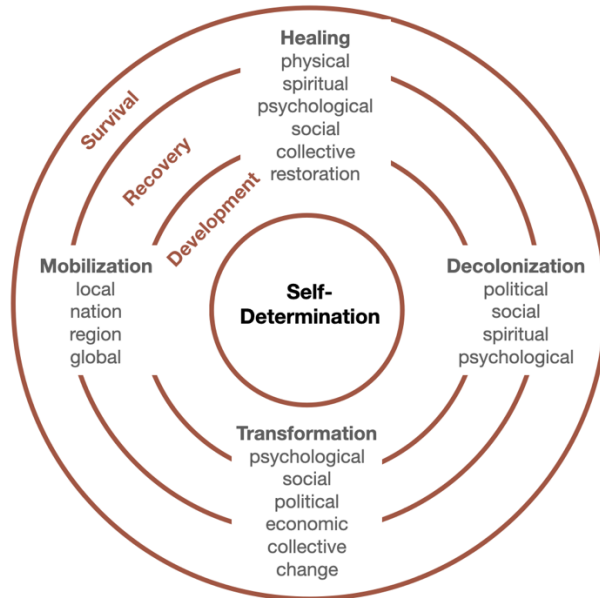
Figure 2

The Indigenous Research Agenda (Smith, 2012, p. 121)

keep this model in mind, and when I "get it wrong" I learn from my colleagues, Native

and not, when I need to make changes. This research project has been no exception. As a

non-Indigenous person, I understand my responsibility to be in community with

Indigenous students and communities. As a white woman working with other non-Native

activists to better understand and recognize these new vistas, and new possibilities for our

activism, I, and the rest of the Teacher Inquiry Group (TIG), must be continually open to

questioning the ways in which we are not "doing it right." We must be willing to share

what in a Western mindset would be thought of as "ownership" over our little piece of the

activist world and able to envision a more collective way to work toward justice. When

the Combahee River Collective Statement, proclaimed, in 1978 that, "If Black women

were free, it would mean that everyone else would have to be free" they did not expressly

include Native women, but what would it look like if they had? What if we turned from

thinking of each other as having specific problems and challenges and more toward

thinking of each other as potentially fully formed, free growing and thinking, glorious beings?

Researcher and author Eve Tuck (2009) explores alternatives to research focused on the damage and brokenness of marginalized communities, alternatives that will, we hope, "interrupt[s] the binary of reproduction versus resistance … in which people are bound to reproduce or replicate social inequity or, on the flip side, that they can resist unequal social conditions" (p. 419). This typically Western social science binary oversimplifies the options and limits the possibilities accessible to complex humans to address incredibly complex problems. Alexander & Mohanty (1997) conceptualize "what might be called 'feminist democracy' in relation to the project of decolonialization…" (p.xxvii). They work with indigenous and non-Indigenous activist-scholars to envision a new way of practicing democracy, emphasizing that "thinking 'out of' colonization happens only through action and reflection, through praxis" (p. xxviii).

Western social science research has proven inadequate as a tool for social change, especially as it pertains to public education. "Our research over the past two decades documents ambitious and promising efforts followed consistently by unsatisfactory gains in the face of normative and political obstacles that keep equity reforms from being fully implemented and/or sustained" (Oakes & Lipton, 2002). As I approach this research I take to heart Audre Lorde's caution that we will never dismantle the master's house using the master's tools (2007). We need new tools. As a white settler colonist woman, I am taking up Indigenous Feminist tools in social science research to help bring about social change; I understand that such an undertaking may be fraught with tensions and that I am not choosing the road well-traveled. My hope in entering into this space stems from a

need to challenge Western epistemologies' dominance within education and social science research, which I believe to be the only way forward to a truly better future.

The current project points to the hope that Indigenous feminist projects in education and social science provide new tools – and new hope – for those of us working on behalf of and alongside our students. Indigenous feminisms' focus on relationships (in contrast to Western science's insistence on distance and disconnection in the service of "objectivity"), and the ethical commitments that such relationships require of research *and* researchers, make this possible. Indigenous feminist work makes space for ways of knowing and being that are marginalized / ignored / scorned by Western approaches to knowledge creation, emphasizing the new possibilities that come into view by employing an Indigenous feminist lens. Indigenous Feminist methodologies insist upon a different kind of engagement within the community / creative & forward-looking; different conception of knowledge and ontological and epistemological assumptions that allow for a different possible future.

Conclusion

In most of the U.S. education/schooling system, there is one end goal, a single conception of "success" to which we should all be striving. Education research's objective is to "help" us reach this narrowly articulated finish line. In the process, even well-meaning interventions work to force all students in to the mold of white Western schooling. Children of color, immigrants, poor kids, Native youth, kids who identify as LGBT, children with special needs, girls - *everyone* – is subject to these expectations. Popular (and financially lucrative) school-wide behavioral intervention systems are proud of their effectiveness in shaping all children's behavior to fit white Western norms of

school behavior…walk, sit, be quiet, raise your hand; get a token or a ticket. Not only behavior is subject to this suppression – different ways of knowing and different forms of knowledge are also excluded. The content of curriculum and the style of its delivery fit neatly into the Western linear model of "progress." It follows that many modes of expression are also discounted, when the only way to demonstrate your learning is through standardized testing. This is a project bent on erasure of difference, and an exercise in conformity. Even the most well-meaning "reforms" risk being co-opted into the overarching logic of sameness, since they are mostly born from that same logic.

This project is not an intervention. It does not aspire to "implementation fidelity" or "objectivity" or a p >.05. This project is conceived of as a democratic co-investigation into the lives and workings of teacher activists and their praxes. It does not aspire to be "taken to scale" or sold by Pearson. Through my work with and among teacher activists I hope to take steps in a different direction – a direction informed by love and motivated by hope, toward a world, and a way of teaching our children (perhaps not a *system* of education?) that accepts and values – even loves them.

CHAPTER III

METHODS ←→ METHODOLOGY

I espouse passionate inquiry

    become deeply involved in things that I study.

        ''We cannot pretend that we do not care. We look at our subject with

        passion because we are our subject,'' professes Raymond (1985, p. 58).

I agree with Weil and McGill (1989): ''Meaning is not 'out there';

    we are part of that meaning and we can therefore convey it personally'' (p. xx).

To declare ''what I know to be True'' is a complex undertaking.

As Graveline's poem (2000, p. 362) conveys, my methodological approach to this work is closely linked to personal passion, to political import, and to theory in which I am solidly grounded. Given the urgent and timely topic of this dissertation and its potential impact on the work of teacher activists, the data collection methods go straight to the source of knowledge, teacher activists themselves. Consistent with my theoretical framework of Indigenous Feminism and revolutionary democracy, and my commitment to community answerability, participants were invited to contribute their input during data collection, analysis, writing, and dissemination of the study. One of the results of the project will be some positive engagement with the research questions and TIG (Teacher Inquiry Group) texts, among the participants, including the researcher. The final "product" (hopefully a dissertation is just one of the outcomes of the entire project) must be returned to the participants and to the in a way that is helpful, and eventually should

find its way to other members of the teacher activist community, locally and in other places. I hope that this might be a point where anyone can pick up the idea of teacher activism healing from settler colonialism, and do their own work in their own spaces and places.

The study's timeline, the methods and location for data collection, approach to analysis and writing, all reflect ethical and epistemological commitments of the researcher, which include: a value of and respect for diverse ways of knowing and being among participants and between participants and researcher; deep respect for the knowledge within the community and recognition of the role of the researcher as a learner and as a (hopefully helpful) vehicle in service of that knowledge; the importance of the involvement of community at all phases of research, from the formulation of the questions to final product[16]; and the usefulness to the community. The participants' involvement throughout the process hopefully helps them think about our work together in new ways. Given these commitments, it may seem challenging at first to plan a course of research that is ontologically and epistemologically consistent, while still being carefully planned and executed. However, entering the research space with clear eyes and a good heart ensured that I balanced Indigenous methodologies' rejection of impermeable boundaries, naturalized binaries and individualism, and embrace of collective work and shared knowledge, with, on the other hand, the Western academy's requirement that my work remain intelligible and accountable to them as well.

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[16] In fact, my local community of Eugene teacher activists has helped me shape this study from the beginning, in many ways, large and small, for the past several years.

Ironically I undertake this project, "the dissertation" within a settler colonial institution, an "R1" university which prides itself on its research output, especially in the "hard sciences." During my time in the doctoral program at the University of Oregon, Nike founder Phil Knight donated funds and bought land across from the campus, on the "Mill Race" where in the past timber (read: murdered trees) was floated downstream to a sawmill a few miles away. It is named the "Knight Campus for Accelerating Scientific Impact." Its website proclaims "Science Advancing Society: UO ascends into new realms of discovery and opportunity with the Knight Campus" (University of Oregon, n.d.-c). During these same years, the College of Education (COE) placed a huge emphasis on bringing in research funding, sometimes stating that the COE was the school with the most research funding coming in for the year (before the establishment of the Knight Campus, that is). As of this writing the College's website has a series of pages to highlight research work. The main page reads: "Research Driving Change: Our research culture is field-leading and highly influential with a long tradition of translating research into effective models, methods and measures that improve lives." (University of Oregon, n.d.-a) The emphasis on funding, on selling educational products, and changing lives all point to western models of research, with their capitalist motives for developing "interventions" to fix people, mostly school children, rather than *making educational and social systems work for all* (the former motto of the UO College of Education).

According to Patel (2012) "logics of coloniality, which are connected to property and stratifications of society, are problematically enlivened through educational research" (p. 12). Further, Battiste (2013) cautions us that in spite of "multi-voiced resistance to and calls for transformation of these [hegemonic education] systems" that have made

very clear the "great losses to the human spirit and capacity [due to the] culturally exclusive, patriarchal educational system" and its practices of "knowledge legitimation, production and diffusion which positions some knowledge are "connected power and others marginalized, dismissed…" (p. 159). Contrary to its vision of itself as a place that will "enrich the human condition through collaboration, teaching, mentoring, scholarship, experiential learning, creative inquiry, scientific discovery, outreach, and public service" (University of Oregon, n.d.-b) the University of Oregon, along with all institutions of education on Turtle Island, are founded upon, and steeped in, colonial logics that constrain possibility for all but a few. As a student training to become an education researcher, I find myself in a position of "buying into" that is, participating in, the work of research and engaging in what Patel calls an "apprenticeship" into a system that I certainly do not "buy into" and that I work hard to resist. I need to be careful that my work does not reinscribe or reify white Western settler colonial ways of knowing and being. Yet my product, "the dissertation" will also be judged by the institution as a whole.

Hence, Indigenous feminist thinkers inform my study from beginning to end, from framing the questions to organizing the research group and its participants, to analyzing the data. In this way "the dissertation" seems more like "my dissertation" and a project that I actually want to do; that I hope can make some contribution to the larger project of Indigenous self-determination and nation-building by working with Indigenous teachers and activists as well as holding my own settler community answerable to their own part in the ongoing structures and practices of settler colonialism.

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Epistemological and Ontological Assumptions

I propose that Indigenous Feminist methodologies can contribute to the development of positive, future-oriented teacher activism. The study helps us understand how teachers develop activist identities and how activist groups sustain themselves in the work over time. It also helped us wrestle with questions of how Indigenous Feminist thought can inform non-Native activists' praxis. Can non-Native activists, by engaging in anti-colonial work, transform their own activist stances to include Native self-determination and its overarching liberatory framework?

To remain an outspoken defender of public education in the face of constant rhetoric that paints us as failures and our work as mechanistic and unskilled is difficult, emotionally and physically. Activists and activist organizations must navigate myriad barriers and persevere in spite of little immediate reward. We often work in small groups around particular issues (what the business majors call "silos") and it can be difficult to collaborate across issues. Indigenous activists may work directly on behalf of Native students (e.g. advocating for resources, establishing programs and schools that support Indigenous students and teach Native languages and traditional knowledge) as well as on behalf of *all* students [e.g. the statewide curriculum efforts that culminated in the passing of Senate Bill 13 (SB 13) *Tribal History/Shared History* in Oregon (Sabzalian et al., 2019) and *Since Time Immemorial* / SHB 1495 in Washington (B. L. Smith, n.d.)]. However, activism by mostly-non-Native teachers [e.g. Opt-Out movement (Pizmony-Levy & Green Saraisky, 2016) and "Too Young to Test" legislation in Oregon] do not generally work together. MeChA organizations and LULAC (the League of United Latin American Communities) nationwide organize on behalf of Latinx students, while the

NAACP and AAUW focus on Black American students' education access and success and that of girls and women, respectively. These can be further broken down, to find organizations devoted to bringing Black kids and girls into STEM fields, and further splintered into "Girls Who Code" and "UWiP" (Undergraduate Women in Physics). A complete list of activist and advocacy groups would be very long indeed.

I will argue that we all can and should be in communication and supporting each other as allies in creating a better experience of schooling for *all* children and for our communities, not instead of the above, but in addition to. I will point out the many ways the oppressive (racist, settler-colonial, heterosexist) structures of our society discourage us from doing so. Settler colonial logics of individualism and competition create the illusion that education "excellence" is a zero-sum game – that there is not enough good to go around. The rhetoric of "bootstraps" and the tokenization of those few who "make it" in spite of "the odds" erases the ways the system is in fact designed to stack those odds against large groups of people. The current application of capitalist and neoliberal language and practices to an education system that claims to work for the education of democratic citizens belies the use of schooling as a tool of control. These pervading logics keep us separate from each other, rather than coming together to stage a larger effort to change the very foundation of public education.

Research Design

Teacher Inquiry Groups as theorized by Navarro (2018) "engaged educators in being students of their praxis through collective learning that involved reflection, discussion and imagining social justice teaching" (p. 346-347). There is deep knowledge in the community of teacher activists, that can help us understand teacher activism and

activist work as critical of the existing system, but also generative and full of possibility for the future of public education and for the U.S. nation-state as a whole. I believe that we are not able to access and use all of our passion as long as we remain subject to settler-colonial logics and expectations, and I hope that activist teacher TIGs can be one way that non-native teacher activists can begin to heal from colonization and tap into a deep well of love and care that has previously been unavailable to us in our praxis.

By working with teacher activists / activist teachers in group meetings and in the field, as well as individually if needed, I affirm that individual agency and behavior is important in activist work, but that neither identity development nor the evolution of beliefs and values is linear or hierarchical. It is a circular and cyclical process of engaging with activist groups, with policies and people, and local contexts with their own values and value systems, all embedded in particular places with particular histories. By leaving open multiple opportunities for participants to have input into the project, I affirm that research is not above and outside the community, but that the project and the researcher are intertwined with the community and the individuals that make it up. As researcher I do not aspire to objectivity, but to productivity. A project grounded in Indigenous feminism requires the researcher to continually consider to whom she is answerable, and to be "steadfast in answering" (L. T. Smith, 2012b). As an educator and as a researcher I must always be open and accountable[17] to the "intricate system of relatedness, obligation and respect" that governs all interactions. Battiste, (2016) called this "response-ability."

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[17] I attempt to reclaim the concept of "accountability" from the neoliberal forces that would have us associate it only with proof of a narrowly defined "achievement" on specific (and poorly designed) tasks.

Participants. Celia Oyler invites us to consider a "wide range of activist projects that occur both inside and outside the classroom" (p. 30). For purposes of this research, I circulated a brief and open-ended questionnaire to those who are involved in the outside-the-classroom type and asked them to identify different types of activism that they have done, and list specific examples (see Appendix F). Participants in the TIG were self-identified teacher activists who are not Native or Indigenous folks. To create a "unique and purposeful sample" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) I invited participants using direct outreach to leaders of known groups and activists that I know personally, and asked for their help in bringing their comrades into the study. This kind of personal and local recruitment allowed me to access activists that I do not already know well as well as folks with whom I have worked for years. The result was a small working group of teachers who have the "ideological clarity" (Bartolomé & Trueba, 2000) and the thorough understanding of education issues and deep respect for community members (Fasching-Varner & Mitchell, 2013) required to get involved in public activism and to sustain their effort over time (Moore et al., 2018). We came together in a "Teacher Inquiry Group" (Navarro, 2018) (TIG) to engage in a process of critical struggle with issues of settler-colonialism and the possibilities for engaging Indigenous feminist methodologies and ways of knowing to transform the mainstream or "whitestream" activist discussion of education justice and teacher activism.

Prior to the beginning of the group's meetings, participants shared their "origin stories" (see Appendix H for the complete text of their origin stories). By way of introduction to the participants, here are short blurbs, edited by the participants themselves:

Carrie Ann. She is now retired, but Carrie Ann taught in local elementary schools for thirty-one years. She grew up in Buffalo, New York, where her father and mother were members of the Communist Party; she describes herself as "a red diaper baby." Her father became a UAW organizer and leader throughout his 30 years in the Chevy plant. Carrie Ann shared with the group that when in junior high she had an assignment to write on slavery, and her father shared a union pamphlet that told about how the U.S. was built by enslaved persons. She opened her paper with "America was built on the backs of Black people." After two years of college in Buffalo, Carrie Ann came to the West Coast, and joined Hoedads Cooperative (along with Roscoe). When her two children were quite young, she went back to school at University of Oregon for her teaching degree and licensure. She became involved in writing curriculum and teaching about the environment and climate change, which led to student activism with her teaching partner, Susan Dwoskin, who focused on democracy and The Bill of Rights. In addition, she wrote an in-depth curriculum for fifth grade about the Kalapuya, people Indigenous to the Willamette Valley and on whose unceded territory Eugene was built.

Jenn. Jenn is a high school literature and writing teacher. Her first memory of activism was when she was an elementary schooler and had just moved to Santa Barbara (CA) and heard on the news that bobcats were being shot. Jenn's mom told her distraught daughter to write a letter to the governor, which she did, and got a letter in return from Governor Gary Hart. She remembers thinking, "Well that feels pretty good."

She became a licensed teacher in Nevada and taught at Andre Agassi Academy in Las Vegas from 2004-2005. She was involved in the 2010 Las Vegas teachers' strike. "… we joined forces with the UNLV students about education … we were on the strip with

signs ... I was really excited about my first protest march…" Here in Oregon Jenn got her Masters at University of Oregon and has gotten involved with activism by defending her daughter's special education needs; she then realized "yeah I don't want any kids to go through this crap." She teachers social justice issues in her classroom and attends school board meetings where she both supports other speakers and makes her own bold statements on behalf of teachers and students.

Larry. Larry grew up in Wisconsin and moved west in 1972 after college . His first teaching job was at Catholic school in Flagstaff (AZ) for two years before coming up to Eugene. He taught high school for two years in Creswell, then at a 4j elementary school, then became the Language Arts TOSA (Teacher on Special Assignment), which is where he and Pete met and worked together. The TOSA's job was "going into buildings and saying 'What can we do to help?' Now the TOSAs are just the delivery system for the administration." Larry taught at Monroe Middle School, where Carrie Ann's son was in his class and they met for the first time. Then he taught at U of O for 8 years, teaching the secondary grades writing methods course. Now Larry is a full-time activist, leading CAPE, (the Community Alliance for Public Education) and managing multiple school board campaigns. "Same fight, different time," he says.

Pete. Pete came to the US from Yugoslavia as a thirteen-year-old and his family settled in Los Angeles. He went to college in LA, and was the first person in his family to do so "because it was $60 a semester [laughs] you know…." Pete got "really involved in the anti-war movement in college. He became trilingual by learning Spanish and his first job teaching was in a bilingual program in southern California. He became involved in union work when teachers in California won the right to collectively bargain their

contracts. After he moved to Eugene he taught English language learning students (called ESL at that time, English as a Second Language), then became a TOSA for Multicultural Education working with teachers and staffs on multicultural curriculum and equity issues across the district. In the late eighties he co-founded the Racism Free Zone at Jefferson Middle School. He worked to develop anti-racist curriculum, involve different communities in the school and facilitated the process of giving voice to underrepresented students in the school. Pete retired in 2005 but kept doing substitute teaching in the local school districts and taught at the College of Education at U of O until 2020.

Rena. Rena is a teacher who left the classroom after 20 years due to frustration with persistent inequities demonstrated by her local school district leadership and the elected school board. Rena received her teaching degree and credential at Pacific University, along with a handful of other folks (including her twin sister, Leah Dunbar) that her fellow TIG participants remembered fondly. Pete said, "there were all these radicals that came out of that." She identifies as a Black/biracial woman, a twin, and a motherscholar who recently completed her DEd in Educational Leadership in 2020. Before leaving the secondary classroom, Rena, along with Leah, co-created Courageous Conversations, a local and well-respected rendition of a secondary level critical Ethnic Studies course. Rena's research focused upon the impact of Ethnic Studies curricula upon students' sense of cross-racial empathy.

Roscoe. After he retired from teaching middle school in 2010, Roscoe stayed involved with the Ganas program that links Latino middle school students with University of Oregon MEChA (*Movimiento Estudiantil Chicanx de Aztlán)* students. He was former president of the Hoedads Cooperative that performed forestry labor across the

western U.S. [18] He grew up in New Hampshire in the French Canadian-American culture; he recalls discovering alternative FM radio stations from Boston in his early teens and thinking, "There's a whole other world out there!" There was.

I asked participants if I could attend any events and/or meetings where I can observe their work first-hand, take notes and/or photos and video. My own notes and experiences in local activist groups provided socio-cultural context. Participants were encouraged to share any realia[19] they would like, including materials related their work, either from the public domain (news articles about their communities, fliers for events, Op-Eds and letters to the editors, other public writing, articles, etc.) or their private archives (artwork, notes, photos, etc.). My commitment to this community of activists is to understand their/our[20] work to the best of my ability, and therefore no source of data (no "data point") will be ignored.

Informed Consent and Confidentiality

Before they engaged in the activities of the study (beginning with the Pre-Reflection writing task) individual participants received information regarding informed consent and confidentiality. Enacting the IRB requirements takes on new components and more importance within this community-based model. According to Denzin, "Taken out

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[18] Hoedads

[19] Realia is a term that refers to any real life object that a teacher uses as a teaching aid in an English language classroom. The greatest benefit of using real life objects as teaching tools in the classroom is that they can help the student connect the theoretical vocabulary being taught, to the actual object itself (International TESOL and TEFL Training, n.d.).

[20] I use both first-person and third-person pronouns to refer to individual teachers and to various groups of teachers. My use of they/we here and elsewhere is indicative of my own membership in the group I call "teachers" and also "teacher activists."

of their Western utilitarian framework, respect, beneficence, and justice must be seen as principles that are felt as they are performed, that is they can serve as performative guidelines to a moral way of being in the world with others" (2003, p.11). Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) emphasizes the "distinctions drawn between legal requirements and ethical codes of conduct. …legal definitions of ethics are framed in ways which contain the Western sense of the individual and of individualized property…" (p. 123). So, while the Belmont Report's (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979) definition of informed consent does one thing legally, in order to carry out ethical research in and with communities, something more is required.

Our "official" code of *respect*, *beneficence*, and *justice* means we clearly inform participants as to the risks and potential benefits of their participation, and of the steps the researcher will be taking to ensure their safety. One way of protecting participants is to preserve their anonymity – this is especially important when working with vulnerable populations. Eve Tuck said of her work with LGBTQ street youth, "the politics of the public/hidden transcript seemed a part of every public observation and every interview" (Tuck & Yang, 2014, p. 217). My goal with this study is to bring that unspoken politics (and its potential for hidden tensions) into the open, to be negotiated and decided upon *with* the community, not *for* the community. I tailored the informed consent documentation to emphasize the collaborative nature of the project, to encourage participants to think of themselves as just that: *participants* in a research project, not the *subjects* of a project set out to study them.

Participants had the option to allow their names to be used in the dissemination of the research, but also knew they would be able to change their minds and opt for

anonymity at any point. Likewise, there are some things that they would like their name attached to (artwork, quotes images), and some that they would not. Anonymity may not be necessary or desirable, since the very topic of the research presumes the participants already engage in public community participation. They have undertaken some level of risk when they became active in pushing back against the powerful hegemonic system of U.S. schooling. All six participants agreed that their contributions to the current research project does not substantially increase that risk.

Data Collection

The Teacher Inquiry Group (TIG) met six times over the course of seven weeks. We met every Sunday afternoon at a coffee shop that we all knew and enjoyed; I reserved a quiet upstairs room for us to meet, and bought everyone coffee or a snack as they were arriving. Our meetings generally started "before the meeting" with updates on local school politics or the passing out of CAPE t-shirts and fundraising updates, and folks just checking in with each other. I asked everyone to plan for an hour and a half or so of meeting time, but multiple times we were engaged in great discussion and went a little over. Almost everyone in this group knew each other, and everyone seemed comfortable sharing right from the beginning of the first meeting. Only Jenn and Pete had not crossed paths yet, but were quickly caught up on each other's teaching and community involvement.

The first half hour of the first TIG meeting was spent getting everyone settled with their coffees and greeting one another. We did a quick round of self-introductions mostly to check out the audio, and we discussed informed consent documents and I gave everyone a folder with reading packets and what I jokingly called "the syllabus" (see

Appendix H). From the very beginning, members of this group were ready to share their

knowledge and wisdom. Following is the very first exchange after passing out the

readings, with a short introduction by me:

> Deanna
> …so then my question, the overarching question for my dissertation became:
> What do we have to do to get these closer [referring to an earlier draft of the
> Teacher Activist triad, the distance between IF and TA]? So what is required of
> us? That's why in the requirements for being in the study, I didn't want Native
> folks to be considering this question, because it puts more work on the Native
> folks to then be telling non-Native folks like "here's what you need to do." So, I
> wanted to take that part, that labor off of the Native folks, and just let us, non-
> Native folks wrestle with it: like, what's required of us as non-Native teacher
> activists to close to close this gap?
>
> Carrie Ann I have a thought.
>
> Deanna Yeah.
>
> Carrie Ann Class. … Class…. issues with class unify all that.
>
> Deanna Say more...
>
> Carrie Ann In my mind, I have ... this is something I think I've known for me. I'm
> not saying it's necessarily true, but for me, I've always known to the bone that at
> the bottom of all of this is economics and class, and for teacher activists. Some of
> what drives teachers perhaps is because we're actually in the trenches with real
> people. Indigenous feminists, the Indigenous, the settlers have all different roles
> to play, not just based on race and gender, but race and gender which heavily
> influenced class, and all work together I mean they are the labor force. And so, I
> haven't thought this out but I'm looking at your triangle [an early draft of the
> teacher activist triad] trying to think this through. But I see that would… for my
> way of thinking, that there's very little that I look at including the environment
> and climate, without including class, and how people are separated out, and
> divided and conquered, based on class and of course people, you know, women
> and people of color are separated out even more. But I think class drives at all. I
> think it's the foundation.
>
> Pete I think that, you know, some of us have come through that process of
> radicalization through working, like for us… some of us … the Vietnam War.
> [other participants nodding] Yeah, many of us, and so we looked at the whole
> issue of imperialism and colonialism, on the larger scale. And like you know a lot
> of people that came out of that, that time start, you know, it was obvious too -

colonialism and imperialism on the global scale. A lot of them were… did not make the connections to the here and, you know, here and now, and to the, you know, American colonialism within, United States. And so, and through that… through, you know, understanding imperialism and colonialism, we saw class and many of us became radicalized and became socialists and communists and, you know, so that's, that's how you know I came through it, and also from my own background my own personal experience, but I mean the idea I think that the idea that you're talking about is really important to understand colonial… colonialism, through the lenses of class. And what was the, what was the… What was the reason for colonialism?

Carrie Ann Capitalism.

Pete Capitalism. And it's like, you know, and there in racism you know before development of capitalism, there wasn't that much you know … there wasn't it wasn't the same kind of thing … but when they were starting to go to create capital and profit. Then you started building these differences, social constructs, around race. Yeah, you know, and so to separate it from development of capitalism I think it's,

Jen Yeah I think money is the crux of it all.

Pete You can call it whatever ... you have money, capital, whatever it's called, it's accumulation

Jen Greed.

Carrie Ann I echo everything you said, you said it well.

Jen I think too the common thing is land. Just land. Environment. And well, the visual that was coming through my mind is not a hierarchical thing is just you know "IF" [Indigenous Feminism on triangle drawing] down here you've got the dirt and this is the, you know, bouquet or whatever like that this is the land and Indigenous Feminism is the ... entrenched in the land and where we're living on it, and we need to see the roots of what where we're living and the roots are the care of the and the stewardship of the earth. As teachers, we're. We have to be that middle ground the stewards of children, but also we have to make them keep their feet planted in the ground, and I don't know where settler colonialism goes but… but it definitely is. We need to we need to skew down. If we get closer to this, [referring to IF on triangle drawing] then the, the triangle changes shape. I don't know it's just a visual that I was getting but land is the common thing that either we're all fighting for, fighting on, or fighting to dominate.

Deanna Well because land *is* capital, looking through the settler colonial lens,

Carrie Ann It's resource, it's, you know, it's not a free gift right I mean that's the, you know, and so when we as colonialists. as imperialists, When we take the land we're there for capital accumulation.

Larry [indecipherable]

Rena The land is capital but so then maybe really like, you know, education is capital too, right, and who gets education and who has access. I mean, that's all part of it, you know, property rights.

Jen What is property? you know this MINE mine. This is all MINE, not yours. Whatever it is, it's not just land, It's everything, the air, the water, the future.

Pete Capitalism education and land that they're all commodity become commodities Yes, can also be bought and sold. I mean education is

Rena That's what's happening.

Pete And that's what that's what Marx said, it says in capitalism, everything becomes a commodity becomes commodified to be sold and bought: human lives, you know, land

Carrie Ann is expropriated,

Pete education, philosophy, you know…

From the first conversation, this group engaged in lively discussion and deep conversations – they agreed and expanded on each others' ideas, they disagreed, they expressed anger and dismay at schooling practices, they got defensive in reaction to some of the readings, but also laughed a lot.

Our second meeting was characterized by confusion about which readings folks should have done. (Leave it to a bunch of teachers to ignore the syllabus completely!). The conversation could best be described as "free-wheeling" as folks moved into talking about settler colonialism and themselves as settlers, then away from their own involvement in settler formations to focus on Occupy Wall Street or whether land

rematriation is "practical" or "reasonable" then back to "how does this inform my day to day work?"

> Larry So here's my question. And this goes back to my rusty academic chops. I mean, all my reading and all my talking is about practical application. And I don't do much theorizing at all. I mean, any theorizing I do is in the context of strategizing. So it's difficult for me to read academic frameworks and then see how they're going to help me translate into strategizing. And I know the questions are broader and I'm interested in your three questions. I just don't know how to… to make the bridge between the… the theories and the and the intellectual foundations, and… and how that's going to inform my ability to strategize to increase teacher activism.

Because two of our members were not present for the second session (Rena and Pete), they felt like they had some catching up to do. We talked more about Decolonization is Not a Metaphor (Tuck & Yang, 2012) but with Rena and Pete engaging with it, along with Larry, Roscoe (Jenn came in for the second half, and Carrie Ann was not present) the conversation took on a much different tone:

> Pete I thought about this. This last Thanksgiving. My daughter, my son lives in San Diego. And they send a video of my little granddaughter Audrey, dressed in a native costume. They're doing this little native thing with feathers and everything, the 1950s 40s whatever.

> Larry *Timeless*. [sarcasm]

> Pete And you know, as I talked to Steve, but the interesting thing is this: The principal is Mexican American, and the woman who put the show on is a Filipino woman.

> Rena mmmhmmm ... for thanksgiving?

> Pete …for Thanksgiving! So they have like, you know, I mean,

> Roscoe we all have things to learn we all have blind spots

> Pete Exactly. I mean,

> Roscoe it's part of being human

Pete ...and we… maybe she just was never exposed to this

Roscoe right.

Pete You know she's coming [unintelligible] from Philippines and

Deanna right, but from a different perspective… the Philippines is colonized

Pete yeah totally

Unknown Speaker Yeah, but...

Unknown Speaker it's a whole different thing,

Larry right? Yeah, but isn't that a question then… how do alliances help address these things? So that there's a unified response.

Deanna Yes.

Rena The next chapter solidarity, right?

Deanna Yup.

Pete Yes. I haven't read that yet. But I'm sure that's gonna be interesting too

Unknown Speaker Yeah.

Roscoe So… So Pete, I want to ask you about teachers in Cuba.

Pete Yeah.

Roscoe And this whole, this whole issue of deeper levels of activism.

Pete. Well, the thing is, the way you know, the, the African Cubans, the cultural stuff, I mean, you know, in all these different places, we went, especially in places like went to Trinidad, which is the place when the major entry points of slaves into Cuba, the Indigenous, you know, the African culture is alive and well. You know, all over Cuba,

Roscoe but that's not indigenous to Cuba.

Pete no, those, right

Roscoe The Taíno... Yeah.

Pete Yeah, the Taino… most of those People were wiped out. It's like…

Then Roscoe pointed the discussion back to teacher activism in Cuba, asking Pete what he had seen the teachers there doing.

The last three of the six meetings I, like any good teacher would, gave up on my imagined perfect syllabus and changed things up. I had been transcribing as we went along, so at meetings I would talk about what I was noticing in the transcribing process. The group sometimes took up specific questions, but sometimes was pretty freewheeling with their conversations. I started to pay more attention to what wasn't said *in addition to* what was said, noticing the points where some participants remained silent or changed the subject – whether abruptly or subtly. The final "meeting" happened on a weeknight when we shared a meal together at one of Rena's favorite spots, and the group disbanded happily (only to see each other again soon at a different meeting, or an event, or a protest).

Data Analysis

Thinking through the lens of Indigenous Feminism during data analysis has allowed me to notice important themes that emerged in our discussions, and to see the divergences that were revealed as participants discussed their work, and their thinking about their work, within the landscape of education activism. By first foregrounding the *problems inherent in* in settler colonial education, the readings and questions encouraged participants to see and understand the structures and functions of public schooling, *and* our context as teacher activists. If, as the old saying goes, "the first step is to understand that you have a problem," *then* we might begin to recognize and start breaking down the barriers between what is and *what might be*. According to (Morrill, 2017), *Indigenous methodologies insist upon an ethics, a centrality of relationships, and a future-*

orientation that Western social science does not. Well-meaning western researchers, in their attempts to work with communities, cannot do so until they put down their tools of manipulation and destruction…" This is true also of well-meaning western social justice activists.

Hence, I did not undertake qualitative analysis using a computer program to sort and "code" data. To identify major themes within the TIG discussions and the activities and words of teacher activists as I observed them in their every day work, I immersed myself deeply in the discussions in the moment, rarely taking notes (mostly during participant observation in the field), but trying to "be present" and notice the interactions, the tones of voice, the facial expressions of the participants. In this, knowing the participants ahead of time helped immensely with the next step: transcribing the discussions. I recorded the TIG meetings using Otter, which attempts to do the transcription on its own, but needs a lot of help. You can "teach" it to recognize participant voices, but not colloquialisms or other figures of speech, place names, and the like. I listened to every recording to correct every line of conversation that had been captured, which allowed me to remember in detail what had happened. I also did the transcribing work as soon as humanly possible after the event.

Imagining the potential *solutions* – and hence the data analysis – with Indigenous Feminist theory allows us – in fact *requires* us, the researcher and the participants, to work (and sometimes struggle) together in a process of focused inquiry and self-reflection. If we can better understand the contextual factors that contribute to the development of activist projects, and to see our own limitations in light of our settler-colonial societal structures when we approach from a place of healing, of action, and of

radically imagined futurities, which is what Native Feminist thinkers provide for us. (See Appendix D "The Racism-Free Zone at Jefferson Middle School.")

The role of this researcher

Giroux (1981) has argued that resistance is the translation of a critical or political understanding of collective experience into political struggle that contests the hegemonic practices of schools. When teachers engage in this struggle, not only can the system be changed, but they/ we can change ourselves and each other. For this project, I conceive of the role of the researcher as a facilitator, a presenter of questions and hopefully of opportunities for change. In qualitative inquiry informed by Indigenous Methodologies, the researcher refuses the role of a creator of knowledge separate from the community. She is always involved with, and accountable to, the study participants. In this way, I hope to challenge what Bishop (1998) called "the dominance of traditional, individualistic research which primarily, at least in its present form, benefits the researchers and their agenda" (p. 201). Again, I draw inspiration from Graveline (2000):

> *As Metis woman, scholar, activist, teacher, healer*
> *I enact First Voice as pedagogy and methodology*
> *Observing my own lived experience as an Educator*
> > *Sharing meanings with Others ...*
> *My Voice is Heard*
> > *in concert with Students and Community Participants ...*
> *I asked: What pedagogical practices*
> > *Enacted through my Model-In-Use*
> > > *contribute to what kinds of transformational learning?*
> > > > *For whom*

As a white/settler woman, scholar, activist, mother, and teacher, I do not claim an Indigenous identity, but continually strive to do my work in the most just, beneficial, and respectful way that I can. I draw inspiration from my Native sisters and brothers to help me stay fully present, engaged, and answerable as I work alongside my non-Native colleagues. "Yet the risk for qualitative researchers has been and continues to be imperial translation. Doing the work of social change … within a context committed to discrediting all women's voices means that social researchers have to be negotiating how, when, and why to situate and privilege those voices. Those of us who do this work need to invent communities of friendly critical informants who can help us think through whose voices and analyses to foreground, and whose to decenter (Fine, 2008, p. 80).

"How we make sense of the world often 'makes sense' only within a particular context and we should never feel comfortable that our knowledge will make sense in every context thereafter. The world will always exceed our knowledge of it" (Kumashiro, 2005). "Common sense" is only common to the dominant culture, and foregrounding Indigenous thinkers and education activists helped the group us unsettle our thinking about what our role is within education activism.

Limitations of the study

Having a small group of participants, some of whom I have worked with quite closely over the past decade, had its advantages. For one, we were able to jump right into reading and discussing the readings without formal introductions. Even though we said a bit about our activist work (mostly in an effort to have introductions and voices on the recording), we just went for it from the start. The disadvantage to this familiarity with

each other, however, was that many assumptions were made by participants about the structure and goals of the group inquiry.

Time limitations also impacted the work of the TIG. As might be expected with people who continually go above and beyond in their work – and in every facet of life, from activism, to parenting, grandparenting, and other family relationships and obligations, to hobbies – attendance was not perfect from week to week. In designing the TIG work, I knew that six weeks was a big request.

Summary

Positive and sustainable social change will require more than bandages to cover up or temporarily stem the flow of (metaphorical and literal) blood. It will require us to look deeply, carefully and honestly at the roots – the buried and hidden roots – of injustice, to assume a radical stance toward the future, in order to imagine and create something better. Indigenous methodologies and Indigenous Feminist analysis allow me to participate in this process. This is where I am able to engage my community in a fearless examination of our own contributions to past injustices, and in a hopeful co-construction of knowledge and vision for the future. In undertaking a small study along with a specific group of public school educators and activists, I hoped to reveal some facets of settler colonialism that might inform our work, and turn to look to the future of our work, and that in the process benefit from the collaboration itself.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Educators[21], whether in the classroom or in the streets, will not be able to enact

liberatory education unless we make radical changes in our ways of thinking; necessary

changes that will make space for healing from the damages of settler colonialism. The

discussions of the Teacher Inquiry Group (TIG) revealed why this is an important

problem, and exposed how settler colonialism manifests in our every day lives, even

when we do not realize it. Perhaps most importantly, this project points us in new

directions to discover what we can do to facilitate healing and allow for transformative

justice-oriented education. Thinking through the lens of Indigenous Feminism during

data analysis has allowed me to notice important themes that emerged in our discussions,

and *also* to see the divergences and limitations that became apparent, as participants

discussed their work, *and their thinking about their work* within the landscape of

education activism. Within these talks, we worked to "make sense" together (Odden &

Russ, 2019) and to make meaning, and think about the potential outcomes together.

Given the urgent and timely topic of this dissertation and its potential impact on

the work of teacher activists, the data collection methods go straight to the source of

knowledge, teacher activists themselves. The researcher's agenda for the TIG discussions

needed to remain flexible to meet the needs and concerns of the participants. Consistent

with my theoretical framework of Indigenous Feminism and liberatory democracy, and

my commitment to community answerability, participants were invited to contribute their

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[21] Most of the time when I am talking about educators or teacher activists I am talking about non-Native persons, and more particularly white-dominant-culture-settlers. I believe my work as one of them is to help us be better.

thinking without undue interference by the researcher / facilitator. The members of this group already knew each other from their various interactions – educational, political, and sometimes social – and relationships in a medium-sized city with multiple opportunities for activists to get involved in community work. At times, our discussions before the "official" meeting started were equally (or sometimes even more) informative than the discussion of the texts provided. All of these unexpected occurrences are congruent with the ethical and epistemological commitments of the project, which include: a value of and respect for diverse ways of knowing and being, both *among* participants and *between* participants and researcher; deep respect for the knowledge within the community; and recognition of the role of the researcher as a co-learner and as a (hopefully helpful) conduit in service of local knowledge.

The results of this study cannot be summed up in a table or a graph; following the activist commitments of the researcher and the ethics of community-based and answerable research. The Teacher Activist TIG, while framed and convened in terms of its three guiding research questions, and structured by a series of readings, allowed participants room to bring up any topic or theme they felt was appropriate and important. Community-informed research is not about one answer. It is exploratory in nature, and the present project is no exception. Consistent with Indigenous research that emphasizes relationship, community, intergenerational connection, and ultimately self-determination and nation-building, the group worked under a less directive approach than they might have in a study that was determined to arrive at a neat and tidy solution. With this kind of work, the outcome may be just the opposite of "tidy." Working toward liberation can be difficult, messy, and emotionally upsetting, especially for dominant culture folks (Boler

& Zembylas, 2003; Bonilla-Silva, 2019; Kumashiro, 2005; Leonardo, 2009; Matias, 2016; Zembylas, 2019). I maintain that these moments of discomfort are necessary for us to move into a healing process and ultimately to a future of liberation and self-determination for all.

As the members of the Teacher Inquiry Group wrestled with the questions of how to increase solidarity within the teacher corps – the "rank and file" in union terminology – they uncovered complex dilemmas and few easy answers. The myth of the "American Dream" was ever-present in our conversations, whether the topic under consideration was individual schools, teacher unions, or land rematriation. The present analysis invokes an Indigenous Feminist approach to these new questions, and works to hold space for *radical* imagination. In describing her project of Radical Resurgence, Nishnaa'beg scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (2017) defines radical as "a thorough and comprehensive reform". She uses the term radical to mean "root, to channel the vitality of my Ancestors to create a present that is recognizable to them because it is *fundamentally different* from the one settler colonialism creates. I am not using the term to mean crazy, violent, or from the fringe …." (p. 48, emphasis mine). It gives us permission to envision a more beautiful future for schooling and for humanity as a whole.

I insist that we all *can* and *should* be allied – in communication with and supporting each other – to create a better experience of schooling for *all* children and for our communities, not *instead* of doing "our own work," but as *part of* the overall effort. Conversations in the TIG revealed ways that oppressive (racist, settler-colonial, heterosexist) structures of our society discourage us from working in solidarity. Settler colonial logics of individualism and competition create the illusion that education

"excellence" is a zero-sum game – that there is not enough good to go around. One person's brilliance must be defined in comparison to another's mediocrity or failure. The rhetoric of "pull yourself up by your bootstraps" and the tokenization of those few who "make it" in spite of "the odds" hides the ways the system is in fact designed to stack those odds against large groups of people. The political forces of neoliberalism and neo-capitalist language serve to prop up the U.S. education system. It *claims* to work for the education of democratic citizens but in practice, schooling is mostly a tool of control. These pervading logics keep us separate from each other, rather than helping us come together to enact and embody a larger effort to change the *very foundation* of public education. We will not be able to work together unless non-Native teachers, especially white-dominant-culture-settlers, are willing to listen and understand *what is required of us* – rather than centering our own projects and our own needs, particularly the need to "relieve the settler of feelings of guilt or responsibility, and [to] conceal the need to give up land or power or privilege" (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 21). The TIG provided an opening where supportive peers could wrestle with these ideas together. This gradually revealed settler colonial assumptions about individualism, competition, and conceptions of success, accumulation, and ownership, which made our inquiry more difficult.

The aim of this chapter is to share some of the TIG's work and to point to the ways that settler colonialism informed our conversation. First, we review some of the ways that settler cultural assumptions about the purposes and structures of research informed our approach to the work. The white western cultural value placed on *individualism* and *competition* informed the way we engaged the research questions, while settler resistance to Indigenous cultural values and lack of understanding of

Indigenous activist needs impeded our conversations at times. Next, I share the three themes that stood out most in terms of the limitations settler mindsets place on the work of activism: (1) western definitions of success; (2) a division of dominant culture activist groups between different but related issues; and (3) a generational divide between activists of a certain age and younger folks who are now becoming involved in social justice movements. This chapter captures the non-Native TIG members' thoughts about working in solidarity with Native activists – and to point to places of possibility and the implications of these results for the future.

Relationality within Nation-Building Indigenous Teacher Education

We noticed an unexpected but related finding in re-reading the data a year after the group meetings. Rena had been working at the Sapsik'ʷałá Teacher Education Program within the Education Studies Program during the TIG and she spoke about how much she had learned from the faculty and staff of the program, who she called, "Indigenous goddesses that would school me." She told the group, "I'm just learning and just thinking a lot about how communities organize and make change happen, which is a gift to get to do that, you know…"

> "I get to be a… I get to pay attention to the emails of Native Strategies [Group] at UO and cause I'm the GE at the Sapsik'ʷałá Program, and I manage the Facebook page. And so I see actually all of the solidarity across the different departments [at the university] and across the nation and *Nations* right? …of Indigenous people. And it is mind blowing. It is absolutely… like talk about organizational duty is watching what native communities are doing.

> "It's the solidarity across Indigenous and the - you know - part of that was Standing Rock. And like, that just brought people together across the world… Indigenous communities across the world. And you know, like, watching Mauna K'ea and Standing Rock, and then you know, that Amazon, [indecipherable]. Yeah, just watching this, the connectedness between all of those communities…"

Rena's experience working with Sapsik'ʷałá staff and students changed the way she understands the relationship between the needs of different BIPOC communities: "it just felt like for me as a person of color, you know, I kind of I grouped Native people in with me as a person of color." Now she understands that her equating her experience and needs as a Black biracial woman with that of Native peoples is an erasure "… of them and of the colonialist project."

For the 2020-2021 academic year, since Rena graduated last year, I have had the privilege of working with Sapsik'ʷałá students, staff, and faculty. As a white settler person, and a person who had already been engaged with Sapsik'ʷałá's work in other ways, including grant writing and writing articles with Michelle Jacob and other Indigenous education and public health researchers and advocates, the Sapsik'ʷałá experience impacted me differently. However, our experiences were similar in that both Rena and I felt extremely fortunate to be in relation with brilliant Indigenous educators and future K-12 teachers, and to learn from them.

The project of Indigenous teacher education is a different project from other social justice education work. Rena and Pete had a conversation during the TIG where she was attempting to articulate the work that everyone has to do toward decolonization as teachers. "Just… just the ways that we see Native people or see 'multiculturalism….'" she said. Pete responded, "Yeah, or equity." Rena went on to explain further: "Yeah, the way that we see equity… there's something… . Like, we're indoctrinated right? We're colonialized, we're colonized." Rena's words – and also her difficulty translating the experience into words – resonates strongly for me. Part of my own anti-colonial praxis this year has been the time I spent with pre-service teachers in Sapsik'ʷałá, and with the

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program's Elder in Residence, Tux̱ámshish, Virginia Beavert, PhD. Each week I would

visit Tux̱ámshish at her home and help her get set up on Zoom so that she could

participate in the Sapsikʼʷałá Seminar with the pre-service teachers, faculty, and staff.

For me, this time with Tux̱ámshish, in her home and in the online space of the seminar

felt like sacred time. The theme of the seminar for that term was relationships, and

Tux̱ámshish encouraged students to be in touch with younger people in their

communities, with Elders, and with family members who they haven't seen in a while.

Their homework was to learn Ichishkíin words, or words from their own tribal languages,

that describe famiial relationships. One of their readings was Michelle Jacob's *The Auntie

Way* (Jacob, 2020), which encourages us all to be in better relations with our loved ones,

and especially to appreciate those who "bring their kindness, fierceness, and creativity to

the world" (Jacob, 2020, dedication).

My own experience of the sacred in decolonized spaces, along with Rena's

description of our mentors as "goddesses" demonstrate how *being in relation* with

Indigenous women – women who are doing the work of teaching Indigenous educators,

while also generously teaching us as non-Native teachers is an important piece of our

own healing. Anthony-Stevens, Mahfouz, & Bisbee (2020) describe Indigenous teacher

education programs as part of the broader "intergenerational processes of Indigenous

persistence, resilience, and community agency committed to strengthening the next

generation of nation builders" (p. 543). For Rena and myself, being able to contribute a

small service to this important "counternarrative[s] to transactional pipeline models in

teacher education" and to be involved in work that "operates on intergenerational

timescales and roots itself in broader community epistemologies, place and contexts"

(Anthony-Stevens et al., 2020, p. 557) was more than a learning experience for Rena and for me, there was a deeply personal element to the experience as well, which stays with us and inspires and informs our future work.

The Prevalence of Settler Colonial Assumptions

At the end of our work as a Teacher Inquiry Group, we found ourselves no closer to understanding just *how* teacher activists are made. Activists looking back on their own development can point to moments that were turning points for them, and while there were some similarities – such as four of the six being active during the Vietnam War in the late 1960's and early 1970's – each individual's experience was different in some fundamental ways. Emphases on individuality, western thinking's conceptualization of research, and misunderstandings about the nature of land and ownership, all limited our understanding of the ways we can make a difference in our communities and the ways we can become changemakers.

Individualism.

Pete articulated his idea that people begin to fight back "when your back's against the wall, man". Larry concurred, pointing out the teachers' unions focus on "bread and butter issues," namely salary and benefits, in the negotiating of collective bargaining agreements (CBA's; also known as the contract) for teachers. Both Pete and Roscoe had spent time in Cuba and Mexico working with teachers there, and according to Pete, in that context "It's really clear who's screwing you over…." In talking about the teacher union work, there was some agreement that unions should be broadening their focus from material concerns – salary, benefits, what TIG participants called "bread and butter issues" – and including more social justice work, as the Chicago teachers have done

(Chicago Teachers Union, 2012). We have seen some evidence of that locally, such as the one-day walkout that Eugene's and Springfield's teachers participated in, along with teachers all over Oregon, and the use of the concept of "the schools our students deserve". Union work, unfortunately, is under attack more broadly by neoliberal groups and individuals who link unionizing to the work of socialism, which has scared many folks away from union participation. For these folks, the idea of a strong group of workers able to protect their own rights undermines the concept of American individualism within free markets (including the labor market) where everyone has an equal chance and anyone can succeed if they just work hard enough.

In the United States, neoliberalism (a "kinder, gentler" fascism?[22]) has further clouded the issues by linking treasured American ideals – such as freedom of choice and the fantasy of endless possibilities for those who work hard enough – to anti-union and anti-activist sentiment. This is a manifestation of freedom for the individual without responsibility for the group. Unions of all kinds are framed in popular discourse as radical socialist organizations, and therefore un-American. Teachers are further portrayed as greedy and lazy (e.g. Guggenheim, 2010), as incompetent (Aronson et al., 2021) and "as bumbling dullards who lack skills and are generally powerless, or who play adversarial roles toward students" by popular media and film (Beyerbach, 2005, p. 270).

TIG members often referred to individual activists and outstanding movement leaders, such as Dr. King or Rosa Parks, or Chicago Teacher Union president Karen

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[22] "The term *fascism* is thrown as a bomb in order to create a perception of crisis—a typical populist gesture whereby the champions of the people seek to 'radically simplify the terms and tenor of political debates' and legitimate 'the demand to act decisively and immediately'" (Moffitt, 2016, cited in Ganev, 2017, p. S16).

Lewis, who has been credited with turning that local union around to focus on the big issues of student learning conditions (pointing out that they are the same as teacher working conditions). On a local level, there are a handful of elder activists who are widely respected and to whom TIG members looked up to as an example. Larry, for example, referred multiple times to one white elder woman in our community as, "the best organizer I have ever seen." He was very interested in how to convince individual teachers to get on board with our work. "I'm here because I am interested in that question: 'Why do some teachers get activated? Why don't others? And what are you going to do about it?'" These sentiments reflect U.S. culture's emphasis on individual agency and internal motivation, as opposed to an Indigenous collectivist orientation, which is expressed in terms of shared accomplishments and movement growth and momentum driven by collective work. Jacob, (2012), expresses "the great responsibility that Native people feel – to our cultures, to our ancestors, to all the leaders, students, teachers, and healers of the past, and to the student teachers and healers who are yet to come" (p. 179). In this view, leadership, whether in the form of teaching, writing op-ed pieces for the local paper, or organizing activist volunteers, is a great honor and responsibility. Further, Jacob (2012) shares that "Yakama cultural lessons teach us that strong, communally oriented individuals make the strongest collectivity" (p.179). Even though TIG members understood the power of collective action in terms of opting out of standardized tests, or in terms of union work, and were able to imagine a collective future in terms of Marxist socialism, there were definite limits to what could be envisioned and what folks were willing to commit to.

TIG participants hoped to "figure out" how to grow new activists, by understanding how individual activists come to be. But identity development is not a process of predictable, linear growth, as western thought would prefer. Braungart & Braungart (1986) and Louis et al., (2016) have theorized leadership development as an individual developmental process. Another example is Holeman's (2007) dissertation, which conceptualizes a "Model of Activist Identity Development (MAID)" as having five stages: Contact, Commitment to Action, Stridency, Adaptation, and Deepened Understanding. The MAID model bears some similarity to Helms' white racial identity development model, in which individuals grow through six phases: contact, disintegration, reintegration, pseudo-independent, immersion, and autonomy. All of the TIG members have been committed to anti-racist work for many, many years, which points to the possibility of a model such as Helms' (Helms, 1990; J. G. Ponterotto et al., 1995). For both activists and white anti-racist persons the "highest stage involves an awareness of personal responsibility … acknowledgement of one's whiteness, and abandonment of racism in any of its forms (Helms, 1990, p. 53).

Outside of Western attempts to break down a complex and unpredictable process in order to intervene somehow, these models are too simplistic in their focus on *individual* work and change (Braungart & Braungart, 1986; Flacks, 1990; Ruiz-Junco, 2011). Individual agency and behavior is certainly important in activist work, but neither identity development nor the evolution of our beliefs and values is linear nor hierarchical. It is a circular and cyclical process of engaging with activist groups, with policies and people, and local contexts with their own values and value systems, all embedded in particular places with particular histories. John O'Leary (Sahnbadis), a Mi'kmaq cultural

ceremonialist and Elder in residence…shared his thoughts on leadership and identity with Alannah Young Leon (2012): "Leadership is unique to the individual. … [each person has] to map their own leadership development" (p. 61). For settlers, the practice of leadership, or education about leadership, has mostly been focused on the development of the individual capacities to lead. Even the broadest definitions of "servant leadership" or definitions that decenter "positional leadership" to emphasize the leader within all of us, fail to take into account the place. For instance, on University of Oregon's campus, multiple leadership initiatives work to include social justice trainings for students (and sometimes faculty and staff as well). Although their stated goal with all of their work is to encourage a diverse, equitable and inclusive model of leadership, rarely do they mention, much less deeply explore, the concept of responsability to the Kalapuya people, on whose home the institution exists.

Conceptualizations of Research

One participant frequently asked me "What is your hypothesis?" and seemed frustrated when I did not really have a set agenda that would work us toward the answer (as if I had the answer). This expectation comes from the conceptualization of "research" as a finite and proof-driven enterprise (Bishop, 1998; Fine, 2008) and was just one way that the TIG as a whole enacted settler colonial mindset and assumptions. At times our thinking was limited by the way we framed the problems present in schools and in activism in general, which made it difficult to imagine truly new solutions and a different future. Over and over again throughout the meetings we would run up against the first two of the three research questions outlined at the beginning of our early meetings, which were laid out in the draft of the literature review which the teacher activists read. One

member of the group in particular kept returning to the question: "How is this [discussion / reading / question] going to help me recruit and retain teachers who are new to the profession, or new to activism in general?" This insistence on an answer – on a clear solution to the problem of teacher non-activism – reflects a settler colonial assumption of research that is not so open-ended, but that has a hypothesis in mind that can be proven or disproven.

TIG members were in agreement that certain kinds of "research" were too reductionist in their approach to teaching and learning. (Shahjahan, 2011) foreground[s] how evidence- based education proponents are unknowingly perpetuating a colonial discourse. In other words, I join with those who have already critiqued evidence-based education, and extend their critique by offering an anticolonial perspective" (p. 182). The purpose is to show that behind the recognition of said knowledge under the "scientific/traditional" binary framework, knowledge/power relations are concealed, which are exercised from the "scientific" knowledge standpoint towards the "traditional" knowledge perspective" (Beltrán, 2017, p. 116). Shahjahan (2011) traces our intolerance for the messiness of teaching and learning to dominant Western epistemologies (pp. 187-188) which in my view translates into our unwillingness to consider decolonizing work for our selves, even as we disagree with some of the products of western educational "evidence" (such as behavior modification plans like PBIS and standardized testing) and their outcomes, particularly for children of color and students learning English.

Settler Colonialism Constrains Our Activist Work

TIG participants were fully aware of curricular shortcomings within individual settler colonial classrooms and on the whole. Pete told about his granddaughter's school

in San Diego. "…they send a video of my little granddaughter … dressed in Native costume .. with feathers and everything. [It looked like] the 1950s…" But recognizing the blatant teaching of false history is but one small step toward understanding the underlying structures of settler colonialism and how they undergird so many of our beliefs. The opposite of putting on a false and damaging reenactment of "The First Thanksgiving" is not decolonized education and self-determination for all. To present an accurate history and to create a school atmosphere that does not actively harm Native children (Sabzalian, 2019) should be the bare minimum of teachers' work, and all members of the TIG understood this.

Rather than provide clear answers, or instructions on how to "decolonize" our thinking, many conversations with the TIG pointed out and made explicit the insidious nature of settler colonial logics of land, ownership, and belonging that live deep inside even the best intentioned white/settler/dominant culture folks.

A few examples:

- A conversation regarding land theft:

  Roscoe: yeah it is the original sin it most certainly is and and how it's connected to so that I'll do whatever it takes to get land property, whatever. It's related to capitalist but you know human beings doing that throughout history.

  Pete: Always ... owning, owning people.

  Roscoe: The old testament is a… a story of tribes

  Larry: A piece of the rock.

  Roscoe trying to survive, stealing each other's land and fighting you know ….

- A conversation about land after the (official) end of slavery in the US:

Pete I mean, the difference, you know, like, like African Americans after slavery and stuff, the most important thing for them was land.

Deanna Mm hmm.

Roscoe If we can get the land, so we can work our own land instead of sharecropping.

Rena Yeah, be left alone. That was a huge thing. And you know, and those people were the most stable

Deanna but you know that that fight is still going on there.

Pete I know

Deanna There's undeeded, not officially deeded or not-documented -well-enough land that they're still in court about, again, ….

Rena 40 acres and a mule

Roscoe Caron But is that colonialism?... for ex-slaves to want land?

Deanna Yup

Pete Well, that's, that's the thing.

Deanna Well whose land is it?

Pete Land … 40 acres and a mule

If we (non-Native) teacher activists, who put ourselves on the front lines of education activism, are unprepared to do the work of healing ourselves, how can we make true and lasting changes? How can we work in solidarity and in relation with Native activists and educators and contribute to Indigenous self-determination? How can we contribute to a just, inclusive, and beautiful future if we ourselves cannot imagine it? As Sandy Grande puts it: "Is it possible for democracy to grow from seeds of tyrrany? Can the 'good life' be built upon the dealths of thousands?" (2005, p. 50).

Western dominant culture definitions think of activist work in a particular way, constraining the questions we ask (Tuck, 2013a) and how we approach them (L. T. Smith, 2015). Settler logics and "moves to innocence" were not predominant in our discussions, but did percolate to the surface from time to time. For instance, when members of the TIG read *Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor* (Tuck and Yang, 2012), they reacted strongly to an account of contact between Indigenous peoples in Oakland and the young (mostly white) Occupy Oakland activists. According to (Barker, 2012) the occupiers could not bring themselves to join with the Indigenous activists, asking, "Would [our] solidarity with [them] require [us] to give up [our] lands, [our] resources, [our] ways of life, so that [they] – who numbered so few, after all – could have more? Could have it all?" (Barker, October 30, 2011). Within the TIG, one participant, Carrie Ann, with a predominately Marxist frame of analysis seemed personally insulted. She said, "The attack on Occupy really bothered me." Another participant, Jane characterized the article itself as "... not friendly…" while another saw the authors' definition of decolonization and the demand for rematriation of land "unrealistic" and "impossible."

Two of our participants had been directly involved with the creation of a "racism free school" at one of our local middle schools in the late 1980's and early '90's. The teacher activists at Jefferson Middle School were instrumental in changing the way the University of Oregon's teacher education program trained teachers. All of our participants had been active in the local teachers' union (Eugene Education Association or EEA), and a couple of them also at the state level (Oregon Education Association or OEA). They have gone door to door to garner support for bond referendums and candidates for the school board; they have marched and demonstrated and gone on strike.

Pete and his comrades in the group were very proud and excited that he had been arrested during a teachers' strike in 1989. But overarching all of these, there is still settler colonialism. The racism-free zone was in a school called "Jefferson" on unceded Kalapuya homeland. The union itself is a racialized group with a history of racism and segregation. Marching, striking, and letter-writing campaigns are resistance mechanisms grounded in western conceptions of participatory democracy. Outlining any "racism free zone" that does not explicitly challenge settler colonialism leaves its structures unquestioned, and untouched. Without engaging with and working to dismantle settler processes and logics, we may in fact be *reproducing* some aspects of the social order even as we struggle to make changes.

Over the course of the six TIG meetings, three themes emerged as most significant and interrelated: the status quo definitions of success that members held on to as they considered their efforts; a compartmentalizing of activist efforts between different groups focused on specific problems; and a divide between the generations of activists in terms of their goals, mindsets, and preferred actions. Western science and epistemological commitments may not be monolithic, but there are overarching

> "'rules' which help make sense of what is contained within the archive and enable 'knowledge' to be recognized. These rules can be conceived of as rules of classification rules of framing and rules of practice. Although the term 'rules' may sound like a set of fixed items which are articulated in explicit ways as regulations, it also means rules which are masked in some way and which tend to be articulated through implicit understandings of how the world works. Power is expressed at both the explicit and implicit levels. Dissent, or challenges to the rules, is manageable because it also conforms to these rules, particularly at the implicit level" (Smith, 2014, p. 58).

Limited Versions and Visions of Activism & Success

In accordance with western ways of thinking about research, some members of the TIG wanted to agree upon a "common definition" of activism before we began talking about activism. This effort to define and "operationalize" the word we use to identify ourselves proved problematic. Additionally, there was some tension around the concept of success vis-á-vis activist work. What would signify successful movement varied among the participants, and there seemed to be a heavy emphasis on an either-or binary. All of these led to further questions regarding who would ultimately decide what counts as success, how would it be measured and who would do the measuring.

A question that came up again and again in the course of our meetings is how best to "recruit" and "organize" new activists. One way settler colonialism infiltrates even our best attempts at justice-oriented work is when we frame community building as "getting buy in" from the largest possible number of participants. The focus of our conversation was on convincing people to join, and identifying successful strategies to build the organization (both teacher union and community grass-roots alliance). Whether we were trying to get people out to march, or canvass door to door, or simply attend a meeting to learn about the organization, the work was framed by multiple members of the TIG as *recruitment*, rather than community building. This may stem in part from the mindset of teachers who are members of the teachers' union. The four retired educators in our group identified strongly with union work; all had held union leadership positions in the past. The two participants who are currently in the classroom are also union members. But how is union success to be recognized, and measured? In Norway, "The government emphasises teacher accountability, research-based practice and specialisation. By

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contrast, the teachers' union highlights research-informed practice, responsibility for educational quality and professional ethics" (Mausethagen & Granlund, 2012, p. 815).

Teacher professionalism and respect is another, equally important part of the larger struggle of teacher unions to earn the pay, working conditions, and proper funding for schools. At times throughout history, in various local contexts, "conceptions of teacher professionalism were more concerned with broader educational goals, cooperation and collegial relationships, as well as with an emphasis on teachers as reflective practitioners who are characterized by integrity, intrinsic motivation and professional commitment" (Mausethagen & Granlund, 2012, p. 817)

"You Can't Work on Everyone's Stuff"

The TIG conversations opened up questions about how our activism is structured as well as what we do. We often work in small groups around particular issues (what the business majors call "silos") and it can be difficult to collaborate across issues. Indigenous activists may work directly on behalf of Native students (e.g. advocating for resources, establishing programs and schools that support Indigenous students and teach Native languages and traditional knowledge) as well as on behalf of *all* students [e.g. the statewide curriculum efforts that culminated in the passing of Senate Bill 13 (SB 13) *Tribal History/Shared History* in Oregon]. Meanwhile, activism by mostly-non-Native teachers (e.g. Opt-Out movement / HB2655 in Oregon; local school board campaigns) do not generally work together. (MeChA) student organizations and the League of United Latin American Communities (LULAC) nationwide organize on behalf of Latin@x students, while the NAACP and AAUW focus on Black students' education access and success and that of girls and women, respectively. These can be further broken down, to

find organizations devoted to bringing Black children and girls into STEM fields, and further splintered into "Girls Who Code" and "UWiP" (Undergraduate Women in Physics). A complete list of activist and advocacy groups would be very long indeed.

Four of our participants (including the researcher) belong to a community group dedicated to "educating the public about public education." Though they cared about a great many issues in the education realm, one of their first campaigns as CAPE (Community Alliance for Public Education) was to educate parents and teachers about their right to "Opt Out" of standardized testing, as a refusal / resistance strategy. The group came to be defined as "the anti-testing group" among community members, the local school district, and in some of the other activist groups even though their overall mission remains much more far-reaching. The Opt Out Movement is part of the larger struggle in public education over teacher professionalism, corporatization and privatization of public schools. In turn, anti-corporatization is part of a larger struggle against racist and otherwise culturally bound methods of sorting, tracking and punishing our students and communities with the most need, and those who have been consistently marginalized and minoritized in new and creative ways, as racism and its devices have morphed[23] in order to resegregate Black and white children in schools (Rosiek & Kinslow, 2015) since Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka Kansas (E. Warren, 1954).

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[23] Alfred & Corntassel (2005) likewise describe the work "of postmodern imperialism and manipulations by shape-shifting colonial powers; the instruments of domination are evolving and inventing new methods to erase Indigenous histories and sense place" (p. 601). Lipman, 2017, p. 20, citing Peck & Theodore, 2012), similarly tells us that "neoliberalism is not a set of fixed policies, but a shape-shifting, opportunistic process of market-driven experimentation"

There was some recognition of the need for solidarity, but there were multiple factors impeding settler organizations from working together with Native educators and activists, and some resistance, which took different forms:

> Larry So part of organizing is that mechanism, if it's an individual or if it's some some big event that crystallizes, but for CAPE to work with that group, I don't even know what they were called SB 13, group, whatever, we would need a mechanism for them to come talk to us or we go talk to them.
>
> Pete And we won't work in isolation.
>
> Larry THAT's a real organizational challenge,
>
> Unknown Speaker …right.
>
> Larry Cause there's other groups too,
>
> Deanna …but also groups *do* go to other groups.
>
> Roscoe environmental?
>
> Larry …there's a problem with that, because you can't go to another group and ask them to do your work.

As we discussed the challenge posed by Boudreau Morris (2017) in their paper *Decolonizing Solidarity: Cultivating Relationships of Discomfort* one of our participants stated, "Well you can't work on everyone's stuff." This may be true under our current model, where every individual identifies with a specific group or cause or project, but what is possible if we think of our work as bigger than chipping away at dozens of smaller but interrelated problems?

Unions more recently have become more student-centered, fighting for "the schools our students deserve" (Brogan, 2014; Chicago Teachers Union, 2012) rather than centering their demands on teacher salaries and job security. At the same time, many unions and teacher professional organizations insist that "teacher teaching (working)

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conditions are student learning conditions" (Hirsch & Emerick, 2007). With the increase

of neoliberal managerial types at work on the education system, we see increasing

backlash against teachers. Aronson et al. (2021) citing Ladson-Billings (2014) tell us that:

> "… teachers have somehow become the new enemy. There has seemingly been a
> transformation of the teacher from hero to scapegoat in the society and this
> transformation is rooted in two contradictory ideas about teaching that critics and
> reformers hold in their heads simultaneously—teachers are the sources of the
> problem and teachers are the solution to the problem" (p. 443, emphasis added).

Furthermore, they argue, policies intended to "fix" schools and teaching cover up

deeper issues by blaming teachers and what they are not doing, rather than what is

possible within the larger neoliberal formulation of school "reform." Apple, (2006)

connects this "politics of reform" to the larger neoliberal agenda, which ultimately

"chang[es] the way we think of ourselves and what the goals of schooling should be" (p.

23). Teachers are increasingly understanding that these attacks are not just on them, not

on their profession, nor even on public schooling, but are an attack on participatory

democracy. They/we are recognizing that schools are imbued in racism and settler

colonial processes of sorting and ranking that serve to reproduce society's status quo. In

response, teachers and their unions have worked with community members and

neighborhood organizations, including sometimes local politicians, to fight back against.

In "the USA, where the neoliberal policies have been more aggressive than in, for

example, the Scandinavian countries," the demand for accountability and top down

reform reflects the mistrust of teachers by the government and is "an expression of public

and political scepticism towards teachers" (Mausethagen & Granlund, 2012, p. 818).

"Nice to See the Grownups In Charge Again"

Another factor that may have contributed to our unveiling of more and more difficult questions and no easy answers may have been a "generation gap" that revealed itself between the four retired teachers – all steeped in the activism around the Vietnam War and the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960's and early '70's – and the two younger teacher activist members in the TIG. Elders of the activist era of Vietnam and the Civil Rights movement had trouble understanding the aims and tactics of youth activists in our community who were working on Black Lives Matter marches, writing, social media, etc. Long before they entered the teaching profession they were active in anti-war, civil rights, radical democracy (e.g. Hoedads Collective). Coming from their different backgrounds, each of these four had similar views on what makes a teacher "get off the bench" and into activism. They mostly acknowledged economic issues, class struggle, and material analyses of schooling that informed their teacher activism. While some of them didn't identify as Communists, none of them was satisfied with the current "liberal" politics of the Democratic Party of Obama and Biden, and identified more with politicians and leaders they called "progressives."

In the TIG discussions we wondered "how does this gap influence the activist identity development of current teachers, who are approximately 30 years younger?" We struggled to understand how our work (within this project) would help with the effort to recruit and retain young teachers into our activist work, as we once again uncovered more questions and no clear answers. Older folks were baffled about young teachers' reluctance to get out at protests. Roscoe stated "it's rough – it seems like they just don't care but I don't know…" Larry added, "I just … I just don't get it."

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The failure to understand the ideals and tactics of a younger generation is not a new phenomenon. It seems that each generation looks at the next one with bewilderment. In the context of teacher activist work though, its elders did not understand or approve of the actions of our local youth-led Black Lives Matter group(s). A source of inspiration and hope lies in Native solidarity-building spaces, where "Intergenerational and lifelong learning are persistent leadership concepts [in Indigenous conversations about leadership], and collaboration is indispensable for developing leadership programs. Listening to and respectfully honouring Indigenous perspectives are required if we hope to overcome the possibility of perpetuating historical injustices…." (Young Leon, 2012, p. 58).

Solidarity Across Difference / Discomfort

By grounding our questions – our problematizing of the issue – in settler colonial theory, we can see and understand the structures and functions of closed-ended questions and the search for answers in individual examples, all within our context as teacher activists. If the common saying is true, that the first step to healing [recovery] is to understand that you have a problem, then we must explore our limitations further in order to begin to recognize and start breaking down the barriers between what is and *what might be*? In Indigenous community-based work, it is understood that all people, including students and teachers, bring their gifts, and that we *want* them to; we wouldn't invite folks to bring and share of themselves and their treasures and then crush them with our demand for sameness. The "path of correctness" belongs to Western society, and has proven to be limiting at best, damaging and destructive at worst. Doing our work in an inclusive way on multiple levels does get messy, but it will be worth it.

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This insight lends itself to the third research question of how non-Native activists can join with Native folks and begin to understand a long-term struggle for self-determination and sovereignty. Can learning through an Indigenous lens allow dominant culture activists (and those from groups on the margins that are not Native) to look at the work ahead, and the challenges we face, from a different perspective? If we are thinking of Indigenous futurities – of possibilities where we all can be our best selves and thrive – we are including our ancestors and thinking of ourselves as someone else's ancestor in the future. All of our work is part of a much larger movement toward education as "soul work" (West, in Weber, 2018) and "freedom work" (hooks, 1994). The framing of the current project with Indigenous Feminist theory and action allows us – requires us – the participants in justice-seeking work, to struggle together in a process of focused inquiry and self-reflection, so that we can better understand the contextual factors that contribute to the development of activists, and to see our own limitations in light of our settler-colonial societal structures when we approach from a place of healing, of action, and of radically imagined futurities. This is a gift that Native Feminist thinkers continue to share with all of us.

We understand activist identity development in the same way we understand young children's development as readers, or undergraduates' development as ethical leaders -- which is to say, not very well. There is no one model that will fit every person's identity development, only various tools that each of us might use in our own self-examination. Ironically, the twin yet opposite emphases on individuality and conformity in Western thought limit our understanding of the ways we can make a difference in our communities and also the ways we can become changemakers. Indigenous peoples'

efforts are always community-inclusive and intergenerational. If we understand our unit

of analysis to be the *entire community -- the collective* rather than the *individual*, we can

begin to imagine what the conditions we might create to cultivate teacher activism, and

where these spaces might open up. Teachers of all races and ethnicities become agents of

the state when they accept their positions in state-run schools. This has the effect of

keeping them upholding the Western settler institution of U.S. public schooling; it keeps

them/us closer to settler colonial ways of thinking than to Indigenous feminist ways of

thinking. According to (Siegel, 2017),

> "The increasingly globally imposed, corporate-controlled monoculture of Western
> society is keeping North American Westerners (and perhaps all members of
> Western liberal monoculture, as well as many non-Westerners around the planet)
> trapped in maladaptive and dysfunctional patterns of thought and behavior. The
> centuries-long imposition of Western monoculture is not only disruptive,
> destructive, and devastating to non-Western peoples and non-human life forms
> around the world, but is increasingly visibly destructive of Western subjects as
> well – first in the form of structural adjustments and other neoliberal processes of
> accumulation by dispossession, [citing Harvey, 2003] which are working to
> squeeze Western populations for the last remnants of what can be plundered from
> them; second in the form of destroying the last remnants of democracy and
> diversity within Western society (as in the rest of the world), and thus also
> destroying the means through which Westerners might peaceably change their
> monoculture; and third, in the form of polluting the planet, disrupting the climate,
> and destroying the ecosystem that most life forms – including human beings –
> rely upon to live" (p. 293-294).

People of color in the U.S. nation-state are not immune from misunderstanding

Indigenous nation-building. Rena, a biracial black woman, shared what she had learned

in her work with the Sapsik'ʷałá Teacher Education Program:[24] "I am learning so much

from these women about Indigenous feminist work. I used to think, 'Oh, we're all women

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[24] The Sapsik'ʷałá program has over 100 American Indian and Alaska Native alumni;
they are teaching all over the U.S. in public schools that serve Native and Indigenous
students. https://education.uoregon.edu/sapsikwala/

of color, we're all in the same spot, right?' But no…." According to (Grosfoguel, 2011) "The fact that one is socially located in the oppressed side of power relations does not automatically mean that he/she is epistemically thinking from a subaltern epistemic location. Precisely, the success of the modern/colonial world- system consists in making subjects that are socially located in the oppressed side of the colonial difference, to think epistemically like the ones on the dominant positions" (p. 5).

To describe this phenomenon, and to help us envision *what is required of us*, I have developed, with much assistance from Native colleagues and activists, a model that illustrates the dynamic relationships between Indigenous Feminisms, settler colonialism, and teacher activism (Figure 3; see also Appendix C). I envision this triangle not as a static shape, but as one always in flux. It illustrates some of the tensions within education activist spaces between settler colonial logics (SC), which represents the entirety of Western schooling demands, from the behavioral requirements to the "monoculture of the mind" created / demanded by standardized tests, the one-size-fits-all curriculum, and teacher deskilling (M. W. Apple, 1982). Even the most taken-for granted aspects of schooling are included here (e.g. graded age groups, the design of school buildings, even the idea that education must occur in a building at all). The teacher Activism (TA) exists in reaction to and in resistance to settler colonial schooling (SC), even when non-Native activists do not
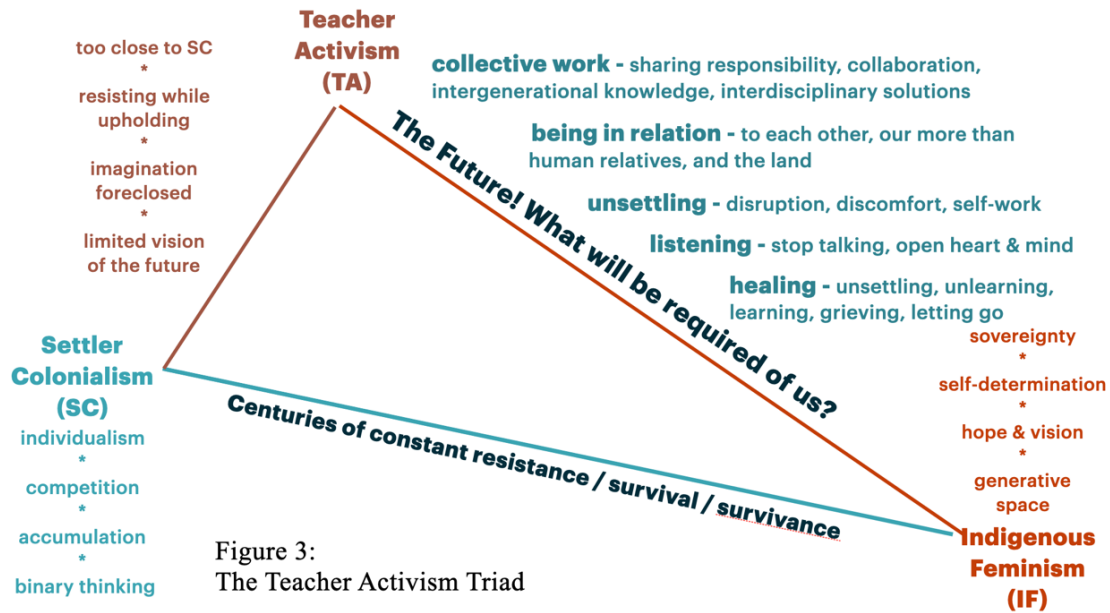
Figure 3:
The Teacher Activism Triad

The following text appears within the figure:

Teacher Activism (TA)

too close to SC
*
resisting while upholding
*
imagination foreclosed
*
limited vision of the future

Settler Colonialism (SC)
individualism
*
competition
*
accumulation
*
binary thinking

collective work - sharing responsibility, collaboration, intergenerational knowledge, interdisciplinary solutions

being in relation - to each other, our more than human relatives, and the land

unsettling - disruption, discomfort, self-work

listening - stop talking, open heart & mind

healing - unsettling, unlearning, learning, grieving, letting go

The Future! What will be required of us?

Centuries of constant resistance / survival / survivance

sovereignty
*
self-determination
*
hope & vision
*
generative space

Indigenous Feminism (IF)

perceive their/our work as such. We, in our various groups and projects are in opposition to canned curriculum, textbooks that present false history, the testing industrial complex, and the sanctity of Western knowledge and knowledge production as the standard of goodness. The length of the sides indicates a metaphorical distance between Indigenous Feminism (IF) and the other two. It could not be a nice neat equilateral triangle in which all pieces are balanced and equidistant. The relationship of TA to SC is much closer than either of them is to IF. If we can understand the interplay in these spaces of tension in between, perhaps we can begin to imagine ways to create the conditions in which we can work in "uncomfortable solidarity" to unsettle settler colonialism in our schools and create a future world where generations to come will work together too. This is how liberatory education will happen.

An Indigenous feminist framework would help disparate groups in at least two ways: first, by focusing on Indigenous self-determination as the ultimate outcome of any

activism, we are centering on the long view, rather than zooming in so closely on our immediate projects or the immediacy of the next upcoming campaign. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) points us to 25 Indigenous projects that all aim toward Indigenous self-determination (and by extension freedom for all); within these there are jobs for activists, for teachers, for researchers, and projects that anyone can take up or join in, whether Native or not. Second, by cultivating relationships of discomfort across groups, we let ourselves always be working "in crisis" (Kumashiro, 2005). When we are unsettled, he maintains, we are able to do social justice work. If we are feeling too comfortable, he recommends that we check in with ourselves … make sure that we are not participating in normative work – that what we once considered radical (or what Kumashiro terms queer – the opposite of normative) is now normative. "People working toward social justice often reach a point when they think they have arrived at the best approaches to achieve their goals" (Kumashiro, 2005, p. 52). This homeostasis means we have stopped moving growing and learning, when we must keep growing and learning.

CHAPTER V

HEALING AND OTHER FUTURE GOOD WORK

In this chapter, I briefly review the foundation of the U.S. nation-state's system of public schooling, and describe teachers' relationships to that system; this is what I referred to in Chapter Two as "two faces of American Education" (after Rana, 2010). I draw on insights from the Teacher Inquiry Group (TIG) discussions in attempts to understand the (often unknowing) complicity of non-Native education activists in replicating schooling's settler colonial structures and processes. I offer a conceptualization of the tensions between teacher activism, settler colonialism, and Indigenous Feminism. Finally, drawing from Indigenous education and Indigenous Feminist research and practice, I discuss the implications of what this project has revealed, and point to some hopeful framing of possible futures.

The aim of this chapter is to invite readers to reflect on how systems impact individuals and at the same time individuals, in relation to those systems, make choices that can either reproduce those systems and structures, or resist them. The work of resistance is in itself complex and always a contested space. Therefore, I present a framework to illustrate the relations between three systems of actors and the structures they co-create and which co-create the individuals: Settler Colonial structures, Indigenous Feminist ontology and epistemology, and teacher activist collectives. My goal is to suggest ways that readers can engage in healing spaces and in solidarity work that will allow teachers (as well as other in-school actors – parents, students, administrators, office staff, the custodians, the nurse, the school psychologists, etc.) to understand the

workings of settler colonialism and the damage it has wrought, and to take up the work of divorcing educational practice from its oppressive structures.

Public education has not lived up to its various lofty aspirations; *in fact it has consistently failed to do so*. Schooling is an effective tool of forgetting or *colonial unknowing* (Vimalasery et al., 2016), which means that most of us, especially non-Native, and especially white|dominant culture individuals, have not had the opportunity to reckon deeply with the root of the oppression and violence that schools are always enacting upon all of our children. Even when disparities in educational provision between white settler children and everyone else are apparent, even when we are advocating for standardized testing to be cancelled, or for an end to policing in schools, we/teacher activists operate from settler colonial understandings of how to "do activism." Even as we resist, we work within the system, and have not had to face our complicity in a white supremacist system that provides a wholly different educational experience for the children of some than it does for the rest of us, just as it did in Jefferson's time. Our Democratic dreams allow us to avoid waking to the harsh anti-democratic reality of schooling in the U.S. This is the work of settler colonialism – or what Aziz Rana (2010) has called the "two faces of American Freedom." How is it possible for a system (or an entire nation) to think of itself, and to be *thought of* around the world as a beacon of freedom, democracy, and self-determination, while at the same time *acting* in ways that are constraining, authoritarian, and restrictive? Tuck & Yang (2012) theorize settler "moves to innocence" employed by members of the oppressor group to help them deny their complicity (or at least minimize any annoying feelings of guilt).

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During six weekly meetings, TIG participants reflected on their/our[25] roles and behaviors in resistance to education's formations of coercion and compliance, and what internalized institutional beliefs might be limiting our work. We also examined how our unconscious alignment with, and our emotional investment in, settler colonial formations inform (and limit) the way we are able to think about the future. The main themes emerging from the TIG discussions revealed internal conflicts in the epistemologies of activism at work in of non-Native teachers who self-identify as activists in educational spheres. My analyses of these research findings have implications for educational activist work moving forward, and for resistance to settler colonial structures in multiple additional spheres of struggle, including public health and health care disparities, poverty and income inequality, human rights and peace, and environmental degradation.[26] The Teacher Inquiry Group has methodological implications for future research in this area, as well as for practice, as they are spaces where activists are able to undertake the critical work of sense-making within their own groups, in light of settler colonialism. Further, I propose ways that this research informs potential implications for healing from settler

[25] As I have throughout the project, I use a variety of pronouns to refer to individual teachers and to various groups of teachers. My use of they/we here and elsewhere is indicative of my membership in the group I call "teachers" and also "teacher activists." In this chapter especially, I include myself in the "we/us" of non-Native teacher activists who also are white|dominant-culture|western persons, as we have much work to do in decolonizing our own thinking, and also to share our learning and unlearning with other members of our group/s.

[26] There can be no definitive list of the social problems that humans are facing, so I draw on my work with students in which I ask them to think of "five buckets of problems" and the relationships between them. "We can't think about education without thinking about poverty. We can't think about health without thinking about environmental degradation.

colonialism in a broader sense, as part of a larger project of justice and liberation within a framework Indigenous relationality and nation-building.

Damages of Settler Colonialism in U.S. Education

Throughout American history, all marginalized groups have, in one way or another, suffered under the insatiable needs of settler colonial logics and structures, whether the tactic is outright slaughter of people, the destruction of their homes and food, or the more insidious devastation of lifeways and attempted erasure of histories, languages, and cultures. All schools in the U.S. are built on Indigenous homelands, and thus education systems are *always* enmeshed in settler colonial matrices of power. This problem is especially urgent in cities, where Black and brown students are increasingly subjected to neoliberal encroachments on their minds, bodies, and neighborhoods (Lipman, 2011), while their Native peers in big cities across Turtle Island are relegated to near-invisibility. Bang et al. (2014, citing Wolfe, 2006) tell us that in what is now Chicago, and everywhere, "The core of the settler-Indigenous dialectical structure is defined by the desire to 'erase or assimilate Indigenous people alongside a continued symbolic Indigenous presence'" (p. 4). In addition to the much-publicized mistreatment of children of color in large urban school districts, settler colonial logics are enacted in U.S. schools from the suburbs to the exurbs to remote rural locations. It is crucial that we resist white supremacy and reproduction of neoliberal and settler colonial logics as the central ideals guiding the education of children.

In response to over-testing, teacher villainization, the emotional and physical abuse of our LGBT and queer students, police violence in schools, and anti-Semitic and anti-Asian rhetoric and violence, educators have become activists. I maintain that

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education activists are on the right side of history in their fight against corporatization and privatization of K-12 schools, where *all* children are *mandated* to attend, and are encouraged to work hard to achieve their goals and dreams. Good intentions may pave the road to hell, as the old saying tells us. Even the best intentions are not enough to pave the way to justice, and we have seen through the TIG that even those with *only the very best of intentions* can be derailed by their own unconscious investments in whiteness and settler colonialism.

If we look critically at the problems of schooling practices it is easy to see racism, ableism, sexism, and corporatization / neoliberalism at work, from the classrooms to the front office, to the playground. We will also see that teacher activists have a long history of resistance to policies and practices which harm children. All of this led me to wonder: how do teachers become activists? What inspires them? Is it a gradual, developmental "becoming" process, or is political action sparked by a lightning bolt of injustice? How do the activist collectives to which teachers belong inspire, support, and sustain them? Through my own experience working in teacher activist spaces, I have noticed that though most of us/them have a critical lens through which to view and understand the problems of racism, classism, and neoliberalism, for example, but we are many times unable to see the structures of settler colonialism at work in schools. When confronted with settler colonial theory, it is painful to acknowledge that settler colonialism is present *in us* and has the potential to limit us in our radical activist work. Even as they/we acknowledge the mistreatment of American Indian / Alaska Native (AI/AN) students, historically and in the present moment, the ways that non-Indigenous teacher activist groups tackle education problems are rarely anti-colonial and decolonizing in their work.

Teacher activists are in an in-between space, where they are at once contesting the system of schooling and in positions of authority that uphold the very system they resist. We/they need a deeper analysis, a more radical (following Simpson, 2017) imagining of possible solutions.

Western social science research has proven inadequate as a tool for social change, as it pertains to public education. "Our research over the past two decades documents ambitious and promising efforts followed consistently by unsatisfactory gains in the face of normative and political obstacles that keep equity reforms from being fully implemented and/or sustained" (Oakes & Lipton, 2002, p. 383). Though we work hard to enact democratic principles in our teaching and activism, "the democratic attitudes of that society have strong limitations and co-exist with nondemocratic ones. (Medina, 2010, p. 3). I would go farther to say that our democratic attitudes are obstructed by their association with settler colonial logics, going back to the founding documents of the U.S. nation-state. Whatever we try to change, whatever small victory we think we have won, settler colonialism co-opts even our best efforts and smooths over our disruptions while the core of the problem remains untouched – or in many cases, altogether unseen.

I agree with Stern (2006) that spaces of learning are places to instill "habits of heart and mind" that are compatible with the compliance and competition needs of settler colonial structures. If this is so, they may also be spaces of unlearning settler colonialism, and healing. As I approach this work I take to heart Audre Lorde's caution that we will never dismantle the master's house using the master's tools (2007). I am looking for

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"new"[27] tools. This project helps us imagine new ways to sustain and enhance the current work of non-Native teacher activists, and how to inspire new teachers to become activists. The study engaged a cohort of teacher activists in a TIG (Teacher Inquiry Group), to explore problems of practice in teacher activist work, and the possibilities/challenges of decolonizing our praxis and working in solidarity with Native and Indigenous educators and activists. In describing her project of Radical Resurgence, Nishnaa'beg scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (2017) defines radical as "a thorough and comprehensive reform" (p.47). She uses the term radical to mean "root, to channel the vitality of my Ancestors to create a present that is recognizable to them because it is *fundamentally different* from the one settler colonialism creates. I am not using the term to mean crazy, violent, or from the fringe …." (p. 48, emphasis mine). Like Simpson, I imagine a fundamentally different education for all people on Turtle Island. Further, I have come to view much of the education resistance and activism in most U.S. settings as just tinkering around the edges of the fundamental problem of schooling, and to view this approach as a strategy of settler colonialism.

If we are to overcome such thoroughgoing colonization of our own selves, we are going to need to think beyond the actions we take to resist the injustices we see, and move beyond the analyses of individual racism, and even change how we understand structural racism. The unseen ontological and epistemological colonization must be revealed and resisted. Epistemic resistance … refers to a mode of relationality that is

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[27] My use of the word "new" here is facetious; of course the tools are not "new" – in the same way that Columbus didn't "discover a *new* world." The tools exist, but we settler colonial folks don't know how to use them appropriately. I am looking for better tools and Native and Indigenous colleagues have been gracious enough to share theirs.

crucial for democratic sociability" (Medina, 2013, p.4) and crucial to functioning of a truly democratic society. Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., in his speech "Beyond Vietnam" warned us,

> "The war in Vietnam is but a symptom of a far deeper malady within the American spirit, and if we ignore this sobering reality [applause], and if we ignore this sobering reality, we will find ourselves organizing 'clergy and laymen concerned' committees for the next generation. They will be concerned about Guatemala and Peru. They will be concerned about Thailand and Cambodia. They will be concerned about Mozambique and South Africa. We will be marching for these and a dozen other names and attending rallies without end unless there is a significant and profound change in American life and policy" (King, Jr., 1967).

And here we are. How is it possible that the U.S. nation-state continues to carry on oppressive structures in spite of decades – centuries even – of activism?[28] How are we able to take on responsibility for history? How do we come to understand the damage that settler colonialism causes, even to those who are benefitting from them? And more importantly, how do we expose our own complicity, renounce it, and take action? Radical resistance to all of these formations will be required. To create the conditions for this work, Medina (2013) says that we need to "undermine and change [both] oppressive normative structures and the complacent cognitive-affective functioning that sustains those structures" (p. 3). This project points us to some ways that we might try to do just that.

As a member of the teacher activist community in the city where I live and where my children go to public school, I had close contact with all of the participants in different venues. My insider-outsider position in the group allowed me to work up to the convening of the research group along with the participants, who mulled over

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[28] See Zinn (2015) for a comprehensive history of resistance and the quest for social justice in the U.S. nation-state.

problems of teacher activist work in real time in the leading up to the formal study, and ultimately helped frame the questions central to the research. The Teacher Inquiry Group (TIG) convened around the following questions:

- How do people become activists? In our loose coalition of community-based education groups – diverse activists – race, class, religion, ethnicities, languages, sexual identities and orientations? TIG participants shared their "origin stories"[29] in the survey and in the meetings.

- How can we spark and nurture teachers to become active in community/politics? If we understand how, can we invite more people into activist spaces? Participants were eager to find an answer to this question in terms of recruitment and "buy-in."

- What is required of us, in order for us to work well and in solidarity with Indigenous activists working in the educational spheres with us?

During our group discussions and in my analyses afterward, I often found myself wondering if, in fact, non-Native teacher activists would be able to address the third question at all. Though most of the participants have strong personal and professional relationships with AI/AN individuals in our communities, thinking about Native ontologies and epistemologies as fundamental to our activist work, or especially as critical for our urgent work of humanity as a whole, seemed impossible at times.

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[29] We thought of our "origin stories" in superhero terms (Peter Parker became Spider Man when he was bitten by a radioactive spider. What spider bites a teacher and turns that person into an activist superhero?) not in terms of traditional creation stories which tell us how the world came to be.

Possibilities

Settler colonialism constrains the vital work of community organizing and education activism. It limits the possibilities of our organizing and activist work, and undermines community building efforts. Within the structures of settler colonialism, we are mired in limited definitions of activist work and limited vision of possible futures. My analysis, emerging from and centered on participant dialogue in the TIG, invites larger questions about the genesis of activism, the larger goals of education activist work, and the role of Indigenous Feminist epistemologies as well as Indigenous models for community building, in envisioning a more just and sustainable future for all people.

Reframing Success

In accordance with western ways of thinking about research, some members of the TIG wanted to agree upon a "common definition" of activism before we began talking about activism. This effort to define and "operationalize" the word we use to identify ourselves proved problematic. Additionally, there was some tension around the concept of success vis-á-vis activist work. What would signify successful movement varied among the participants, and there seemed to be a heavy emphasis on an either-or binary. All of these led to further questions regarding who would ultimately decide what counts as success, how would it be measured and who would do the measuring.

A question that came up again and again in the course of our meetings is how best to "recruit" and "organize" new activists. One way settler colonialism infiltrates even our best attempts at justice-oriented work is when we frame community building as "getting buy in" from the largest possible number of participants. This is seen at meetings of the CAPE group, where folks would be excited to count the numbers of attendees, and were

visibly elated or dejected depending on the attendance. The focus of our conversation was on convincing people to join, and identifying successful strategies to build the organization (both the teacher union and community grass-roots alliance). Whether we were trying to get people out to march, or canvass door to door, or simply attend a meeting to learn about the organization, the work was framed by multiple members of the TIG as *recruitment*. "Tell me how to get new young teachers active," seemed to be Larry's main goal for the first few TIG meetings.

To reduce ongoing struggles for justice to the categories "successful" or "not successful" is not helpful; as we are looking toward a future of continued work for justice, we must think beyond "winning" or its opposite; to dream of movement building not in terms of numbers, but in terms of community-building. Indeed, when TIG members named "strategies" that really worked, they looked like community building: three long-time teachers from the same district spoke fondly of the union leaders taking coffee to the schools in the afternoon and "hanging out" listening to members' concerns and hopes. They also recalled the party-like atmosphere when kicking off a Saturday morning of canvassing: "We would go door to door, and hundreds and hundreds of teachers… mountains of bagels, a wall of coffee, and parents, an army of people ready to hand out… and here's your clipboard…." Pete added, "Every precinct we covered in Eugene." Larry recalled, "A Saturday morning at South Eugene [High School] …" and Roscoe finished his sentence: "It wasn't 'are you going on Saturday?' It was 'I'll see you there." Yes, we need allies and collectives to support, nurture and heal, but we have to accept uncertainty and try to learn patience as well. Morris (2016) encourages us to engage in actions and changes, and to stop avoiding our own settler uncertainty. She asks

us to "engage continuously with unsettled relationality" (p. 456) and to learn to sit with the uncomfortable feelings.

What is "success" and what is not depends upon who is doing the judging. Critics of the Occupy Wall Street movement call it a failure, but according to (Calhoun, 2013) "there is no shame in being more moment than movement. It is no denigration of Occupy Wall Street (or the Occupy movement(s) more generally) to say it may not have a future as such. It may be a shaping influence on a range of movements and on the course of social change even if there is no continuing movement under the Occupy name" (p. 26). Ehrenberg, (2017) maintains that Occupy's (OWS)"failure was a function of its initial strength. Drawing power from a utopian and anarchistic impulse, OWS refused to engage with the established political system. Fearful of being coopted and of engaging with power, its leaders articulated three guiding principles that made it impossible for the movement to follow through on its original positions" (p. 1). In our own local context, some TIG participants took stark criticism of the union as a good sign. As Larry stated, "It means they're scared. It means we're winning." Using this lens, the neoliberal rhetoric surrounding teacher unions, framing them as "militant" organizations and describing teachers' letters to the local paper or to the school board as "a rant" is a signal of success. But again, it depends on who is saying it. Who controls the dominant discourse? If "the editorial board of *The Seattle Times* was quick to accuse the teachers of 'demanding too much' [or call] the strike "illegal," "disruptive," and "a symbol of excess for those who oppose more school spending" (Bryant, 2015)? Who "wins" when a leading news outlet disparages teachers like this?

There may be many different versions of what makes a "successful" movement. Was the anti-Vietnam movement a "success"? Was the Civil Rights Movement a success? The work of social movements is far too complex to fit inside a "success or failure" binary. There are too many factors, just as there are in most endeavors that involve human social interaction – including education. But Settler colonialism, and Western culture in general, loves binaries. According to Kumashiro, (2005) "… the knowledge of the world that we have produced is a knowledge centered on binaries, such as of self and other, inner and outer, us and them, means and ends, win or lose. Such binaries are problematic not only for reinforcing hierarchies of one party over another, but also for excluding third parties" (p.47). To remain an outspoken defender of public education in the face of constant rhetoric that paints us as failures and our work as mechanistic and unskilled is difficult, emotionally and physically. Activists and activist organizations must navigate myriad barriers and persevere in spite of little or no immediate reward.

Uniting in Our Efforts

As an activist myself, and a colleague of the participants in this research, I have seen firsthand how working on one (or two, or three) chunks of the problems of U.S. education makes it difficult for activists to engage in critical conversations relevant to their work. Under settler colonial logics of specialization, we see activism efforts operating in silos by topics (i.e. racism vs. testing vs. TEK vs. gender and STEM). There is a distinct lack of cohesion between groups where each is focused on one or two particular problems within the education activist realm. It sometimes feels like we're in competition with each other for people to "buy in" to our project. Many committed activists are in fact *over-committed*, belonging to multiple non-profit boards, grass-roots organizations, relief

projects, and organizing efforts on different topics. One participant expressed frustration at this separation of issues, but also lamented, "We can't work on everybody's thing."

But we do not have to be in competition with each other for our rights and freedom. The members of the Combahee River Collective (1978) theorized "If Black women were free, it would mean that everyone else would have to be free since our freedom would necessitate the destruction of all the systems of oppression." Educator and activist philosopher Anna Julia Cooper eloquently stated in her 1892/1893[30] speech "Woman v. the Indian":

> "It is not the intelligent woman vs. the ignorant woman; nor the white woman vs. the black, the brown, and the red, – it is not even the cause of woman vs. man. Nay, 'tis woman's strongest vindication for speaking that the world needs to hear her voice. It would be subversive of every human interest that the cry of one-half the human family be stifled. Woman in stepping from the pedestal of statue-like inactivity in the domestic shrine, and daring to think and move and speak, – to undertake to help shape, mold and direct the thought of her age, is merely completing the circle of the world's vision. Hers is every interest that has lacked an interpreter and a defender. Her cause is linked with that of every agony that has been dumb – every wrong that needs a voice" (Lemert & Bhan, 1998, p. 107).

Indigenous nation-building and self-determination is good for EVERYONE. Healing from damages of settler colonialism can help us address the interrelated problems of environmental destruction, health care inequity, poverty and income inequality, racism and human rights crises, and education's focus on obedience and sameness, all of which can be traced back to the founding of the U.S. as a nation built on white supremacy and racialized capitalism. None of us has to choose between "our issue" and "their issue." But white|settler|dominant culture folks do need to choose a

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[30] Lemert & Bhan (1998) call this speech "her most carefully worked-through statement of black feminist theory…" (p. 15). She borrows the title from a speech by Rev. Anna Shaw, and proceeds to utterly excoriate white suffragists who do not support their sisters of color. Five stars. A must read.

commitment to the whole of justice, not just to one little corner. Boudreau Morris, (2017) contributes to the work of non-Native folks who wish to engage in decolonizing work, and she recommends: "As settlers working in solidarity, our role is to recognize the importance of Indigenous narratives, to listen without recentering settler narratives, attempting to shed settler identity, or expectations of Indigenous responsibility to educate on demand, and then pair knowledge with action in order to engage in decolonization" (p. 464). My hope is that a focus on Indigenous self-determination will help us to understand the inter-connectedness of all the problems caused by imperialism and racialized capitalism – and help all of us working in solidarity to identify an overarching theory of change, beginning with the ongoing self-decolonization practice that must be done by settler persons.

There is risk in this work, of recentering whiteness and turning "decolonization" into a performative gesture that non-Native folks can make to indicate that they are "good people" and to distance themselves from their responsibility, as settlers and as white/dominant culture persons, to not "make this about me" and instead focus on healing, whether that means land rematriation or reparations.

Intergenerational Work and Healing

MOVE TO RESULTS Finally, TIG conversations revealed generational gaps that undermine effective activism. Participants were often confused about the behaviors and attitudes of younger activists. In the worldwide marches that both grieved for George Floyd and demanded an end to police violence, young Black leaders stepped forward to organize protests and to coordinate mutual aid services for those participating, including legal services, medical provision, hydration stations, safety lights, and block cars to

protect marchers in the streets. At times the young folks collaborated with their elders (Black and Brown members of our local teachers' union co-organized a rally with the brand new youth-led organization called "Black Unity" at the downtown federal courthouse). Rena and her sister were among those handing out signs and bottles of water, but I did not see any others of our group in the crowd. Larry later reported that he remained on the edge of the crowd with his bike and his grandchild. A couple weeks later he reported on an event that CALC (Community Alliance for Lane County; formerly "Clergy and Laymen Concerned About Vietnam" and one of the oldest and most impactful activist groups in Eugene) had hosted, and stated, "Nice to see the grownups in charge again."

Intergenerational collaboration does not only mean elders guiding youth, it can also mean youth mentoring elders, what business school students call "mentoring up." Young people are speaking and acting out for justice all around the world, demanding prison abolition, the removal of police from their schools, justice for workers of all kinds, and integration of their schools, and for smart gun control. Young people are "doing activism" in their art, their music, their writing; they organize conferences and marches. Robin D.G. Kelly (2014) laments, "All around us, young people are at the forefront of asking how we imagine a different future, but their theorizing goes unnoticed because youth are still seen as the junior partners of the social movement. This is a departure from how youth were perceived in prior generations. Then, youth were the future. Now, they are who we need to train to become like us" (pp. 88-89). In his discussion of leadership "for the good of the people" Cajete goes on to say that "All gifts are needed; all perspectives point to realities that may affect community well-being; and all of us move
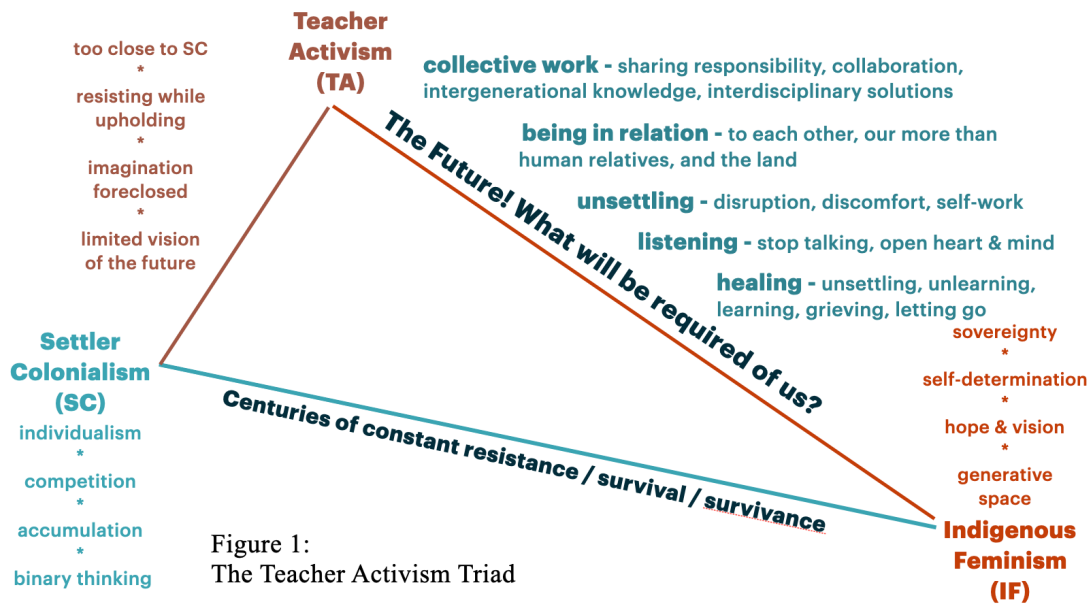
into the roles of leader and follower fluidly as our knowledge and talents fit the need and circumstances" (p. 146). This must include people from all ages, who each come with their own generational as well as individual perspectives.

Settler Colonialism permeates activist spaces, just as thoroughly as it does our education spaces. Settler Colonialism is *real* and it is in us. Individualism, competition, binary-thinking, compartmentalizing of issues, and generational gaps pervade our thinking and our actions. Even the most-informed, most committed, most well-meaning folks sometimes do not know how to do the work of resisting it, and we need to help each other overcome our reluctance to approach the settler inside each of us. In response to this need I hope to add to a conversation about how well-meaning dominant-culture folks can heal from settler colonialism, by exploring a path (a curriculum if you will) of learning, unlearning, and relearning. When we (settlers) listen to Indigenous teachers, researchers and theorists, we can expose the assumptions of settler colonialism that we deeply but often unconsciously hold (whether we are teachers, public health advocates, or human rights watchers) we may be able to see the places where they are limiting not only our work, but the rest of our lives, and the lives of our children, and contributing to climate catastrophe and war. When we have a collaborative space, such as the Teacher Inquiry Group, to work on relearning ways to be in relation to each other, with land, and with our more-than-human relatives, we settlers can support each other in our growth while not extracting further labor (including emotional labor) from our Native friends and colleagues.

Theorizing a Teacher Activism Triad

In an attempt to illustrate the dynamics of resistance, survivance, and healing in opposition to the oppressiveness of settler colonialism, I propose *The Teacher Activist Triad* to help us to better understand where we face resistance, both within ourselves and within our activist collective groups, what I have called "locating the resistance within the resistance" (Chappell, 2019). I conceptualize the triangle as malleable; the sides can shorten or lengthen, the three points can move toward or away from each other. I maintain that we have some agency to make changes in these relationships. The triangle model allows us to locate the place(s) where *any of us* can make a contribution toward justice. I hope to invite folks into the effort by pointing out and clarifying where there is work to be done.

As we have heard from the TIG participants and in reflecting on our own daily interactions, non-Native people, especially white|dominant culture folks, are able to avoid thinking about settler colonialism for the great majority of their lives. The Settler Activism Triad makes visible the relationships between the forces that constrain us and those that provide room for growth and possibilities of positive futures. Perhaps it is a tool that can help "undermine and change oppressive normative structures and the complacent cognitive-affective functioning that sustains those structures" (Medina, 2013, p. 3).

Teacher Activism (TA)

too close to SC
*
resisting while upholding
*
imagination foreclosed
*
limited vision of the future

collective work - sharing responsibility, collaboration, intergenerational knowledge, interdisciplinary solutions

being in relation - to each other, our more than human relatives, and the land

unsettling - disruption, discomfort, self-work

listening - stop talking, open heart & mind

healing - unsettling, unlearning, learning, grieving, letting go

The Future! What will be required of us?

Centuries of constant resistance / survival / survivance

Settler Colonialism (SC)

individualism
*
competition
*
accumulation
*
binary thinking

sovereignty
*
self-determination
*
hope & vision
*
generative space

Indigenous Feminism (IF)

Figure 1:
The Teacher Activism Triad

Settler Colonialism ⟷ Indigenous Feminism

Since the beginning of Europe's colonial project on Turtle Island, Indigenous peoples have been resisting and surviving. Ostler, (2019) provides a thorough account of the U.S. nation-state's failed attempts to completely destroy all Native people. He concludes, "as the United States and its citizens pursued the elimination of Indian lands and tribal communities, their actions were sufficiently destructive to justify the fears of Egushawa, Quinney, and countless other unknown Indigenous historians and prophets that their people might someday disappear. That this did not happen testifies to the resilience of their own generations and the generations since" (p. 382). Today, land theft and environmental plunder; kidnapping, murder, and rape, are still being met with resistance. One obvious recent example is the Standing Rock Sioux and their resistance to the Dakota Access Pipeline (known as DAPL) through their sacred land. In addition to literally blocking pipelines and other disastrous projects with their bodies, political

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strategies to gain Indigenous self-determination have ranged from negotiating in good

faith, recognition politics and the rejection thereof (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005;

Coulthard, 2014), and education projects such as that of Dion & Dion (2004).

The demand for self-determination and recognition of sovereignty over the land that

The People have called home since time memorial is situated within the larger context of

human rights struggles globally, and within a 500-plus-year timeline of survival and

resistance, or survivance. Native teachers, scholars, and their allies theorize ways that

Indigenous cultural values can counteract environmental harm (e.g. Jacob, Gonzales,

Chappell Belcher, Ruef, & RunningHawk Johnson, 2020), health disparities (e.g.

Gonzales et al., 2018), human rights work (e.g. Falcón & Jacob, 2011) as well as in

education spaces (e.g. Jacob, RunningHawk Johnson, & Chappell, 2021; Tlali, 2017;

Tuck, 2013). Sometimes the struggle in education is centered around access to learning

spaces. Other times we focus on curricular content and other times on pedagogy. Other

times folks "defect" from whitestream education altogether, and start a school for Native

children (e.g. White, 2015). Jacob et al. (2021) invite us to think beyond ameliorism to

imagine "a classroom experience that nurture[s] and inspire[s] us to be in good relation

with the Indigenous peoples and homelands on which our classrooms are built" (p. 1),

and then to build it. With this project, I aim to contribute to the ability of settler /

dominant culture teacher activists to do just that. By holding my own community

responsible for understanding public education's settler colonial shortcomings and

responsible for changing their way of thinking about their own efforts to create

sustainable change, I hope to open new avenues for non-Native folks to work in solidarity

with Indigenous communities to imagine an entirely different model of what education can be. It might not be "a classroom experience" at all, but a community-based or nature-based curriculum – or some of each.

Smith (2012) offers us many examples of what we can do – 25 projects to be exact – that teacher activists, researchers, and allies can join in or perhaps begin themselves (pp. 143-164).

Teacher Activism ⬅➡ *Settler Colonialism*

This is the shortest leg of the triangle, which indicates that the work of teacher activists (particularly white|dominant culture folks) is very close to the structures and processes of settler colonialism. The designers of the U.S. nation-state had a particular notion of *freedom for some* and enacted their vision of *democracy by the few,* which makes the application of their *professed* ideals (e.g. "all men are created equal) to our current public schooling problematic at best, impossible at worst. To rely on their "wisdom" requires a split in knowing (Rana, 2010), or an "unknowing" (Vimalasery et al., 2016) of history. It demands a deep denial of current reality. These are incompatible with the ideal of an enlightened citizenry in our contemporary situation. This paradox informs my investigation of teacher activism.

The paradox of teacher activism in resistance to settler colonialism stems from their mutually constitutive relationship. Logics of settler colonialism within schools create teacher activists who would resist practices that are damaging to BIPOC students, poor children, those with special educational needs, and in fact all subjects of public schooling (including teachers). Without engaging directly with the presence and impact of settler colonialism on schools, they/we end up falling short. Absent a critical analysis

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of settler colonialism, we saw time and again in our TIG discussions that most non-Native activists are themselves so thoroughly steeped in the ways of settler colonialism that they/we cannot see its structures and processes acting upon their/our own lives, *even when they/we are able to cognitively understand the injustices at work in schooling.*

In conversation with the Teacher Inquiry Group unknowingness about settler colonialism was often apparent. One participant, who identifies as a biracial black woman, spoke of how much she had been learning about Indigenous Feminism by working with three "strong, amazing Native goddesses who are my teachers." She expressed gratitude for this learning, and contrasted it with her way of thinking before she began work with the Sapsik'wałá Teacher Education Program.[31] "Before, I just thought, 'we're women of color; we're all the same, right?'"

One participant was very enthusiastic to share about a middle school where he had worked, and to tell how the school community had come together to create a "racism free zone" throughout the entire school. Another participant recalled that work and was equally enthusiastic: "It was legendary." But there was no acknowledgement of the problem of trying to create a "racism-free" zone in an institution of settler colonial domination, on stolen land. Without such acknowledgement, the project cannot be answerable to the entire community. As long as the focus remains on intervening with individual students – whether to educate white dominant-culture students to be more responsive to incidents of racism (e.g. microaggressions) or training some students to help ameliorate the conflicts of their peers – the work will fall short; it will not be

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[31] For more information about the Sapsik'wałá Teacher Education Program, visit *https://education.uoregon.edu/sapsikwala*

sustainable absent an acknowledgement of settler colonialism at work and specific actions to change the culture of the school away from its assumptions and structures.

In separate conversations, one participant also objected to the researcher's and other participants insistence that Native ways of educating children would be preferable to anything coming from Western and U.S. traditions, stating, "But isn't the job of any education system to pass on societal norms and beliefs?" with an aside that suggested perhaps AI/AN education is being "romanticized" somehow. He said, "Isn't this the way it's always been [societies warring and conquering one another] in one way or another? And is everything that was taught in the schooling among the Indigenous people … and of course, which Indigenous are we talking about? Indigenous people in Southeast Asia or only in the United States … but was it always good? Was it always fair to women, for instance? Could it have been fairly brutalist? Was it always... So is there a romanticization that is going on in this?"

These examples are emblematic of the ways that settler colonist teacher activists are too close to the problem, and benefit too much from the status quo, to be much of a solution -- unless we can change ourselves. According to Medna (2013) this means we must resist our own "meta-insensitivity … lack of critical awareness of what we know and do not now about the experiences of people who are significantly different from us" (p. xiii). Thus, teachers are in a tricky position if they/we become politically active – they are at once resisting the status quo, while upholding it at the same time. This is clear when someone is disciplined after speaking out, whether that means a private "talking to" or being denied promotions or even being terminated from their positions in schools. But it is not always so obvious a conflict, as it may also be ambivalence within. When

we/they are emotionally and cognitively and materially invested in SC (often without conscious awareness), teachers, activists, and others have a very difficult time processing the Indigenous folks' and understanding the ways self-determination might look, and how we imagine it as a benefit to all beings, including our non-human relatives.

TIG participants shared their feelings of discomfort at key points in their development as activists. Jen spoke of "going to my first microaggressions class." She shared that she had not had any education about racism or other oppression until she came to University of Oregon: "I just didn't get that anywhere. So I'm used to discomfort that something will throw at me with a new concept that puts my identity into its place." However, multiple group members seemed uncomfortable with reading "Decolonization is not a metaphor" (Tuck & Yang, 2012). Folks used words such as "alienation" and "unreasonable" and "unrealistic" to criticize the article. One participant said that the authors had a very "narrow view" and that their argument "felt a little reductive."

This is where I see my work making a difference in the efforts for education as "freedom work." If this project, and those that may take up this work, can push the distance between teacher activism and the settler colonial institutions that teachers uphold in spite of their best intentions, can we then get in closer solidarity, guided more by Indigenous self-determination (the big picture) than by piecemeal resistance to individual practices (tests, segregation, tracking, curriculum that lies, behavioral programs, etc.). If we can get TA moving away from SC, then might it be possible to move us *toward* IF and Indigenous ways of knowing and enacting activism for social change?

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Indigenous Feminism ←→ Teacher Activism.

Healing can happen. White/dominant culture folks and other non-Native people can heal themselves, their relationships, their relationships to the land, their relationship with the past, their relationship to knowledge, to trees, to rocks, to each other. Dominant culture people must be able to understand the meaning and importance of Native sovereignty and of self-determination. They/we need to know and understand the history of the U.S. nation-state from an anti-colonial perspective, in order to be able to believe that Indigenous nation-building work is a key factor in the healing of our shared nationalist wounds. Once some of this happens, opening up the imagination and creating a new vision, we can move TA more toward IF.

According to Stoler (2006), "Domains of the intimate … are strategic for exploring two related but often discretely understood sources of colonial control; one that works through the requisition of *bodies* – those of both colonials and colonized – and a second that molds new "structures of feeling" – new habits of heart and mind that enable those categories of difference and subject formation" (p. 2). Healing can also happen in these domains, where our habits of heart and mind can be moved from settler colonial thinking and feeling toward a more inclusive, multifaceted and justice-oriented way – of deeply understanding our interconnectedness.

There are examples of healing that we might draw on, from different spheres of life and justice work. The Free Minds Free People (FMFP) project works around the country to heal the damages of racism and to redefine activism as a struggle for shared humanity. Valdez et al. (2018) share the story of a mother who testified at one of their meetings about the death of her son – her bravery, her passion, her survivance: "She

embodied "radical healing" (a healing process of nurturing strong relationships and racial identities among education activists while simultaneously developing political consciousness that leads to action inside and outside the classroom" (p. 246). The FMFP project is one of radical healing, in that it encompasses multiple ways of building community, of working together, of learning to love each other and accept each others' love, and of learning "revolutionary ways that refuse to treat persons as objects or as throwaways. Our position, in short, is that any effort to organize with others to resist an assault should be understood as an effort to organize with others to insist on human being" (Valdez et al., 2018, p. 247).

Discomfort / Pain of Learning and Unlearning

The concept of white fragility has commonplace in the literature on racial justice, and has even become somewhat of a buzzword in non-academic circles as well. Since its publication (2018) Robin diAngelo's book *White Fragility* has been translated into ten languages and has spent weeks at the top of various lists of bestselling books. diAngelo uses the term *fragility* to demonstrate the intense feelings that white folks experience when their feelings of comfort (brought on by any interruption of their/our insulation from the reality of racism) are disrupted. I agree with Zembylas (2018) that the term "discomfort" is more accurate than "fragility" – we white folks are not actually fragile, just the bubble we live in is. (Davis et al., 2017) point out that emotionality / fragility surface when the dominant culture folks' feeling of "entitlement to racial comfort" is challenged. We are not actually "fragile" just so protected from the reality of racism that our whole view of reality is distorted.

In a zoom talk and conversation with our students earlier this year, Bettina Love asked "What are you willing to give up?" This question, too, must be confronted. There is a helpful meme out there that circulates every once in a while. It claims, "Equal rights for others does not mean less rights for you. It's not pie." But isn't it *just like pie*? For others to have equal rights, some have to give up the part of their slice that allows them to dehumanize people, terrorize young Black men in the streets, turn our gaze away from the heinous crimes committed against Indigenous women and girls (MMIW) and to go through life relatively free of fear.

Whites often feel vulnerable or "attacked" when confronted with their own privilege and made to unpack their "invisible knapsack" (McIntosh, 1989) of advantages. That step is difficult enough, but for activists who have already done some of this work, questions become less about individual reckoning, but asking bigger questions. The practice of radical activism for deep and enduring change will require us to approach questions such as: "Is democracy *actually* for everyone? Who is truly included when we say that all are equal? What is my role in all this?" such recognition precipitates a different kind of calculus, that may be equally or more painful. We must ask ourselves increasingly difficult questions. "What does "freedom" really mean if it is achieved only through denying others?" Using school desegregation and resegregation efforts (e.g. Milliken v. Bradley and Parents Concerned v. Seattle) Horsford (2016) has theorized that those in privileged positions have turned the idea of individual freedom into a weapon against BIPOC people-groups: "white opposition and resistance to desegregation efforts and the freedom to associate, or not associate, with others is key to this notion of white freedom from racial equality and diversity (p. 10). For those of us who deeply care about

educational justice, and justice in general, must reject this argument and wade into the big questions. We/they must take the plunge and according to Britzman (2003) "involve themselves in true thinking and true reflexivity, and to do so, they must embrace vulnerability and uncertainty."

Do we need therapy? Britzman (2009) says yes, and asserts that a generalized unwillingness to witness the unconscious and unpack our baggage makes education somehow unreal and results in multiple alienations, including that of the teacher. She claims that "Unless the teacher can confront the defenses of idealization and omnipotence in her or his own teaching, there will be no real contact with others" (p. 97). For Britzman, it is the "deconstruction of the teacher's self-image and a confrontation with their baggage that render possible the intersubjective contact that is a hallmark of significant pedagogical encounters. Or, returning to the previously mentioned concept of teacher presence will permit a teacher to become more fully present to themselves and to others (Keck, 2020, p. 413).

(Keck, 2020) sees evidence of a "therapeutic turn" in teacher education and points to a "new-style group, connection, sharing, and belonging are in no small part the result of [talking about difficult topics in safety] even where this affect might be conventionally viewed as negative" (p. 414). Naranjo (2010) proposes a healing process that reminds one of the work of the TIG in this study, and of Navarro's (2018) description of how "reading and discussions engaged educators in being students of their praxis through collective learning" and how they participated in work "that involved reflection, discussion and imaging social justice teaching (p. 347).

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As teacher activists pull back the veil and confront (or are confronted with) the reality of settler colonial structures that prop up the world around them, they may move through similar phases of development as a group; the resolution of conflict around these difficult realizations becomes a mode of healing. I propose that this individual healing, in the context of a collective, is an ingredient in our work that will bring us closer to our ultimate goal of education for freedom, not for correctness, for liberation not conformity. How do we create the conditions under which this would happen?

We Need Stories! Lenapé-Potawatomi scholars, teachers, and siblings Dion & Dion, 2004 point to the difficulty that teachers face in recognizing their own implication in the oppression of Indigenous people when they are to teach contemporary First Nations materials, and suggest that non-Native people are not truly able to hear and understand the voices of indigenous people while in a state of extreme discomfort. In their work they share Indigenous stories with non-Native teachers – stories that demonstrate community-based leadership, respectful interaction with other persons and beings. These stories make clear the millennial relationship of Native peoples to the land that is sacred, that is a part of the community. They then invited their non-Native students to ask themselves:

> "'Mistahimaskwa was not in my history book. Why did I not hear his story?' This question offers readers a *listening position* that provides some distance between the events of the story and themselves. This offer is followed up by a request to those who have inherited the land to hear the story. Thus, having been denied access to the story, they are now being asked to *accept responsibility* for hearing." Such confrontation with new information, a provocative question, and the taking of a listening position in relation to uncomfortable revelation, allows and gives space for the dominant culture individuals to *take responsibility* for what they have come to know" (Dion & Dion, p. 92, emphasis mine)

Thus, they helped the dominant culture folks an alternative to reactive anger or denial or unhelpful guilt in learning about Native self-determination. They go on: "conceptions of testimony and witnessing, we began to think about and understand

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how relationship, attention to detail, and concerns with representing the suffering of others were critical to our project of retelling" (Dion & Dion, 98).

Interdisciplinary Theorizing of Healing and Possibility / Futurity

Indigenous frameworks for teaching and learning are "life-seeking alternatives (Cajete, 2015, p.21). As individuals, we receive messages from society's institutional structures from the moment we are born. In order for Teacher Activism (TA) and Indigenous Feminism (IF) to talk to each other, we – our individual selves and the groups to which we belong – need to be in relationship in ways that will allow us to hold a generative space for the difficult work we need to do together. How can we learn to "stop talking" (Merculieff & Roderick, 2013) and listen enough to understand others' experiences? From there, perhaps relationships can be formed and nurtured – that is where the healing will happen, in relation with one another. From the conversations among the TIG participants it became apparent that most participants have not had the opportunity to engage with Indigenous epistemologies, and therefore had minimal understanding of the work of Native activists, in education and in other fields, and confronting this was emotionally difficult – at different times and under different circumstances within the group, but as Boler & Zembylas (2003) tell us: "no one escapes hegemony" (p. 115).

In outlining a "pedagogy of discomfort" Boler & Zembylas (2003) emphasize that the journey to recovery from our false beliefs about racism, sexism, homophobia, classism, etc., encompasses cognitive processes of learning about hegemony and also dealing with the "internalized emotional processes of hegemony" (p. 117). They illustrate, using examples from their students, the ways that liberal individualism, denial, and the prevalence of "restrictive binary oppositions" restrict our thinking about

everything from gender to race, to age, leaving little room for ambiguity, much less

change. "Inhabiting this ambiguity can be very discomforting and demands substantial

negative emotional labor such as vulnerability, anger, and suffering. To tolerate this

ambiguity, one has to dismantle old habits and replace them with new ones and this

involves considerable emotional and intellectual risk (p. 129). Davis et al. (2017) take up

the "pedagogy of discomfort" model as well as Regan's (2010) and apply some of their

thinking to what they see as the tensions and concerns within multiple programs working

to assist in Canadian settlers' work of changing their relationships to themselves and to

Native nations and persons. They see transforming settler consciousness as a process that

"engages in an ongoing, complex, and dynamic process grounded in a lifetime

commitment, which occurs at the level of the individual, family, community and nation"

Davis et al., 2017, p. 411).

Teacher Inquiry Group (TIG) as a potential site of healing

The Teacher Inquiry Group methodology that we employed in this work is similar

in form to other teacher-led professional development groups (also known as

"professional learning communities" or PLCs), such as critical friends groups (e.g.

Carlson, 2019) or what Masuda (2010) terms "teacher study groups." These groups,

formed by teachers for themselves, create opportunities for teachers to learn from one

another, explore important issues in education (both the broad education sphere and

within their own immediate classrooms). (Masuda, 2010) states, "Teacher study groups

provide a forum for teachers to articulate their thoughts without judgment" (p. 469)

which corresponds to Medina's conception of epistemological change within the context

of a social (or in this case social / professional group). Our TIG (Navarro, 2018) was able

to engage in a process of critical struggle with issues of settler-colonialism and the possibilities for engaging Indigenous feminist methodologies and ways of knowing within the mainstream activist discussion of education justice and teacher activism.

These kinds of teacher-directed groups create spaces where differences can be explored. It is complex work and can be messy at times, but we must embrace the ongoing process. Maria Lugones (Lugones & Spelman, 1983) "logic of impurity," of "Mestizaje" helps us envision a space where complexity of identities, complex inner lives of groups and group members coming together allows individuals to understand things differently – as against settler colonialism, non-binary, not-competitive, not pre-planned, not a narrow path. Understanding that perfection is not the goal – "the primacy of the nonideal, where there is friction" (Medina, 11). Black American educator and theorist Anna Julia Cooper declares, "… the law holds good in sociology as in the world of matter, that equilibrium, not repression among conflicting forces is the condition of natural harmony, of permanent progress, and of universal freedom" (1892, in Lemert & Bhan, 1998).

"So what happens when the [teacher activist] encounters the injustice that has permeated the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people? The story opens a space for initiating a 'but wait, something is wrong here' response. The potential for disrupting the 'strength in the face of adversity' theme depends on what teachers and students do with that recognition, how it gets taken up and worked through" (Dion & Dion, 2004). The TIG in this study provided an opening where supportive peers were able to undertake this work together.

Implications

Rather than approaching this project only from a place of critique, and risk falling into deficit thinking about teachers and teacher activism, I take a stance combining democratic imagination (and its possibilities for different kind of citizen participation), with concepts from Indigenous educators' decolonial and future-oriented work to come to a kind of radical futurity, made possible within the Indigenous Feminist work for self-determination for all people. Democracy is not just the franchise. Voting does not ensure democracy and democracy does not guarantee freedom. "Democracy is not only about voting but also about talking" (Medina, 2013, p. 5). Voting is about yes or no to certain questions or proposals. It is in the development of those proposals – the talking through disagreements and the willingness to discuss different options and to be open to new ideas is where democracy happens. Deep participation (Tuck, 2013).

Medina suggests we "bring to the fore not only dormant potentialities, but also those that are inhibited and deeply repressed. This lucidity has to become capable not only of recognizing and appreciating stigmatized differences that are already there, but also innumerable other differences that could be energized through critical interventions in the social and psychological arrangements that have constrained processes of identity formation." (such as s-c) restraining development.

This is difficult work. "Resisting" is not just fighting against something, but "contending with different epistemic realities" (Medina, 2010, p. 16). We must be able to embrace the complexity of any behavior in and of itself, as it is guided by "principled stances" on one hand, and on the other hand by "pragmatic choices in specific social contexts" (Collins, 2011, p. 108).

Redefining Freedom

Communities in collectives together, taking responsibility to one another and for their own learning and discomfort, can help us rethink what we mean by "freedom" when we recognize humanity in each other. We are gendered, raced, and classed before we can think for ourselves, much less speak for ourselves. As individuals *in relation* with our communities we have opportunities to unveil those insidious messages we receive and (many times unconsciously) perpetuate. We can learn from the model of Myles Horton's Highlander School for activists. At the school, working closely together, and "dedicated to developing its students' capacities for both individual and collective self-determinaiton" (Payne, 2007, p.70), they used (as one of their teaching strategies) storytelling. Sharing our own stories – of our journeys, of our missteps and mistakes, and our "origin stories" within groups such as the TIG, we non-Native can grow and learn from each other.

Interdisciplinary & Intergenerational Work

Working as communities in relation it is possible to create broader coalitions of activist persons and activist collectives, to encourage interdisciplinary and cross-cultural work. Indigenous Feminist theorizing allows us to think beyond the settler-colonial conception of academic "silos" and the conformist goals of academic "disciplines." We all are interrelated, and the problems that settler colonialism has wrought upon Turtle Island are intimately intertwined. There is no magic cure, but teacher activists can commit ourselves to working in spaces where Native self-determination and nation-building intersects with the good of all (public health, environmental sociology, schools). There is a role for activist collaboratives in encouraging interdisciplinary and cross-

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cultural work. We need all hands on board - those with knowledge and expertise in history, economics, political science, writing, drama, poetry, art, *and* teaching and learning. Drawing again from Medina (2013) we understand that to overcome our own epistemological differences and to appreciate others' standpoints, "critical awareness of the limits of our imagination is not only an individual task but also and necessarily a social enterprise that requires interactions with indefinitely many particular and heterogeneous others" (p. 266-267). And, coming back to Kumashiro's (2005), such tension is productive when we learn through disequilibrium, or what he called "learning in crisis."

Radical Democratic Praxis

Radical democracy and decolonial work can work together. Woven into a complex tapestry. To create the conditions for democratic work: "expressibility requirement: different groups can come together in a public where it is possible to articulate shared experiences and perspectives. "The responsiveness requirement" demands that the expressions of one group have the "proper uptake by other publics and by society as a whole" (Medina, 2013, p.9).

Education philosopher John Dewey provides a theory of active, engaged *learning* through experience to inform the ongoing *practice* of democracy. He tells us that "occupations hav[e] a social meaning … social efficiency means neither more nor less than capacity to share in a give and take of experience" (Dewey, 2016, p. 83). Brazilian activist and teacher Paulo Freire advocates for knowledge created through dialogue and *conscientizaçion* as a vital starting point for the work of social change. He sought to teach democratic processes by modeling democratic teaching. Black American sociologist

Patricia Hill Collins invites us to address critical questions of knowledge and its relationship to power. What counts as knowledge and who has the power to decide which knowledges count? She recommends *visionary pragmatism*: "Visionary pragmatism consists of choosing to commit to principles that can be used to guide human action" (p. 108). The focus of this project, is healing the relationship of education activists to settler colonial constructs of schooling, but the same restorative processes will be beneficial to those trying to make positive, justice-oriented changes in other institutions, from the US prison-industrial complex, to local land use rules. posits that a "Deweyan model of democracy [is] an embodiment of scientific method. Just as the solution to scientific problems is to do more science, 'the cure for the ailments of democracy is more democracy'" (Dewey, 1998, p. 327). For democracy, like science, embodies the two practices crucial to self-correction: dissent and experimentation" (p. 29). Medina (2013) agrees that a democracy-in-the-making always needs to allow for mistakes, for learning and "self-correction, which require the recognition of democratic fallibility and the institution of 'feedback mechanisms' so we can learn and move forward when additional information becomes available" (p. 5). Collins (2009) invites us to become "active creators" (p. 182) of the society that we want to live in. "Rather than describing our actions through the frameworks of reform and fitting in, we need to find ways to … tell a sustained story of practicing resistance (p. 183).

Working Democracy Requires Healing; Healing Requires Courage

All of us are harmed by settler colonialism, whether we live with intergenerational trauma of oppressed peoples or the psychic wounds of the dominant culture persons. *We all need healing.* As a white, settler, dominant-culture person myself,

I take it as part of my work to help the healing (for the oppressors) begin. Settler people need to understand what sovereignty means, what self-determination and nation-building efforts are about. We have seen that this can be difficult, emotional labor. But we can help activists develop an analysis of the settler colonial school system as harmful for everyone, and help think outside the boxes - or build new Indigenized boxes. How does an activist collective encourage folks to join in the effort and help new members to understand the culture and values of the organization? How do movement leaders encourage ongoing development of activist frameworks with existing members?

What will be required of us? TIG discussions revealed places where settler colonialism hampers activist success. Indigenous Feminist methodologies and analyses can inform the work of non-Native teacher activists and activist groups, to reveal new possibilities for the future practice of public education. Our work now is "creating the cultural and structural conditions that can open up spaces for the expression and appreciation of different perspectives, of the indefinitely many ways of thinking, acting and living that can be part of a pluralistic society" (Medina, 2013, p. 265).

The current project evokes hope; it points to possibilities, to ways we can create spaces where everyone can thrive. Where we can invite everyone in with all their gifts. Where members are able to share in the responsibilities of leadership. Employing a conception of radical democratic practice, made possible within an Indigenous feminist / decolonial worldview, the aim of this project is to understand the work of teacher activists and their coalitions, and help them better understand their own practice/praxis, always with an eye toward a more just and beautiful future. This project points to possibilities of healing from settler colonialism as individuals and within our collectives.

In this effort there is a role for teacher education, helping future teachers resist neoliberalism, even when it's well-meaning, and nurturing a new generation of practitioner-scholars, who will be able to make sense of data provided by various organizations (aka "stakeholders") outside of our schools, as critical consumers of others' research. In this work we must ally with each other and form cooperative coalitions. "Collectivist, reciprocal ways of being and living in respectful and honest relations are of utmost importance as we [within academia and schooling] have increasingly denounced our connectedness, spiritualities, and possibilities in the name of competition, efficiency, individualism, measurement, and profitability (Cannella & Manuelito, 2008, p. 54).

There is a role for education researchers and others associated with "the academy", if they/we allow for theorizing from those directly involved in the work; if they/we become activists directly involved in the resistance; if they/we bring tools from our areas of expertise to our work in community; if they/we remain responsive to community needs. These folks are public scholars, or "activist academics" and we have role models all around us if we look carefully. Might we form an interdisciplinary, interracial and intergenerational collective that will facilitate community building, convene partners, and assist with resource sharing.

This is about the future. What will be required of non-Native teachers, researchers and community activists? Medina (2013) reminds us of our obligations as humans: to fight against ignorance, to know and understand our own selves and work to understand others' points of view; to always be learn and do our best to contribute to the learning efforts of our fellow humans; and of course, to collaborate in the pursuit of epistemic justice.

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Public schooling exists *within* and functions *as a tool of* the settler colonial project in the U.S. nation-state. We are right to resist the US regime of standardized testing. Stern (2006) argues that standardized tests "were [are] geared toward the absorption and internalization of norms, in terms of content as well as form" (p. 327). This demand for assimilation and conformity, plus the tests' reliance on the idea of their own "objectivity" has made standardized testing a critical tool in settler colonial schooling for generations. A project grounded in Indigenous feminism requires all of us to continually consider to whom we are answerable, and to be "steadfast in answering" (L. T. Smith, 2012b). As teacher activists we must always be open and accountable to the "intricate system of relatedness, obligation and respect" that governs all interactions. Battiste, (2016) called this "response-ability." And we all are responsible for its upkeep.

APPENDIX A
TEACHER INQUIRY GROUP (TIG) READING LIST

Battiste, M. (2016). *Decolonizing education: Nourishing the learning spirit* (reprint).

    Saskatoon, SK, Canada: Purich Publishing.

Boudreau Morris, K. (2017). Decolonizing solidarity: cultivating relationships of

    discomfort. *Settler Colonial Studies*, *7*(4), 456–473.

    https://doi.org/10.1080/2201473X.2016.1241210

Jobin-Leeds, G., & AgitArte. (2016). Grounded in Community: The fight for the soul of

    public education. In *When We Fight We Win! Twenty-First-Century Social*

    Movements and the Activists that are Transforming Our World (pp. 23–49). New

    York: The New Press.

Merculieff, L., & Roderick, L. (2013). *Stop talking : Indigenous ways of teaching and*

    learning and difficult dialogues in higher education. Anchorage: University of

    Alaska Anchorage.

Tuck, E. (2013a). Locating the hope in bone-deep participation. In T. M. Kress & R.

    Lake (Eds.), *We Saved the Best For You: Letters of Hope, Imagination and Wisdom*

    for 21st Century Educators (pp. 11–14). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

Tuck, E., & Yang, K. W. (2012). Decolonization is not a metaphor. *Decolonization:*

    Indigeneity, Education & Society, *1*(1), 1–40.

INTRODUCTION EMAIL TO THE TEACHER INQUIRY GROUP
(FOR POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS)

Welcome, Teacher Activists!

Thank you for considering joining in this project! As part of my dissertation study, I invite you to work in a small group, with myself and a 10-12 other teachers, to understand and support our important and urgent work as activists outside the classroom. We are going to engage in a Teacher Inquiry Group (TIG) to discuss how we as non-Native educators can contribute to decolonizing work through our activism. I hope to capture your insights and experiences in activism, while we all learn from each other, through sharing experience and wisdom. Participation in all parts of the study is entirely voluntary. The TIG will be limited to a small group, but up to 200 people can do the survey, tell their Origin Stories, and send in Realia! These require digital participation, so teacher activists' contributions are not limited by geography. (Send this link to your friends!)

I hope you will read the information here, complete the initial (short!) survey, attend an info session, and ultimately choose to participate in the TIG.

The only requirements are:
a) you have been a public school professional [any grade, any discipline or specialty, nurses, counselors, etc, everyone welcome]
b) and have been for at least five years;
c) you identify as a teacher activist and participate in social justice work *outside* of your classroom; and
d) you do not identify as a Native or Indigenous person (I know this sounds weird and exclusionary, but the study is about ally work – it will make sense as we get underway).

Survey

This is a basic demographic survey so we know who is participating, and also so I know how to cite you in my research. For example, "Barbara, a 33-year-old white art teacher in a New York City public middle school had this brilliant insight about the role her Latinx students' artistic expressions has in her own activist art expression: _____." Or "Cheryl, a black woman who taught high school said, "One of my biggest challenge as a person who looks like me, being an activist in Oregon was _____.""

Please answer all the questions! Thank you for your participation. I appreciate it very much.

------------------------------- QUALTRICS SURVEY -------------------------------

What is your name? _____
If you would like us to use a pseudonym, you may name yourself!
How old are you? _____ How long have you been a teacher?
Where are you originally from? _____
Where do you live now? _____

Would you like to share your gender identity?
Would you like to share your racial / ethnic / linguistic / national /or any other salient identities?

Where are you currently teaching? (city/town, school district, school)
What are you currently teaching? (grade, subject, or other role in school / district)

What other teaching assignments have you had in the past?

How do you teach? (a little bit about your teaching philosophy, curriculum theory, classroom style, etc)

Do you identify as a teacher activist or activist teacher?

How do you define activist teacher or teacher activist?

What actions do you take or have you taken in the past in your role as a teacher activist/activist teacher? (Include organizations you belong to or social media work you do; letter writing, demonstrations or protests; lobbying, canvassing, political campaign involvement; really anything you think is part of your activist work!)
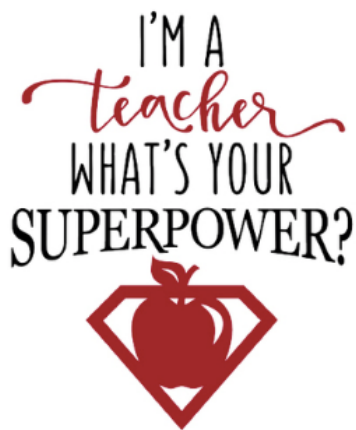
In school:
Locally:
State:
National level:

Tell Your Story!

Like all superheroes, we teachers have our "origin stories." Please use this space to tell how you became who you are! This is a completely open space, so feel free to share as much as you like, from your first memory of knowing you wanted to be a teacher to your first inkling of the injustices inherent in the education system, to your most recent protest march, and whatever in between you would like to share.

In the study, this background information will provide rich context to our discussions of our current work and future directions as teacher activists.

Share your stuff!

If you are an English or ESL or other language teacher, you are already familiar with "realia" but if you are not, you can just think of it as the "stuff" that can inspire or help tell your story. In my study I am trying to tell the story of teacher activists and teacher activism – more accurately, I am trying to have YOU tell the story. To that end, if you would like to share anything related to your own practice of teacher activism, please do! There are many ways you can do this, so please do whatever works for you. "Realia" in this context can mean almost anything: art, writing, even doodling! Photos, newspaper articles, twitter threads, etc. If you wonder if something "counts" just ask me (I'll probably say "of course!")

TIG Information for Potential Participants

Overview:

        The political work of teacher-citizens is a crucial component to a reclamation of public schooling by and for the public. Teachers are far from apolitical and impartial conveyors of inert or objective knowledge. When they/we[32] have the capacity to speak out in public ways about education injustices, they/we can make changes happen. Different teacher activist groups hare working on different projects to address different issues, from curriculum content, to special education students' rights and challenges, to the needs and strengths of English Language learners and immigrant children, to racist discipline policies, to the health of school lunches. Around the country, teachers are speaking out in various ways in favor of their students and public schools, and we have some wins under our belts, but our impact has been limited in scope. Increased knowledge and understanding of activist teachers' activities, motivations and commitment over time will help teacher educators as well as community leaders and policy makers better support teachers' efforts. By grounding education problems, and the limitations of various education "reforms" in the settler colonial theory, then bringing an Indigenous Feminist lens to my analysis of teacher activist identities, I hope to illuminate the vast potential of teachers as change agents, and point the way to future development of that potential.

        There are many brilliant teachers, scholars and activists doing inspiring work all over the U.S. nation-state and around the world, and they all know that there is no "one right answer." To some extent or another we all must find our own answer, for ourselves, in our own particular situation. This study explores the stories of teacher activists in Eugene, Oregon, in an effort to learn how they became involved in activism and advocacy work, and what inspires and sustains them. A small group of eight to twelve teacher activists will participate in critical inquiry group activities (Navarro, 2018) for six weeks, where they will be invited to examine their own activist work in light of shared readings. Using an Indigenous Feminist lens to frame the analysis, I hope to contribute to a robust future vision of teachers' community involvement. By working together in a process of focused inquiry and self-reflection, we (I include myself as the researcher as a participant in the group) can better understand the contextual factors that contribute to the development of a resilient corps of teacher activists, and to explore ways that non-native education activists can work as allies with Native teachers and education activists to advance the ideals of liberatory democratic education for all children.

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[32] I will use a variety of pronouns to refer to individual teachers and to various groups of teachers. My use of they/we here and elsewhere is indicative of my membership in the group I call "teachers" and also "teacher activists."
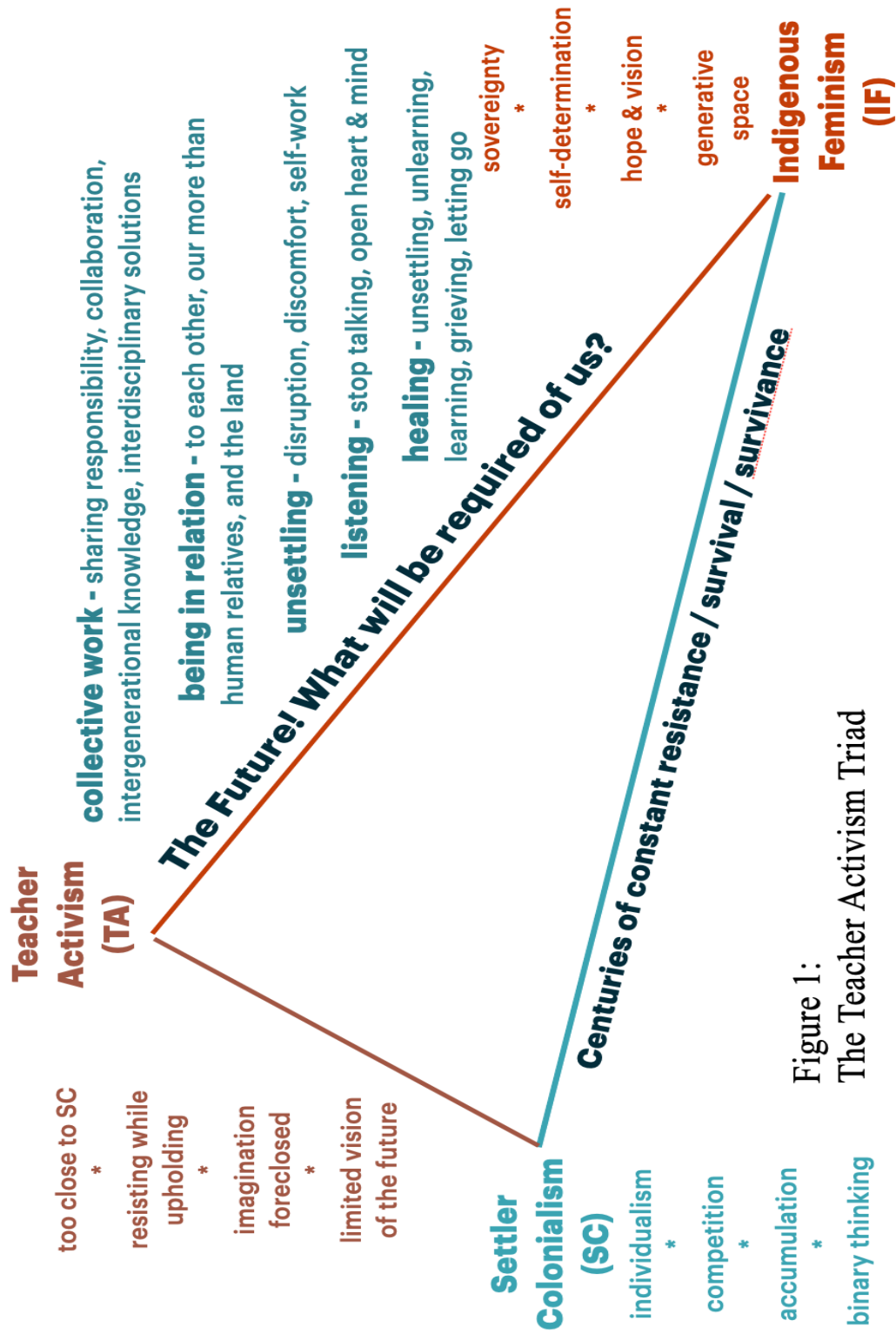
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Figure 1:
The Teacher Activism Triad

Teacher Activism (TA)

collective work - sharing responsibility, collaboration, intergenerational knowledge, interdisciplinary solutions

being in relation - to each other, our more than human relatives, and the land

unsettling - disruption, discomfort, self-work

listening - stop talking, open heart & mind

healing - unsettling, unlearning, learning, grieving, letting go

Indigenous Feminism (IF)

sovereignty
*
self-determination
*
hope & vision
*
generative space

Settler Colonialism (SC)

too close to SC
*
resisting while upholding
*
imagination foreclosed
*
limited vision of the future

individualism
*
competition
*
accumulation
*
binary thinking

The Future! What will be required of us?

Centuries of constant resistance / survival / survivance

TIG Meeting #1

Pete: 13:10 But um, yeah, then I start teaching at Jefferson Middle School, and we brought in the racism free zone. Back in 1989.

Carrie Ann: 13:14 It's legendary.

[rest of introductions]

Pete 54:00 Right and then, then you look at the city, anybody comes from anywhere else sees this city, people of color, see it as a very hostile places, you know, so just because the liberal types are so comfortable with, they're so open yeah but it's like, so why is this place so cold?. And so, unwelcoming to different types of people? but so everybody thinks they're sensitive to it, but around issues of economics, like I know that, like in Jefferson we had a very diverse, you know, student body. And so, we're a racism free zone right, but some of the biggest divisions in that school was around economics, poor kids, and better, you know, and the kids who are on the outs with the poor kids, you know, it was because they didn't have the clothes, they didn't have the right clothes they didn't have right tennis shoes they, you know, those issues, and they didn't you know, people didn't want to talk about it. They would rather talk about some of these other things with a racism free zone good but that includes a lot of different things you really want to look at it deeper. It's not just a surface thing. And so, so yeah, I find that it like that here in Eugene, to be true, that people are more open to talk about something

TIG Meeting #3

Roscoe 14:51 You know that we're looking at the questioning systems is really an essential I agree with you. Otherwise you're just trying to make things a little bit better. Oftentimes for the kids in your classroom only, and that's not bad. But that's not that's not an agent of change.

Pete 15:09 But for many of us radicals at one time, he was challenging the capitalist system. That was a system. This is this is dealing with something really Different,

Roscoe 15:19 And my work at Jefferson was questioning "no racism" as a system.

Pete 15:24 Yeah.

Roscoe 15:25
How does that affect everyone in our school?

Deanna 15:29 And I think what they're saying here is that when, when we do that without thinking about colonization, we run the risk of reinscribing or … if we don't like … if we talk about racism as mostly black folks or mostly Latinos or when (well, there's a whole other discussion to be had about who's Asian like "who counts as Asian"), but that if we are doing our social justice work and not attending to colonization that there's a risk of solidifying colonization even more

Pete 16:16 mmmnmmm that's what I get too from it

TIG meeting #4

Pete 46:03 I remember, once my son when he was in Spencer Butte, Spencer Butte, you became a racism-free zone I think this was this after Jefferson, we became one. And they had like a community thing for different organizations to come and talk. And so they invited all these groups the kids did and one of the groups was LGBT group. And so they were invited. And Jerry Henderson was the principal there and he started getting these calls from parents. Spencer Butte says "Why are you bringing LBGT?" so he disinvited him. ... and the kids one day, you know, I was working but said one day Steve came home from school. He was like 11, 12 year old I don't know. "What happened?" "Oh, we just we… we walked out." So I said "Why?" "Well, they disinvited these people and you know, we're a racism free zone. So we put up this big black construction paper [or, you know, butcher paper over,] you know, racism free zone thing [sign]." They made a connection. Then, you know, this was, you know, we're supposed to be open to everybody. And so then Jimmy H. invited them again! He did, he went back and he got him back….

Pete 1:12:38. Yeah, when they started, you know, with our whole multicultural racism-free zone at Jefferson. And all of a sudden, you know, we had, I was teaching two groups of kids in blocks in sixth grade, and we can really get in deep and all these different things, and we could integrate all this stuff, and all of a sudden, they start talking about these "skills." And "when you gotta start teaching this separate from social studies?" and our whole thing was run by social studies, right? In our ... whole kind of curriculum, the literature, everything was connected to ...and so I used to say, you know, "this is going this is this is the start of breaking up blocks,"

Deanna 1:13:23 What kind of skills? like separate from…

Pete 1:13:25 like reading skills… I mean, what's gonna… how can you… How can you test it on, you know, on the test…

Carrie Ann 1:13:31
very discrete, disconnected…
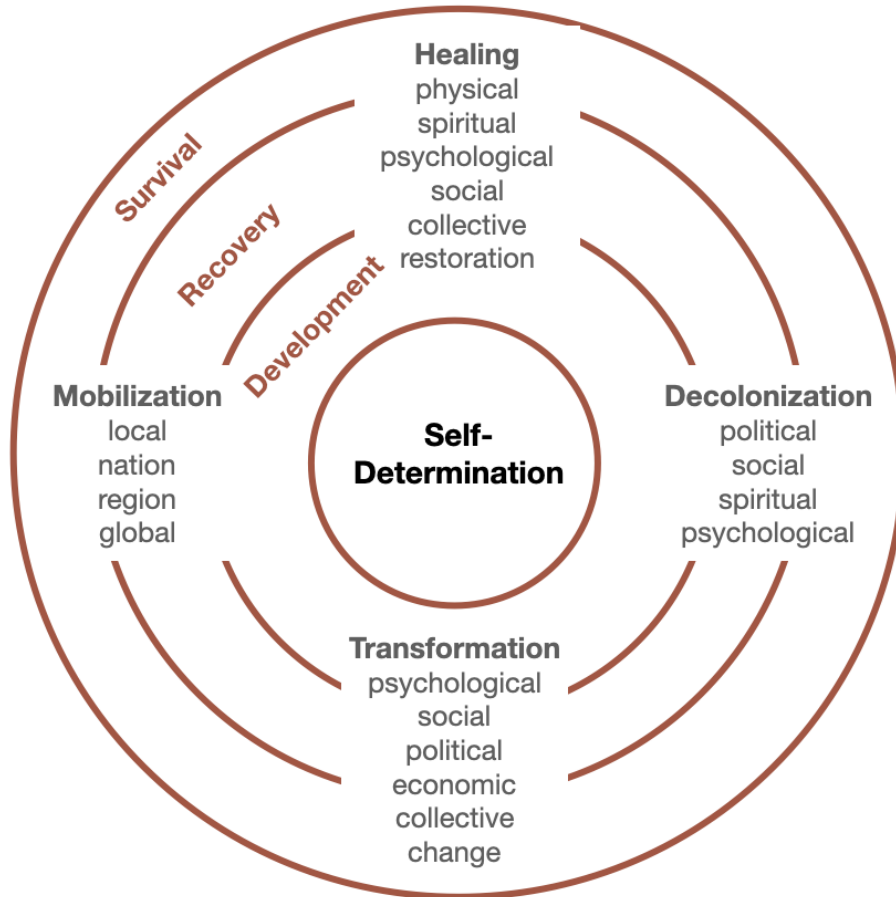
Figure 3
The Indigenous Research Agenda (Smith, 2012, p. 121)

Teacher Activist Survey Responses

Jenn, age 44, grew up in TX CA NV, has been a teacher for 10 years

Where are you currently teaching? (city/town, school district, school name)
Eugene 4j, SEHS

What are you currently teaching? (grade, subject, or other role in school / district)
10th grade English, AP Language and Composition (11-12); Animals in Literature (11-12)

How do you teach? (a little bit about your teaching philosophy, curriculum theory, classroom style, etc)
Teach integrity and learning psychology of growth mindset and the value of risk and making mistakes, down to earth approach, hold every student accountable for their actions and attitudes, involve students and parents in email communications regarding assignments

Do you identify as a teacher activist? An activist teacher? (Is there a difference?)
Yes. No difference

How do you define activist teacher / teacher activist?
One who seeks agency and results in equity, one who voices concerns regarding student and teacher welfare and mental health, one who seeks a common sense approach to teaching students for the purpose of improving society as a whole

What actions do you take, or have you taken in the past, in your role as a teacher activist/activist teacher? Include organizations you belong to or social media work you do; letter writing, demonstrations or protests; lobbying, canvassing, political campaign involvement ... really anything you feel is part of your activist work (in school, locally, state, national level)

>*In school: Current VP of staff council*
>*Locally: attend City council meeting (for sanctuary city) and school board meetings--attend protests*
>*State: write representatives and respond to representative inquiries regarding my teaching profession*
>*National level: stay up to date with news and current events*

Why do you want to participate in this research project?
To help a colleague and further the mission of making schools awesome

<u>Larry, age 70, taught for 45 years; from Wisconsin; white male; recently retired</u>

Where are you currently teaching? (city/town, school district, school name)
What are you currently teaching? (grade, subject, or other role in school / district)
n/a retired

How do you teach? (a little bit about your teaching philosophy, curriculum theory, classroom style, etc)
Critical inquiry; integrated skills; small group tasks; performance assessment.

Do you identify as a teacher activist? An activist teacher? (Is there a difference?)
Yes. My activism followed me into the profession. I became a teacher to foster critical analytical skills.

How do you define activist teacher / teacher activist?
A teacher who recognizes the contexts in which students come to school and makes room for the contexts in the curriculum.

What actions do you take, or have you taken in the past, in your role as a teacher activist/activist teacher? Include organizations you belong to or social media work you do; letter writing, demonstrations or protests; lobbying, canvassing, political campaign involvement ... really anything you feel is part of your activist work (in school, locally, state, national level)
In school in 80s-90s: created learning situations that provided opportunities for students to process course content from multiple perspectives including their own; incorporating current events; role plays; debates.
Locally: member of Teacher Task Force on Cent America; founder of teacher union's Human & Civil Rights Com; Union Vice-Pres; member of Com in Solidarity w Centeal American People; founding member of CAPE.
Nationally: member of Network for Public Education; attend regional and national conferences

Why do you want to participate in this study?
Teacher activism is a passionate interest; Deanna rocks

<u>Carrie Ann, age 65, taught for 31 years; from Buffalo, NY; Jewish, atheist recently retired</u>

Where are you currently teaching? (city/town, school district, school name)
What are you currently teaching? (grade, subject, or other role in school / district)
Volunteering in my former 5th grade classroom.

How do you teach? (a little bit about your teaching philosophy, curriculum theory, classroom style, etc)
Developmentally appropriate curriculum, integrated teaching, culturally responsive teaching, involvement in current world issues, with a focus on building student

relationships with me, and supporting students in interacting positively with each other. On a daily basis I know where I am going, I know my curriculum and what students need to learn, (I read the standards, which is another whole subject!) and do not, nor have I ever, followed a text book. I learn about my topics, do current research, and am very flexible in my time. I actually love when we all get so interested in our discussion that the day's schedule is forgotten. Teaching and learning is a lifelong journey, filled with the full realm of emotions and struggles and beauty. I am unafraid to share my passions, my knowledge, when I'm wrong and/or uniformed, make mistakes, get it right, struggle, stumble - be human- and laugh.

Do you identify as a teacher activist? An activist teacher? (Is there a difference?)
I am not thinking about the difference. I see myself as a teacher who also chooses/needs to be active. I believe that inherent in education is involvement, learning about and practicing what democracy is and means for individuals, community, and the world.

How do you define activist teacher / teacher activist?
I believe a teacher activist empowers students to be engaged and active in the world around around them. An activist teacher teaches and supports the democratic process/social justice/citizen rights, critical thinking, questioning, exploration, research, empathy, and cooperative learning.. An activist teacher is willing to use their own voice to go against the logic of a system that is unjust, to encourage students to find their own truths and to be active participants in their own lives, to stand up for their beliefs

What actions do you take, or have you taken in the past, in your role as a teacher activist/activist teacher? Include organizations you belong to or social media work you do; letter writing, demonstrations or protests; lobbying, canvassing, political campaign involvement ... really anything you feel is part of your activist work (in school, locally, state, national level)
Since it's been 31 years it's a long story. Here's a brief synopsis, and I'm happy to write a longer piece at another time. I am a red-diaper baby, having been raised by parents who were members of the Communist Party in NYC in the 1950's. They came to Buffalo, with about 20 other people before I was born to organize the unions in the factories. My father spent his career at Chevy in Buf., as a UAW organizer/shop steward. I grew up on picket lines and union meetings. I was an EEA rep. council rep for 15 years, and worked hard to keep the staffs I was on informed and active.(There is a lot of "in-between' here that I can detail at another time, if you'd like). Most recently my teaching partner and I and collaborated with her teaching Cultural Linguistics, me teaching Environmental Science/Climate Change, and become active supporters of Our Children's Trust climate lawsuit against the state and federal government. After losing my beloved partner last year, I continued our work as best I could, and brought students to the federal courthouses in Eugene and in Portland. Students had their own research, signs, and speeches. Currently I am a relatively inactive member of CAPE, which likely will change when I adjust to my retirement after 4 decades of being on duty! I write letters, show up at most demonstrations/rallies, and attend environmental and political conference around the world.
Why do you want to participate in this research project?

I want to participate because I think that we all can support each other in our work, activism, and I'm curious about it all!

<u>Roscoe, 67 years old, taught for 25 years; from Manchester NH, male, European American, retired</u>
Where are you currently teaching? (city/town, school district, school name)
What are you currently teaching? (grade, subject, or other role in school / district)
n/a retired
How do you teach? (a little bit about your teaching philosophy, curriculum theory, classroom style, etc)
Project-based, student-empowering, relevant, community-oriented, multicultrually-based, social justice-oriented, high expectations, and... fun!

Do you identify as a teacher activist? An activist teacher? (Is there a difference?)
Yes. The terms seemed interchangeable.

How do you define activist teacher / teacher activist?
A teacher who understands that their professional and ethical responsibilities extend beyond the teaching of the basic curriculum and beyond their classroom. A teacher activist considers the implications of their work in the wider world to include the categories of experience: race, class and gender. A teacher activist views teaching and learning as necessary elements both personal development and social change. A teacher activist views their work as connected to the life stories of students and their families and to the larger community. A teacher activist works to mold professional development to include social justice, equity and teacher empowerment.

What actions do you take, or have you taken in the past, in your role as a teacher activist/activist teacher? Include organizations you belong to or social media work you do; letter writing, demonstrations or protests; lobbying, canvassing, political campaign involvement ... really anything you feel is part of your activist work (in school, locally, state, national level)
I was a member and chair of the EEA Human and Civil Rights Committee, which, in addition to working on labor and race issues, organized social justice workshops and established a sister-union with the SNTE in Oaxaca. I was a co-founder of Ganas. I regularly raise equity issues in school staff meetings - not always appreciated... I chose to work at Jefferson Middle School, the local Racism Free Zone. I helped organize the Progressive Teachers Caucus within the EEA and linked with the Portland Rethinking Schools teachers to form a progressive social justice caucus within the OEA -- also not always well-received. We joined with teachers across the country to form the National Coalition of Education Activists in 1994. https://www.rethinkingschools.org/magazine/special-collections/the-role-of-teacher-unions/social-justice-unionism After retiring, I worked with other teachers to form CAPE. I taught a class on Poverty in the College of Education that focused on class prejudice by teachers and administrators.

Why do you want to participate in this research project?

If ever there was a time when we need teacher activists, it's now.

Rena, 47, taught for 20 years in public schools; currently a graduate student at UO, born in Los Angeles, went through elementary through undergrad in Indiana, female Black-identified bi-racial.
Where are you currently teaching? (city/town, school district, school name)
What are you currently teaching? (grade, subject, or other role in school / district)
I am not currently teaching. Currently, I am supporting pre-service teachers and the Sapsikʷałá program.

How do you teach? (a little bit about your teaching philosophy, curriculum theory, classroom style, etc.)
I teach by loving students where they are at and encouraging them to challenge their fears.

Do you identify as a teacher activist? An activist teacher? (Is there a difference?)
Good question. As I became a teacher, I first identified myself as a revolutionary, and teaching and working with youth seemed a good means to nurture transformation.

How do you define activist teacher / teacher activist?
A teacher who is there to transform the status quo - whatever that may look like. Someone who is working in the classroom for more than high grades and test scores, but to highlight the ways in which society can be more just.

What actions do you take, or have you taken in the past, in your role as a teacher activist/activist teacher? Include organizations you belong to or social media work you do; letter writing, demonstrations or protests; lobbying, canvassing, political campaign involvement ... really anything you feel is part of your activist work (in school, locally, state, national level)
I was involved in Amnesty International, Black Student Union, Environmental club, and even volunteering for the Democratic Party in high school. While continuing to be involved in those concerns, thanks to the Gulf War, I got involved in anti-war protests in University. That has continued, of course, although I don't consider myself a Democrat anymore. As an educator, I have been advisor to Peace Jam (and school/community projects, GSA club, Affinity groups for students of color, facilitated Youth Action Project at White Privilege Conference and other anti-racist work (such as #BlackLivesMatter educational events and curricula). I even consider my classroom curricula activist work, as it has always focused upon resistance experiences and ethnic studies. I recently resigned from my teaching job in protest of the continued marginalization of students in our local school district.

Why do you want to participate in this research project?
Solidarity.

Pete, 71 yo Serbian American immigrant, male from Belgrade, Yugoslavia, retired
Where are you currently teaching? (city/town, school district, school name)

first year in retirement

What are you currently teaching? (grade, subject, or other role in school / district)
This is a first school year that I am not in the classroom. I retired from full time work in 2005 and have been a substitute teacher, mostly at the high school level since then. I also worked in U of O Teach for 6 years and 2 years at Pacific University.

How do you teach? (a little bit about your teaching philosophy, curriculum theory, classroom style, etc)
I taught at all grade levels- elementary, middle school, high school and university level. I believe that teaching is based on relationships with students, their families and the communities they come from. Learning from my students is part of my philosophy and having students know who I am and where I am coming form is very important to me. Teaching all subjects from multiple perspectives is the way I teach. By doing that it leads my students to develop critical thinking which is one of the most important lessons in life for my students. Also opening up my students' minds to different ways of looking at the world by being exposed to different cultures and ways of living. As an immigrant I am tri lingual and tri cultural. I moved here from Yugoslavia and went to school in East Los Angeles where I learned Spanish and lived in a predominantly Latino neighborhood. My first job was in a bilingual program in the LA area. Open discussion in my class is a daily activity. My role as a facilitator of that discussion is what guides my teaching.

Do you identify as a teacher activist? An activist teacher? (Is there a difference?)
I don't see the difference between the two. To me it seems rhetorical and not worth my time thinking about it.

How do you define activist teacher / teacher activist?
Teacher activist struggles to make sure that practitioner perspective is brought to the table at the building level, district level, community level, state level and national level. Standing up for our profession and demanding that our voice is heard is the key to being an activist. Standing up for our students and advocating for their needs. Being involved in our community we teach in and supporting parents and our student families.

What actions do you take, or have you taken in the past, in your role as a teacher activist/activist teacher? Include organizations you belong to or social media work you do; letter writing, demonstrations or protests; lobbying, canvassing, political campaign involvement ... really anything you feel is part of your activist work (in school, locally, state, national level)
As an immigrant who came into American schools not speaking English, I understood the immigrant student experience. That motivated me to get into teaching, especially bilingual (Spanish). This was mid seventies and we were bilingual education pioneers. Also during this time teachers were winning the right to collectively bargain in California and I became an union activist. When I moved to Eugene, I was involved in a first teacher strike in 1979 and again in a month long strike in 1987. I was arrested in that strike with 12 other teachers. Ever since then, I have been involved in EEA, OEA and have been delegate to several NEA conventions representing 4j teachers. I was on the

EEA executive board for several years and was the Vice President of our local for 2 years. I was also the founding member of the Human and Civil Rights committee of EEA. My first job in Eugene was teaching ELL to Southeast Asian boat people (kids) in junior high. I also got involved with the 4j Multicultural council and was a TOSA for multicultural education for several years. In the 1990's I worked at Jefferson Middle School and organized the first Racism Free Zone in Eugene.
I have also been active in political campaigns through the union that involved lobbying, canvassing and organizing protests (May 8 of this year).

Why do you want to participate in this research project?
I believe that we can learn much from the history of our activism and that it should be documented for the future.

APPENDIX G
NON-TIG-MEMBERS QUESTIONNAIRE ANSWERS

"Cher" (a pseudonym), 31 years old has taught for 6+ years, from LA and Eugene, cis-female; mixed, Chicana, Queer, possible adhd, bilingual

Where are you currently teaching? (city/town, school district, school name)
UO (grad student instructor)

What are you currently teaching? (grade, subject, or other role in school / district)
Ethnic Studies 101

How do you teach? (a little bit about your teaching philosophy, curriculum theory, classroom style, etc)
When I was K-12, I found that looking at the whole child and teaching about relationships/self-management and social justice were key elements of teaching for me.

Do you identify as a teacher activist? An activist teacher? (Is there a difference?)
Lol, yes, there is! And I do!

How do you define activist teacher / teacher activist?
I would say all teachers have the potential to be activists but not all answer the call. I see teacher activists as teachers who work to promote social justice in the classroom and outside the classroom by tackling oppression at building, district, community, state, and national levels. Maybe not all all the time, but a variety of levels throughout the teaching career.

What actions do you take, or have you taken in the past, in your role as a teacher activist/activist teacher? Include organizations you belong to or social media work you do; letter writing, demonstrations or protests; lobbying, canvassing, political campaign involvement ... really anything you feel is part of your activist work (in school, locally, state, national level)
I worked with the union, CAPE, different community orgs

Why do you want to participate in this research project?
I want to be able to help provide more voice to activism in teaching!

Colleen, 67 yo and a teacher for 38 years; born in Washington but began teaching in California; female American with Germanic and Irish ancestors

Where are you currently teaching? (city/town, school district, school name)
Retired; last taught in Springfield Public Schools at Mount Vernon Elementary

What are you currently teaching? (grade, subject, or other role in school / district)
Taught 4th grade from 2005-2017

How do you teach? (a little bit about your teaching philosophy, curriculum theory, classroom style, etc)
I was a teacher who learned as from my students as they learned from me about empathy, character, honesty, and many other components of humanity. I tried to impress upon them the idea that all humans have the same value/worth and that dignity of all who inhabit this earth should be universal. I have been known to cry and show my emotions when talking about the KKK, slavery and other such atrocities in our country's history.

Do you identify as a teacher activist? An activist teacher? (Is there a difference?)
Yes to all 3: I was during my last 8 yrs of teaching as a building rep for my local, and delegate to state and federal association, participating in lobby days and other events; I attended board meetings and testified regarding issues of inequity and others which affected my students and introduced my students to relevant information in fostering their awareness of humanity and equity for all; the difference is in the realms of each with former being about all things education/teacher related and the latter being more universal to other issues in all of life.

How do you define activist teacher / teacher activist?
See above.

What actions do you take, or have you taken in the past, in your role as a teacher activist/activist teacher? Include organizations you belong to or social media work you do; letter writing, demonstrations or protests; lobbying, canvassing, political campaign involvement ... really anything you feel is part of your activist work (in school, locally, state, national level)
Union building rep; attended school board meetings and spoke; attended Lobby Days and marched during rallies in Salem on several occasions and inspired/motivated 8 non activist colleagues one year to join me to meet with legislators to discuss our concerns for our students; served as a delegate to OEA representative assembly for 5 yrs and NEA for 3 years

Why do you want to participate in this research project?
To further contribute to education as a retiree and to help a fellow activist

"Molly Brown" (a pseudonym); 59 years old, taught for 30 years, retired June2018; from Iowa now lives in Canby OR; White, Northern European (Irish/Scottish/British) ethnicity; native English speaker/bilingual in Spanish

Where are you currently teaching? (city/town, school district, school name)
What are you currently teaching? (grade, subject, or other role in school / district)
retired

How do you teach? (a little bit about your teaching philosophy, curriculum theory, classroom style, etc)
I took a mostly constructivist approach to teaching, when I was allowed to do so. I believe in allowing students to participate in making decisions about what they want to

learn. I like to have a general plan for what I will teach but be prepared to take detour from or abandon that plan completely if it's not working for either my students or me. I enjoyed building a classroom community that had mutual respect for others at its foundation.

Do you identify as a teacher activist? An activist teacher? (Is there a difference?)
I identify as an education activist.

How do you define activist teacher / teacher activist?
A teacher who is involved in the issues that affect their and their students' educational experience.

What actions do you take, or have you taken in the past, in your role as a teacher activist/activist teacher? Include organizations you belong to or social media work you do; letter writing, demonstrations or protests; lobbying, canvassing, political campaign involvement ... really anything you feel is part of your activist work (in school, locally, state, national level)

My original activism began around my work with English learners when I was hired to work as a teacher in Woodburn, OR in the early 1990s. I had returned to Oregon from 5 years in California where, at that time, Native language instruction in Spanish was widely provided in public schools. I helped advocate for and create Woodburn's Dual Immersion program, along with many other district teachers and parents. I continued to work in, advocate for, and promote Dual Immersion programs throughout the rest of my career.

I also became a Building Representative with my local education association during my career and eventually held positions in my local as Secretary and later Vice President of our association.

> *Additionally, I became involved in Stand for Children at one point in the early 2000s when that organization still advocated for funding for schools, once being president of our local Stand chapter. I parted ways with Stand when they began to appear to prefer a top down rather than bottom up form of organization that seemed to want to blame teachers for the problems in education as opposed to poverty. As I and many others who resigned from Stand for Children later discovered, this was around the time they began to accept large grants from the Gates Foundation. Those of us who left partly due to a feeling that there was some teacher bashing going on had that suspicion confirmed when Stand founder Jonah Edelman gave the famous Aspen speech where he explained that he had decided to help take down Illinois teachers unions, viewing unions as the problem. Many of us in Oregon, at that point, went on to form Oregon Save Our Schools after connecting via a Parents Across America blog. On request, I can provide links to articles and these blog posts if wanted.*

I later became frustrated with the Neo-liberal policies expressed by Edelman showing up at the national level in the administration of Barack Obama and Arne Duncan's Department of Education. I became involved in a Facebook group called "Dump Duncan" and through that group I was connected to another Facebook group called "Badass Teachers Association" just as the group began forming in June of 2013.

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Soon after getting involved with Badass Teachers (BATs) as we organized national call ins and Twitter storms, and even a march in Washington, DC at the DOE to call out Duncan's horrible policy decisions, I asked myself "Why isn't my national education association doing these things?" So I ran for a position to the National Education Association's Representative Assembly. I had already virtually met many other educators in the BATs group as well as meeting some in person, both on a trip to Seattle to protest the Gates Foundation's meddling in public education policy as well as at the march in Washington, DC. I was elected to NEA RA the second year of the formation of the BATs caucus and helped work with that caucus to create a justice movement within the NEA. I also know that many BATs around the country have been involved in the Red For Ed movements in states like Kentucky, Virginia, etc.

Why do you want to participate in this research project?
I want to help the researcher and I hope this study will help create more teacher activists/activist teachers.

Jenn
First time I realized I wanted to be a teacher was after applying for a tutoring position
helping high school students write college applications. A professor came to one of my
literature classes in community college, before I knew what career I even wanted to
pursue, looking for college students willing to create curriculum for teaching students
writing skills for college application essays. I got the position because of my writing
skills, taught my own group of students from Oxnard High School my own curriculum,
and had a great time doing it. After that, I went to my college advisor to begin the process
of aligning my classes for teacher education.
After getting my Bachelor's in secondary education in English and teaching in Las Vegas
for five years, in my last year I attended a protest for teacher wages. The protest was
joined by UNLV college students, all seeking justice in education. The atmosphere was
intoxicating, I felt like I was a part of something bigger.

Fast forward to my masters education at U of O in Eugene, Oregon and I learned of
CAPE and the injustices of standardized testing. My engagement in current events and
my experiences in teaching by then had informed me that there is a need for teachers to
stand up for our future of democracy and civil rights. I attended CAPE meetings,
participated in the Women's March and the March for Science, and as a teacher at SEHS,
I saw many teachers who were activists--and had the pleasure of seeing our students
engage in at least one protest a year since Trump was elected. I am now invigorated by
our community's dedication to social justice, and I also know that it takes work. Today, in
2019, I have committed to engaging more in my student's mental health, helping them to
be informed citizens in a democracy, and in the attempted corporate take-over of
education.

Roscoe
I grew up in the working-class French Canadian-American community in Manchester,
NH. From a young age, I understood some measure of ethnic and class prejudice. I was
politicized by the Civil Rights and anti-Vietnam War movements. I spent a number of
years working in worker-owned and worker-managed cooperatives. I became a teacher to
make a difference in young peoples' lives and to help them to make a difference in their
world. I learned organizing principles in political and cooperative work. I applied those to
my work as a teacher.

Rena
I guess my origin story does indeed begin with my/our origin. My mother was a teacher
before students with disabilities were required by law to the right of education. She
taught for a program that served the needs of students who were blind, deaf, autistic, had
down-syndrome, etc. My father was also briefly a math teacher, although his passion was
always history. When their cross-racial relationship became known to the school district

in which they were employed, their contracts were not renewed and they moved to Los Angeles, California. I grew up with an understanding that certain types of people were not valued in mainstream classrooms and that institutions would do what they could to maintain the status quo. My own entry into preschool reinforced that understanding. I was born left-handed and corrected to be right dominant. One way was the best way. We did move back to Indiana for kindergarten, and my twin sister and I were separated into different classes, a cruel indicator that individualism was valued over our needs for co-cognition. Luckily, Leah and I had each other - because being Black/bi-racial at that time was unique and we were the target of much attention and racism. Our family lived at the edge of town and attended a rural school district and our mother taught in the city. Winter blizzards kept our district shut down and I remember Leah and I being raised in my mother's special education classroom. We were shown that all students deserved dignity and had a voice (at least in my mother's classroom). Although we never had a Black (or bi-racial) teacher in our classrooms, we grew up in a non-bussed integrated community which was unusual. However, we could observe how Whiteness is privileged in the school system and honestly, we benefitted from it due to our light skin and educated parents. But our parents made sure we were aware of that, and I know that that is why we have "grown up" to teach the way that we do.

Larry
I decided to become a teacher in 1969 or 1970 as an anti-Vietnam War and Civil Rights protester at Univ. of Wisconsin, my state school. I started as a pre-Business major, but that didn't last long as my critique of US policy, culture, economy was fed daily. I knew I wanted to be "part of the solution," and teaching was a solid pathway.
I had to cut my hair in order to get placed at a local middle school for student teaching. Fortunately, I had no piercings or tats to hide.
As I matriculated from my 1st job in Catholic parish Latino school in AZ, to a rural high school in Creswell, OR, in 1976 to elementary school at a Back-to-Basics alternative school in Eugene 4J in 1978, to a middle school in 1985 in same district, I focused my teaching on preparing students to be critical thinkers, clear speakers and writers, and confident people. It was core to my teaching at all grades because I knew that this country requires people with these skills. I wanted to make learning these skills fun, engaging, and connected to real life.
I was never seriously challenged for this perspective because I was trusted as a teacher who was careful about the details of teaching. No administrator came after me because I was good at the job. No parent fought me because they knew I was on their kid's side. The times have changed, and I know the challenges are greater.
I was a teachers' union activist. I was recruited as a 1st year teacher in Creswell to join the Bargaining Team. I volunteered to be the Building Rep in 4J. I ran for and was elected to the Executive Board as a reform candidate, and I was elected Vice Pres as the same. I was the 1st Chair of the Human & Civil Rights Committee of the union.
I was invited back after I retired to help re-establish that Com. It led to the formation of CAPE- Community Alliance for Public Education in 2013.
The roles have changed, but the core value has not. Working for this type of education inspires and fortifies me.

Pete

My story is directly linked to my status as an immigrant. I came from Yugoslavia at an age of 13 not speaking English and really not wanting to be here. I came with my family of 5 and were sponsored by my uncle who came in 1910 the year my father was born. When we came it was the first time my father and his brother met in person. We did not speak English and my uncle forgot most of his mother tongue, Serbian.

Our view of America, the land of milk and honey, changed quickly by the reality of our situation. My parents not speaking English and not having much education, were forced into menial jobs of washing dishes at San Diego State and my mom cleaning houses for rich San Diego families. My brother and I went to school not knowing the language or the culture. I adjusted better than my brother who was put in a special ed class because he did not speak English.

My teenage years were spent learning English (I learned it very quickly), helping my dad find work and working myself during my high school years. Also I found myself being in a minority in a predominantly Latino community in East LA. Tough neighborhood taught me lessons in survival during my formative years.

I did well in high school and became first in family to graduate from high school (my father finished 4th grade and my mother 2nd grade). I went to Long Beach State when the tuition was $60 per semester. Working part time and going to school got me through in 4 years. I got my degree in History.

While in college I became involved in the antiwar movement. Growing up in socialist Yugoslavia I learned about colonialism and imperialism and joined others in opposing US imperialist policies. My radicalization and developing world view came out of my immigrant experience and the antiwar movement.

I also became involved with the Farmworkers Union on the lettuce and grape boycott in the LA area. I became an organizer on several campuses for the union, met Cesar Chavez, Fred Ross, Bobby De La Cruz etc.

During my senior year in college I also became a draft counselor helping other students avoid the draft and building my own case for getting a deferment. I saw a university counselor for over 6 months and convinced her to write me a letter of support. My argument was because of my family's history during WW2 (Two of my uncles were killed as well as over 60 Mandrapa men by Croatian fascists, my father's 4 years as a prisoner of war in Germany) I could not participate in American war on Vietnam.

I was able to get out of the draft. After I graduated worked at odd jobs before going back and getting my teaching credential. My first job was in a bilingual program (Spanish) in LA. I learned Spanish in school and time I spent in Mexico.

Right away I got involved in the teachers union, American Federation of Teachers the more progressive than NEA (beginning of the collective bargaining era for public employees).

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I moved to Oregon in 1978 and my first job was working with migrant farmworker students in High School Equivalency Program at U of O. Began working at 4j after that and was involved in the teachers strike in 1979 (one week) and was an activist in our 1987 strike (one of 12 teachers arrested). In the mean time worked in the ESL program in 4J and was the Multicultural TOSA for the district. We did lots of equity work in the 80's through the Multicultural Council made up of diverse group of teachers and community members.

When I went back to full time teaching at Jefferson Middle School I helped found the Racism Free Zone at our school. We drew staff that wanted to be in the most diverse and progressive school in 4j. I worked on developing multicultural curriculum with other teachers and members of the community. I worked at Jefferson for 18 years while we were in the struggle to make 4j more equatable for students and staff.

During my time teaching I was a union activist and was on the exec board of EEA, was an EEA Vice President, EEA rep on state wide committees and represented Eugene teachers on the National level (NEA).

Since retiring from full time work, I have subbed (high school), taught method courses at U of O college of ed and Pacific and have continued to work for the union in variety of projects and political campaigns. Also I was one of the founding members of CAPE.

Session: Theme Activity	Reading *Essential Question*
Week 1: Opening / Joining Sharing Origin Stories Stories & Ideas of Participation	"Locating the Hope in Bone-Deep Participation" (Tuck, 2013a) *What do we – in this group – mean by participation!*
Week 2: Framing our Discussions, setting goals for the group Brainstorming examples of S-C logics, structures in our own lives, work.	Chapter 2 – My Literature Review & Conceptual Framework Triangles *What is settler colonialism? What might be required of us as non-Native activists?*
Week 3: Diving Deeper, Framing Our Questions	Decolonization is Not a Metaphor (Tuck & Yang, 2012) *If not, then what is it? What is it for each of us? What is it for our activist groups?*
Week 4: What is Required of Us? And other questions?	Decolonizing Solidarity (Boudreau Morris, 2017) *What does solidarity look like? What else can we imagine?*
Week 5: Decolonizing Solidarity	*EXCERPT FROM EITHER: Decolonizing Education: Nourishing the Learning Spirit* (Battiste, 2016) *OR Stop Talking* (Merculieff & Roderick, 2013) *What can we imagine for the future of education if we are inspired by Indigenous ways of thinking, learning, and teaching?*
Week 6: Closing Labyrinth? Learnings? Changes? Next Steps? Compliments? Circle?	"The Fight for the Soul of Public Education" (Jobin-Leeds & AgitArte, 2016) *What are we up against? What are we Fighting For? What next?* *Celebration*

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