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The Persistent Challenges of Addressing Epistemic Dominance in Higher Education: Considering the Case of Curriculum Internationalization

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The recent growth of internationalization at colleges and universities in the Global North has amplified the need to address the ongoing colonial politics of knowledge in these institutions. In this article I argue that a failure to denaturalize and interrupt long-standing patterns of curricular Euro-supremacy may result in internationalization becoming yet another means of economic expansion and epistemic erasure. However, rather than offer a prescriptive roadmap for epistemic decolonization, this article is an effort to consider the paradoxes, challenges, and difficulties that often arise in efforts to do this work.

Introduction

In the past three decades, internationalization has become increasingly central to the institutional strategies of many colleges and universities in the Global North, in particular through the recruitment of international students, expansion of study-abroad programs, increases in international research and exchange partnerships, as well as internationalization of curricula (Altbach and Knight 2007; Brustein 2007; Stromquist 2007). Recently, some have called for more critical examinations of the practical, ethical, and political dimensions of these efforts (de Wit 2014; Knight 2014; Madge et al. 2015). In particular, there is growing concern that mainstream approaches to internationalization may further entrench colonialist, capitalist global relations, and reproduce the Euro-supremacist foundations of modern Western higher education .[1] In this article I argue that if internationalization is not to become yet another means of economic expansion and epistemic erasure, then further work is needed to interrupt the imperial tendency to instru-

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[1] Sidhu (2006); Rhee (2009); Rizvi and Lingard (2010); Shahjahan (2013); Suspitsyna (2015).

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mentalize difference, assert mastery, and seek national advantage at the very moment the international is evoked as an ethical concern.

I begin by reviewing the early history of internationalization and the dominant global imaginary within which it is situated. I then review the challenges and paradoxes that arise from existing efforts to disrupt epistemic dominance in higher education and ask how lessons learned from these efforts can inform curriculum internationalization. This article addresses the following questions: What difficulties and tensions arise in efforts to enact epistemic justice within Anglophone Western higher education institutions in general and specifically in the context of internationalization? To what extent can alternative epistemes be made legible and legitimized within these institutions, and what might be lost—or gained—in the process? And what kinds of transformations are and are not possible as long as these institutions (and the imaginaries of individuals within them) remain enframed by the imperatives of the nation-state and global capital?

A Note about Method

While the focus of this article on Anglophone, Western university contexts risks a recentering and reification of the English-speaking West, there is also an ethico-political imperative to respond to the challenges raised or exacerbated by the rapid growth of internationalization efforts in these institutions. This imperative is only further intensified given that the Western university is frequently (though not universally) taken as a model for the development and transformation of universities elsewhere (Nandy 2000; Marginson 2008; Rhoads 2011), as well as the fact that three of the top five destinations for international students are predominantly English-speaking Western nations: the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia (UNESCO 2014). Having recognized that Western universities' Eurocentrism and global hegemony continue to be a problem, we need to consider what enables these dynamics to continue despite powerful critiques and practical efforts to disrupt them.

Thus, this article is not intended as a guide for epistemic decolonization, nor do I claim to have transcended the patterns of epistemic dominance I identify.[2] Rather, this article is an effort to consider the paradoxes and persistent challenges that arise in efforts to do this work. Denaturalizing existing politics of knowledge can bring us to the limit of what is possible within the dominant global imaginary. However, at this "limit-space," the common desire to quickly mend, escape, or replace that imaginary so as to regain a sense of certainty, categorical clarity, and moral redemption may circularly lead to

[2] In fact, I presume just the opposite: that we are deeply embedded within the systems we critique, which in turn strongly shapes the knowledge and social relations we (re)produce. As Mitchell (2015) suggests, "Our theories of intellectual work … are problematically incomplete if they do not open onto a practice of confronting the extent to which we are made by that which we seek to oppose" (91).

its reproduction. Many decolonial critiques document a persistent failure to adequately address the effects of colonialism and its afterlife and to recognize the centrality of colonialism to the past and present of capitalism and the nation-state. If this is so, then rather than rushing to determine a new way out or forward, we need to consider what political, methodological, and pedagogical questions remain to be asked if increasing numbers of people are dissatisfied with this imaginary yet largely remain deeply embedded and invested in the promises that it offers. As internationalization expands, it presents an ambivalent opportunity and an ethical demand to undertake this questioning.

Internationalization and the Foundations of Western Higher Education

According to de Wit (2002), in order to understand internationalization today, it is important to consider its roots in earlier iterations of higher education. I further suggest that understanding this history is integral for understanding the Euro-supremacist foundations of modern Western higher education more generally. Thus, contemporary ethico-political questions and concerns around internationalization should be historicized and considered with due attention to the ongoing colonial politics of knowledge.[3] As Scott (2000) has pointed out, "The contemporary university is the creature of the nation-state—not of medieval civilization" (5). In this section I briefly consider the role of conquest and slavery in the shift from the medieval to the modern university.

From the Western European Renaissance to the beginning of the twentieth century, higher education was increasingly oriented away from its medieval scholastic tradition toward producing knowledge and leaders for nascent nation-states. During this time, the primary international elements were individual mobility, research exchange, and the export of European academic systems elsewhere (de Wit 2002). The "export" of European higher education models is more accurately characterized as academic colonialism (de Wit 2002, 8), beginning in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries when Spain, Britain, and France first established universities in their colonies in the Americas (Mignolo 2003; Wilder 2013). While these institutions were predominantly meant for educating clerical and secular elite European settlers, as Dolby and Rahman (2008) point out, "the European university model was

[3] Some argue that critiques of Western knowledge tend to imprecisely represent it as monolithic or homogenous, belying its internal diversity (e.g., Phillips and Ruitenberg 2012; Siegel 2006). Yet as Alcoff (2007) points out, broad commentaries on Western knowledge may be appropriate in response to the historical ease with which "non-Western knowledge" has been portrayed in similarly broad strokes. Said (1994) also provides a prescient warning about the risks of disregarding persistent colonial divisions of the world: "We cannot get around them all by pretending they do not exist; on the contrary, contemporary Orientalism teaches us a great deal about the intellectual dishonesty of dissembling on that score, the result of which is to intensify the divisions and make them both vicious and permanent" (327).

imposed on colonial subjects in Asia, South America, and Africa beginning in the eighteenth century and extending through the present" (684). Several early US universities also had programs for converting indigenous youth, and the United States later established universities within its extracontinental imperial acquisitions, such as Puerto Rico, Hawai'i, and the Philippines (Bascara 2014).

However, modern Western universities were not autonomously formed in Europe and then simply exported to colonies; rather, conquest and enslavement were integral to the formation and growth of these institutions in both locales. The effects were simultaneously economic and epistemological. Regarding economics, the value produced from colonization and slavery (and the associated triangle trade) helped to fund modern higher education institutions, while epistemologically, claims about the universalism of Western knowledge could only become meaningful through the violent production of racial and colonial particularism/difference in colonial contexts (Grosfoguel 2013). Claiming the exclusive right to police, produce, and possess knowledge was, according to Willinsky (1998), all part of the need to "make the whole of the world coherent for the West by bringing all we knew of it within the imperial order of things" (11). The modern university helped to institutionalize the practice of preserving and producing certain types of knowledge while eliminating or erasing others (Hong 2008).

In many cases, knowledge was also extracted from non-European peoples and then framed as having been "discovered" by Western researchers. According to Smith (2012), these supposed discoveries were treated as raw materials and subsequently "commodified as property belonging to the cultural archive and body of knowledge of the West" (64). Mignolo (2003) argues that in this process, Europe's Others were "placed in the role of providing information and culture, but not knowledge" (109). Dussel (2000) also argues that the claim to a linear continuity between "Greece-Rome-Europe" is actually an inaccurate historical narrative originating in German Romanticism: "Aristotle's writings on metaphysics and logic were studied in Baghdad well before they were translated into Latin in Muslim Spain; then, from Toledo, they arrived in Paris by the end of the twelfth century" (466). Thus, much of what is now claimed as "Western thought" was stolen or adapted from others without due acknowledgement. As Euro-descended people asserted themselves as the only viable knowledge creators and arbiters of legitimacy, non–Euro-descended peoples were deemed to be objects of knowledge.

This colonial politics of knowledge may be summarized as an imperial effort (always incomplete) to capture and contain the threat that other knowledges and ways of knowing pose to the modern Western episteme and its ordering of the world, given that these other knowledges both signal the limits of mastery and continue to hold possibilities for worlds otherwise.

In this sense, Western knowledge is characterized as much by its particular content as it is by its organizing principles of progress, possession, universalism, certainty, and neutralization of difference (either through incorporation, erasure, or elimination; Silva 2007, 2013). Uncertainty, contradiction, and unassimilable difference are then treated as a problem. If this is the case, then critiques of epistemic Eurocentrism that articulate the issue as one of ignorance that can be solved through more information may be insufficient. That is, if epistemic dominance is not (only) caused by a lack of knowledge but rather (or also) by the very imperative to accumulate knowledge and police the categories of meaning by which existence is organized, then a solely additive approach that "celebrates" difference but ultimately operates within the same framework may fail to adequately address the underlying problem (Bhambra 2013). To further develop how the racialized framing principles of Western knowledge systems are deeply embedded not only in educational institutions but also in the ontological and material organization of modern life, in the following section I consider how this relates to a global imaginary that was birthed in the simultaneous rise of modernity and colonialism.

The Dominant Global Imaginary

Gaonkar (2002) describes a social imaginary as "an enabling but not fully explicable symbolic matrix within which people imagine and act as world-making collective agents" (1). According to Taylor (2002), social imaginaries instantiate "a moral or metaphysical order, in the context of which the norms and ideals make sense" (107). Neither purely ideological nor material, social imaginaries circumscribe what is deemed possible or legitimate to think, act, and know, thereby linking present conditions to future aspirations at a collective level (Rizvi and Savage 2015). Because social imaginaries both produce and are (re)produced by individual subjects, efforts to resist and/or enact alternative imaginaries tend to be complex and contradictory.

Our currently dominant global imaginary was/is distinctly modern and colonial, these being two sides of the same coin, with conquest and enslavement providing the basis of the material and symbolic matrix of the modern world as we know it, beyond and before the enclosure of Europe (Wynter 2003; Silva 2007). Although this imaginary has since been contested and reformed, its basic structuring logics endure as it continues to produce individuals and communities within a racialized ordering of humanity. In this ordering, the white/Euro-descended subject's "civic-humanist, rational self-conception" is constituted against a racialized "irrational/subrational Human Other" (Wynter 2003, 281–82).[4] Significantly, this division is not merely an

[4] The use of a male pronoun is intentional here, given that the "ideal" subject is a (cisgender) male.

effect of exclusion; rather, more fundamentally, the differential valuation of life is required for the modern/colonial global imaginary to function. This is because fulfilling the promises of affluence, universal knowledge, state-ensured security, autonomy, progress, and freedom for the "civic-humanist rational subject" (i.e., producing the promised value) necessitates that certain populations be deemed by their nature morally and intellectually inferior, which also marks them as exploitable, expropriable, and expendable (Silva 2007).

However, in order to perpetuate investments in this global imaginary and justify its continuation, any relation between its promises and subjugations must be disavowed. Thus, social violence is cast as exceptional or as evidence of modernity's incompletion, rather than as its ongoing condition of possibility. There is also a parallel here at the level of knowledge: the violence affected by the Western episteme is understood to be the result of insufficient inclusion of difference, rather than as an effect of its mode of knowledge production and its instrumental uses of knowledge. Yet in the case of both the imaginary and the episteme, the framing is as significant as the content.

While the framing of this modern/colonial imaginary remains in place today, its particulars have shifted significantly over time, due to changes in dominant formations of capitalism (from merchant to industrial to financial) but also due to the resistance by those on and against whom this imaginary has inflicted the greatest violence, as well as counter-responses to these resistance efforts (which have taken the form of direct retaliation, cooptation of critique, and everything in between). For instance, in the post–World War II era, the imaginary shifted to incorporate official refutations of racism and colonialism, in particular as "cold war politics demanded the construction of a strong and irreproachable West" (Kapoor 2014, 1127). Far from being cast aside, however, colonial logics were recast, for instance, through development projects framed as a means to help the non-West "catch up" to the West and progress toward perfected "humanity" (Wynter and McKittrick 2015). As Silva (2015b) points out, these development projects left "unexamined the cumulative economic effects of colonial power, that is, of the still-working mechanisms of dispossession, displacement, and death" (35). Yet Western powers continued to define themselves favorably against their Others by "benevolently" promoting progress while at the same time asserting the West's universal epistemic value and securing their continued economic advantage (Biccum 2010).

With the rise of the present era of globalization in the 1990s, following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the supposed vindication of liberal capitalism, another important shift in the global imaginary took place. Concurrent with the expansion of free trade and the financialization of capitalism was many nation-states' official embrace of multiculturalism and the

depoliticized celebration of increased global interconnection, which obscured ongoing and even intensified modes of domination and dispossession. As Blanco Ramírez (2014) suggests, "Globalization has been used to euphemize, negate or justify geopolitical relations that are imperialistic in nature" (124). Although some assert the novelty of today's global interconnectedness, it is difficult to disentangle any invocation of the global from its colonial origins (Jazeel 2011). Hence, these global relations were and are hardly horizontal (Spivak 2012; Silva 2015b). This is all significant in the context of higher education's internationalization, given that it is often positioned as an inevitable and apolitical response to globalization, which in turn is positioned as a positive or at least neutral development (Altbach 2004; Gaffikin and Perry 2009). As a result, it can be difficult to challenge popular narratives about countries' and institutions' benevolent motives for internationalization, and to link internationalization to ongoing processes of colonization and capitalist accumulation (Brandenburg and de Wit 2011).

The globalizing reach of this imaginary over the past six centuries has meant that wherever one is situated within its colonial divisions, it is not possible to simply "opt out" of its unevenly distributed repressive, disciplinary, and biopolitically productive effects. However, this imaginary is neither totalizing nor inevitable, and it has prompted a range of responses, including various modes of embrace, ambivalence, and resistance. These have taken the form of: outright rejection of the imaginary; shifting its terms and expanding its borders in order to demand inclusion or access to the promises of modernity; strategically appropriating its terms to serve alternative ends; and/or asserting imaginaries premised on other, alternative modes of existence. Yet these efforts can also create contradictory and unexpected outcomes, especially when some elements of the imaginary are affirmed while others are resisted. Selective resistance is not only due to the practical difficulty of challenging every element of an imaginary at once but also to the fact that doing so might make an intervention unintelligible to those within it.

In the next section I consider how different efforts to challenge the dominant global imaginary in the context of higher education curriculum have prompted important changes but have also generated new challenges and contradictions that we can learn from in our efforts to internationalize the curriculum. Learning from both their successes and complications, these earlier efforts can teach us about the difficulties, limits, and double binds involved in trying to comprehensively disrupt a deeply entrenched mode of world-making. These difficulties affect even the most critical or marginalized of students and scholars, particularly when we remain tethered to the very institutions and subjectivities that are constituted to normalize the dominant imaginary. Indeed, as Mitchell (2015) suggests, "There is nothing about our position in the academy, however marginal, that is innocent of power, nor is

there any practice that will afford us an exteriority to the historical determinations of the place from which we speak, write, research, teach, organize, and learn" (91).

Disrupting Epistemic Dominance

According to Ahenakew (2016), the initial challenge of making structures of epistemic dominance visible from within an imaginary that tightly regulates knowledge is to make "what is invisible noticeably absent, so that it can be remembered and missed" (333). This requires generating sufficient dissatisfaction with the current ordering of the imaginary and its promised futurities so as to bypass its sturdy structures of denial and spark the desire or demand for (self-)reflexive examination and substantive change. Having done so, the next step is to "make what is absent *present*" (Ahenakew 2016, 333). This second step entails the creation or regeneration of different possibilities, while at the same time it also generates new ethical and political paradoxes and questions, particularly when doing this work in the context of Western higher education institutions. For instance, challenges arise in efforts to balance the need to take practical, immediate action *with* the need for persistent, reflexive critique of the impact (and limits) of these actions *with* the need to attend to diverse and sometimes-conflicting responsibilities to students, administrators, governments, and various other communities. There are also questions about the extent to which it is possible to know, imagine, and be "otherwise" from within institutions that are so tightly oriented and organized around a particular (Western) form of knowing and funded by particular interests (of state and capital) that are also deeply invested in naturalizing that way of knowing (Roy 2006).

It is around these and related challenges that this section is oriented, with the intent of learning from existing successes and mistakes. Below I describe four distinct (though in practice, often overlapping) approaches to addressing epistemic dominance in higher education, emphasizing the gifts and challenges of each. This is not meant to be a comprehensive representation of all possible efforts to do this work. Rather, this is an invitation for further, in-depth conversations and examinations of the complicities and tensions in which these efforts operate, and for these conversations to in turn enable us to enrich and consistently revise experiments at the limit of what appears possible.

Thin Inclusion

Thin inclusion (of epistemic difference) is a common approach to addressing Western epistemic dominance through the selective incorporation of "diverse" scholars and texts into mainstream institutions and courses. While this may affect some important changes in Eurocentric curricula, it

does not entail significant transformation of structures or policies that would reorder the knowledge that is valued or rewarded, or reorient research support structures to accommodate different modes of knowledge production. This approach is exemplified by efforts to designate one day or week of a course term as the time to discuss race or gender, while the rest of the syllabus remains much the same and issues of racialization, colonialism, or heteropatriarchy are not addressed in relation to the other weeks' topics. Further, this approach may emphasize the consumption of knowledge about marginalized countries or populations, rather than facilitate the creation of spaces to ethically engage the knowledge produced by those populations. Knowledge "about" may even be instrumentalized against those populations, particularly in the contemporary context of heightened national "security" and surveillance measures.[5]

In this way, thin inclusion can become an exercise in examining "global issues" from a Western epistemological framework that ultimately reproduces Euro-supremacy. For instance, in a critical review of global ethics curricula Stone-Mediatore (2011) documents that scholarship and pedagogy in the field continues to emphasize "almost exclusively" white and Western authors, which can "reinforce the message that discussions about how to address transnational moral problems are the prerogative of white people in the global North . . . [and] teach white global-North readers that they have nothing to learn from thinkers in other cultural and geographic communities" (47). Even when different knowledge traditions are included, Spivak's (1988) foundational postcolonial question about whether the subaltern can speak—or rather, whether they can be heard—remains pertinent. If Western concepts, categorizes, and logics, are premised on a disavowal or absorption of difference, then efforts to access non-Western ways of knowing from within Western frameworks may silence difference yet again, either through a "mishearing" or a selective hearing of only less threatening aspects of marginalized ways of knowing. The harm is then redoubled as the epistemic violence is reproduced at the very moment that it is purportedly transcended.

Thus, the thin inclusion approach is additive and does not substantively attend to the differential, historically accumulated institutional power of different knowledges and knowledge communities. Incorporating often superficial, tokenistic elements or areas of non-Western knowledge into existing curricular structures can be a strategic institutional means to manage difference (Nandy 2000). Rather than create opportunities to engage potential conflicts or incommensurabilities between different knowledge systems, these are largely avoided. Despite its limitations, however, because of the broad appeal of this approach, it may be important as a basic starting point or spring-

[5] See Paik (2013); Wainwright (2013); Campbell and Murrey (2014); Chatterjee and Maira (2014).

board from which to push existing conversations to new places of inquiry and experimentation.

Thick Inclusion

The thick inclusion (of epistemic difference) approach is more deeply committed to addressing the colonial foundations of higher education. Rather than merely sprinkling non-Western texts and theories into the curricula, more questions are asked about how knowledge is produced and about the cumulative power and resource differentials between epistemes, disciplines, and communities of knowledge producers. Thus, the implicit universalism of existing courses and canonical texts come under question. It is felt that with adequate reform, these foundations can be deconstructed and subsequently reconstructed in ways that support greater global epistemic justice. One example of thick inclusion is Gale's (2012) assertion of the value of incorporating Southern Theory (as theorized by Connell 2007) into higher education. He calls for "the creation of space in HE not just for new kinds of student bodies but also for their embodied knowledge and ways of knowing" (254–55). Thus, inclusion is not limited to numerical difference, or to questions of expanding what is known but also how things can be known.

In another example, Handler et al. (2016) write about their experience creating an undergraduate global development studies program, emphasizing the challenges of creating a curriculum that encourages students to deeply and critically examine their own "good intentions," and to situate their desire to "help" those who they deem "underdeveloped" within larger systems and histories of colonization, exploitation, and marginalization. Further, they sought to ensure that this suspicious orientation toward the benevolence of development would not be limited to a single course or class session but rather be embedded throughout the program, including practical engagements.

One of the biggest limitations of the thick inclusion approach is that even when inclusion of other epistemes is nominally more substantive, open, and democratic (i.e., less conditional, selective, and additive than in thin inclusion) these epistemes may nonetheless be affected by their insertion into Western university contexts. Ahenakew (2016) points to the risks of "grafting," in which non-Western knowledge traditions are included in curricula only after they have been transplanted onto Western ways of knowing and/or if they can be instrumentalized toward the pursuit of mainstream institutional goals. Such goals include preparing marginalized students to become "proper" subjects of the state and the market (Ahenakew et al. 2014), creating a marketable product or intellectual property (Castro-Gomez 2007) or legitimizing institutional claims to be benevolent, "multicultural," and antiracist (Ahmed 2012).

Thick inclusion may therefore reorder the curricular canon such that different knowledge content is directed toward the same ends: namely, utility-maximizing mastery of knowledge as a means to legitimize the assertion of one's will on the world. This instrumentalization betrays the possibility that non-Western knowledges do not simply offer a variation of the dominant global imaginary, or a new formation of state power but actually signal other modes of organizing social, political, and economic life (Ahenakew et al. 2014). Further, as Watts (2013) points out, even when Euro-Western academics engage with indigenous knowledges to challenge imperial knowledge production in the service of the state and/or capital, this knowledge may still be grafted as "an abstracted tool of the West" (28). Such uses may signal a desire for redemption for one's complicity in colonialism without having to enact substantive redress, and a continued attachment to colonial futurities that promise security and control—that is, seeking to transcend colonialism without giving anything up (Jefferess 2012).

Thus, while thick inclusion approaches importantly acknowledge the limits of the dominant global imaginary, there is a strong pressure to turn back toward the center with a reaffirmed commitment to "fix" and redeem the institutions that the imaginary supports, and that support the imaginary.

Institutionalized "Interdisciplines"

After World War II, Western universities continued the colonial tradition of producing and deputizing knowledge about the non-West through the creation of "area studies" centers and other military- and defense-funded research projects for national security.[6] However, Kamola (2014) also notes, "As evidence of university-military collaborations came to light within the context of anti-war and civil rights protests," they also inspired "the creation of 'bottom-up' studies of the world's poor and marginalized" (527). This led to some self-reflexive reform of existing area studies but was also paralleled by an even more significant curricular change within the West itself. Desegregation of higher education in this era meant for the first time that indigenous and racially minoritized students could access colleges and universities in significant numbers, though still nowhere near proportionally to their white counterparts. However, the courses of study that they could access once enrolled remained highly white/Eurocentric. Particularly in the United States, frustrations with this curricular racism culminated in demands to make space for marginalized knowledge as a central element of community self-determination: institutionalization of what Ferguson (2012) has described as "interdisciplines," including black studies, indigenous studies, Latinx studies, Asian American studies, and women's and gender studies.

[6] Cummings (1993); Rafael (1994); Bu (2003); Paik (2013).

The demands for relatively autonomous spaces within existing institutions shifted the existing politics of knowledge in Western universities and Western societies more generally. In particular, those deemed "Other" by the white, male West asserted that they were not objects of knowledge but rather producers of knowledge. Notwithstanding the ongoing import of these interdisciplines, some have begun to ask about the paradoxical effects of institutionalization on the production of knowledge.[7] Mitchell (2015) suggests that no matter how marginalized, such fields are affected by their positioning within the institutions they so firmly critique(d). Institutionalization should not only be understood as the result of purely oppositional grassroots organizing, but also as an instance of "racial capitalism's capacity to renovate itself by way of the strategic valorization of the marginal" (91). He argues for the need to consider the paradoxical fact that intellectuals in these fields are "interpellated at once as a representative of the university and a representative of organized resistance to it" (87) and to question what underlies the presumption that the critical knowledge they produce will lead to social transformation. Wiegman (2012) also notes the ambivalent effects of linking epistemological authority about a subject matter to one's embodiment of/identification with it; to do so is to not only place impossible demands on individuals to "represent" an entire, heterogeneous population or set of experiences, but it also "threatens to strip subjects of epistemological authority over everything they are not" (7). At the same time, there is a risk of entirely divorcing knowledge from experience and assuming that all knowledge is universally accessible.

There is another, related paradoxical effect of interdisciplines' institutionalization, which is that it enabled the rest of the institution to largely continue reproducing the status quo. By granting conditional inclusion without also substantively redistributing resources, decentering whiteness, or shifting other disciplines' curricula, universities largely left in place existing institutional hierarchies of knowledge and indeed of humanity (Ferguson 2012). Today these interdisciplinary fields consistently face de-/underfunding, forced consolidation, or even termination, such as the recent attempted closure of the US's first and only College of Ethnic Studies, at San Francisco State University (Asimov 2016).

Finally, as universities increasingly make "diversity" or "multicultural" courses a general education requirement for all students, there is ambivalence around whether scholars in the interdisciplines should lead this work or remain more internally focused on their own students and research (Flaherty 2014). This also raises larger questions about the just distribution of pedagogical labor in addressing epistemic dominance. There is a risk that marginalized individuals will always be tasked with the role of explicating that marginalization and/or to be "representatives" of marginalized knowledge

[7] Ferguson (2012); Grosfoguel (2012); Wiegman (2012); Mitchell (2015).

communities (even as their presence in the university is celebrated as evidence that marginalization is "over"; Ahmed 2012).

Alternative Institutions

In addition to efforts to transform mainstream institutions, there are a handful of "alternative" higher education organizations with more grassroots or autonomous origins and structures that are experimental efforts to reach beyond the edge of the dominant imaginary and immerse participants within alternative epistemes. This approach is premised on the idea, as Ahenakew et al. (2014) suggest, that "if we try to provincialize Western thought within the institutions (e.g., nation-states, universities, schooling, etc.) that were created to naturalize it, we will need to remain within its language, epistemology and ontology" (217). This approach focuses on fostering and revitalizing non-Western epistemes outside of mainstream Western or Western-style institutions.

Examples of alternative institutions include Swaraj University in India (Akomolafe and Jain 2016) or Universidad de la Tierra (Unitierra) in Mexico (Teamey and Mandel 2016). The Tobago Center for the Study and Practice of Indigenous Spirituality in the Caribbean is another example. The Center "is dedicated to the trans-generational preservation of ancestral knowledge and indigenous spiritual traditions through study, practice and reflection" and hosts activities including meditation, the study of sacred texts, ceremonies, and sustainable food and medicine cultivation (Tobago Center 2015). It does not offer degrees, nor is it formally affiliated with any mainstream higher education institutions. Emphasizing indigenous knowledges, it treats the land itself as a living being and teacher, enacting an alternative to the anthropocentrism, logocentrism, and egocentrism of mainstream, Euro-supremacist educational institutions.

The price for the relative independence enjoyed by institutions like this may be that they lack access to the kinds of political and economic resources held by their mainstream counterparts, no doubt in part because they contest the terms on which such resources are pursued and allocated. In fact, educational institutions rooted firmly in non-Western knowledges and ways of knowing are often contesting the dominant global imaginary by exploring or amplifying possibilities for existence beyond what is offered by modern/colonial logics. In the case of some autonomous universities, particularly those that largely spurn engagement with mainstream governments or markets, this creates an interesting challenge: while the intention may be to ultimately create institutions that support alternative, sustainable forms of sociality, in the meantime these universities may not adequately prepare students to thrive within existing mainstream social institutions. Further, because they do not want to be beholden to the state or capital, these institutions may not only

struggle financially or need to compromise on funding sources, but they also may be inaccessible to students, for instance those who cannot obtain a student loan because the school has not been accredited.

Thus, alternative institutions may also engage in "hacking" mainstream institutions and resources for their own ends, such as the Dechinta Bush University Centre for Research and Learning in northern Canada. Dechinta was founded around the vision of "a land-based university that would address critical northern issues rooted in indigenous knowledge and values" (Ballantyne 2014, 75). Elders, university professors, and community leaders all serve as course teachers, students bring their families to the site, no student is turned away for lack of funds, and curricula address topics such as hunting, and indigenous law and arts (Luig et al. 2011; What Dechinta Offers 2015). For now, however, Dechinta significantly relies on and "repurposes" tools and resources produced through capitalist modes of production, and on the academic credits granted by the mainstream institutions with which it partners (Ballantyne 2014).

In these alternative institutions, emphasis is on learning from and with (rather than about) communities, and producing and transmitting locally relevant knowledge. The gift of these institutions is that they engage the necessary challenge of experimenting with and (re)building something different. In doing so, they also illuminate the limitations of mainstream institutions, and signal that something else is possible. A limitation of alternative institutions is that they can leave untouched the mainstream institutions that continue to affect those within and outside their walls in significant ways.

In both their successes and complications, each of the four above reviewed efforts to address Western epistemic dominance in higher education offers important lessons that can fruitfully inform efforts to internationalize curriculum. In particular, they underscore the need to attend to the politics of knowledge in the curriculum internationalization process; address not only knowledge content but also the frames of knowledge production; and the necessarily processual, and multi-dimensional nature of this work.

Curriculum Internationalization

A decade after Kelly (2000) argued that, in Western institutions, "many current approaches to internationalization of the curriculum in higher education are ad hoc, tokenistic, and inadequate" (163), Svensson and Wihlborg (2010) and Clifford (2009) both noted a continued dearth of curricular considerations. More recently, Sawir (2013) found that internationalization of the curriculum has been emphasized as important for international and domestic students alike, as a means to prepare "students to be global citizens who can operate in a globalized world" (361). However, internationalization of the curriculum is very much a process in progress that demands fur-

ther conceptualization. Foster and Anderson (2015) suggest "We are on the journey of our understanding of internationalized curriculum where the complex nature of [curriculum internationalization] is only just beginning to be grasped by theorists and practitioners" (1). Further, according to Leask (2015), "Studies of internationalization of the curriculum in higher education are even rarer [than more general studies on higher education curriculum] and, with a few exceptions, are focused on a single institution and/or a single discipline" (26). If both the study and practice of curriculum internationalization are only beginning, then this is an opportune time to consider the possibilities, contradictions, and challenges of this work from the outset.

On the one hand, any effort to internationalize curricula will be heavily shaped by what is possible and desired in a given context. Thus, offering a one-size-fits-all "how to" guide would be of very little practical use and would reproduce the dangerous epistemic arrogance that characterizes any claim to universal relevance. However, based on the literatures that I have reviewed above—that is, the colonial history of international higher education, the basic features of the shape-shifting dominant global imaginary, and lessons learned from existing efforts to interrupt epistemic dominance—in this penultimate section I outline three things to keep in mind when engaging in this work.

Depoliticization of Internationalization

Perhaps the most basic challenge in the task of not reproducing Eurosupremacy in the context of curriculum internationalization is adequately addressing the history of the present, and considering the deeply embedded power differentials and politics of knowledge that have structured Western universities' curricula, and indeed Western social, political, and economic life, up to this point. These structures cannot simply be transcended with good intentions but rather must be accounted for in their full complexity and addressed as part of any effort to rethink existing curricula. However, much of the curriculum internationalization literature centers around descriptive accounts of internationalizing efforts and the practical challenges of implementation; for instance, around faculty resistance to interventions perceived to threaten their autonomy (Smith and Kruse 2009) or strategies for shifting organizational and/or discipline-specific cultures (Clifford 2009).

In this sense, existing curriculum internationalization literature is largely concerned with a certain institutional politics at the level of practice. While no doubt important, these concerns tend to foreclose examination of the politics of wider sociohistorical processes that shape existing curricula, and that drive the apparent imperative to rethink those curricula in the present. The politics of knowledge production itself, the differential valuation of knowl-

edges, and the historical and ongoing ways in which Western universities have contributed to local and global harm also need to be acknowledged. Even as increased international engagements do offer valuable opportunities to rethink harmful patterns, these possibilities are often circumscribed by the fact that internationalization efforts are frequently motivated by the institutional pursuit of (financial and symbolic) resources (Naidoo and Jamieson 2005; Sidhu 2006) and the national pursuit of political and economic advantage (Zemach-Bersin 2007; Brown and Tannock 2009).

Evidence of these motivations comes through in common descriptors of the need to internationalize curriculum to ensure Western students' competitive advantage within an increasingly "global knowledge economy" and/or prepare Western students to act as global citizens and leaders. For instance, in their review of OECD, UNESCO, and American Association of Colleges and Universities' curriculum reform documents, Matus and Talburt (2015) identified an "economic logic of the so-called knowledge society at the level of individual institutions and student-citizens, who are to be educated to become economic globalisation's next agents" (227). Similarly emphasizing the need to respond to a new global era, Leask et al. (2013) note, "The rationale for internationalisation of the curriculum has been repeatedly associated with preparing graduates to live and work locally in a 'globalized' world" (188). Further, while preparation for global citizenship may be compared favorably to a narrow emphasis on economic or professional advancement (Leask 2015), the common presumption of Western students' entitlement to and unique qualification for global leadership also suggests a troubling reproduction of Western supremacy, universality, and presumptive benevolence (Spivak 2004). This raises a number of questions that might be asked about any effort to enact or assess curriculum internationalization efforts, such as: Who or what is considered to be "international" and why? Who is internationalization of the curriculum meant to benefit, who actually benefits, and according to what/whose set of values and norms are these 'benefits' defined? Why is internationalization of the curriculum deemed to be so important in the current moment in the way that it wasn't previously? What different kinds of investments and intentions do different individuals and communities bring to curriculum internationalization efforts, and how do these converge or conflict? Without addressing these larger contexts and questions, curriculum internationalization may reproduce rather than interrupt Western dominance, even as it may be celebrated as evidence that we have arrived at a postcolonial global moment.

Thinking Differently about Epistemic Difference

Tracing the history of the modern Western episteme indicates that its framing and the colonial context of its constitution is as significant as its

actual content. In particular, this framing is oriented toward the pursuit of universal reason and totalizing accounts of reality, and treats knowledge production, accumulation, and mastery as a means of describing/containing the world in order to control/determine it (Silva 2013; Andreotti 2014). Thus, despite its claim to autonomy and universality, the modern episteme is also highly relational, given that it was/is produced in part by policing epistemic difference. This distinction between knowledge content and framing also highlights the need to distinguish between knowledge produced about a community/group from knowledge produced by and/or with that community/group. Specifically, to only include knowledge about difference produced within Western frameworks may reproduce epistemic dominance.

If this is the case, then simply adding epistemic difference (as in the thin inclusion approach) may be insufficient, given its failure to ask about who maintains the epistemic authority to determine the frames of meaning and terms of inclusion. In contrast to these approaches, we might engage in sociohistorical systemic analysis of the politics of knowledge, asking such questions as: What historical and ongoing processes facilitate the invisibility of certain knowledges and ways of knowing? How are knowledge traditions differentially valued within existing pedagogical and research structures? What interests and attachments drive the desire for knowledge to classify, measure, predict, and explain? How do these desires affect (and limit) the kinds of relationships that are possible? What disjunctures, complications, and (im)possibilities arise where epistemes meet? What about our currently dominant episteme demands the eradication of difference, contradiction, and incommensurability? Conversely, how might we consider the ways in which knowledge systems are neither autonomous nor homogenous but rather interdependent, heteronomous, and internally diverse? What kinds of pedagogies would support students to encounter epistemic difference without immediately encoding it back into their existing frames of meaning? Asking such questions could be part of an effort to build critical literacy around the colonial framing of knowledge, not only in the university but also more generally.

One possible guide for this work of reframing comes from Santos's (2007) call to develop an ecology of knowledges, wherein different types of knowledge would be valued for the interventions that they enable within a particular context, rather than for their ability to "objectively" or "authentically" represent reality across all contexts. Within this ecology, multiple knowledges might coexist without a battle for hegemony or a demand for synthesis, because each is understood to offer context-specific, partial, and provisional gifts, just as each has attendant limitations and ignorances that it must bracket in order for its internal logic to work. What Santos suggests is that even as we enact this bracketing, we must remember our own partiality, affirm the indispensability of the knowledge we have bracketed, and recognize the need for "constant questioning and incomplete answers." Such an approach also af-

firms that different knowledge systems are not autonomous but rather interdependent.

An ecology of knowledges approach therefore does not propose to replace Western knowledge. However, it does consider that because the dominant global imaginary presumes Western epistemic universality, in order to practice an ecology of knowledge, it would be necessary to redistribute "material, social, political, cultural, and symbolic resources" (Santos 2007, 64). This approach may recognize the need for both immediate institutionalized inclusion of often delegitimized knowledge and knowledge holders as well as long-term efforts to construct "various protocols of dialogue between different epistemic perspectives" (Carvalho and Flórez-Flórez 2014, 127). It also raises practical questions, for instance, what kinds of departmental infrastructures could substantively (rather than tokenistically) include non-Western knowledge in ways that honor not only in what is taught but also how it is known, and who (or what) can serve as a teacher?[8] How can knowledge-holders from radically diverse traditions be recruited, retained, and substantively supported—and what if these individuals do not wish to be a part of the Western university? Is it possible to incorporate different knowledges without grafting them into the commodifying demands of the "knowledge economy"? How can different disciplines (including STEM and professional disciplines) responsibly and reflexively examine and address their historical and ongoing disciplinary entanglements with colonialism?[9] Is it even possible to disentangle modern Western thought from histories of colonialism? As internationalization grows, how can universities remain accountable to local knowledge communities rather than looking toward the global as a means to disavow those responsibilities (Roshanravan 2012)? How should we balance the need to recognize that all knowledges are situated (rather than universal) without assuming that all nonwhite/Western faculty or students are 'experts' in non-Western knowledge traditions?

There are significant questions around the feasibility of doing this work in mainstream Western institutions. However, if we do not attend to these challenges, curriculum internationalization may ultimately expand rather than dismantle the Western episteme as efforts to include what was previously "outside" of the dominant imaginary become efforts to contain more and more things inside it (Alcoff 2007).

An Ongoing and Multipart Process, Not an Event

Addressing nearly six centuries of Western epistemic violence, along with its material effects, is a messy, contested, nonlinear, and ongoing pro-

[8] I am thinking here about Marker's (2004) reminder that many indigenous knowledge systems place "animals, plants, and landscapes in the active role of teacher" (106).

[9] See Bhambra (2013) for an instructive example of this work in the discipline of sociology.

cess. There is no single event, policy, or practice that can adequately address the full scale and complexity of this task. Any single effort to do so will inevitably be partial and limited and likely bring about its own set of new problems. Further, there are also multiple tasks involved in this work, which often overlap, and are both interdependent and contradictory. Below I theorize these as four "levels" of intervention in the context of curriculum internationalization, placing them in relation to the dominant imaginary: denaturalization; seeking practical solutions; addressing contradiction; facing complexity.

At the first level, denaturalization, the basic challenge is coming to understand the effects of the imaginary in framing what, whose, and which knowledge and ways of knowing are deemed legitimate and legible—that is, generating dissatisfaction with the fact that the dominant imaginary affirms certain ways of knowing while it delegitimizes and devalues ways of knowing that fall outside its limits. There may be significant resistance here, which manifests as denial that there is a problem, or dismissing the depth of the problem. At the second level, seeking solutions, there is a search for practical answers and material interventions that will address immediate and accumulated harms produced by the dominant imaginary. These interventions may be at the level of institutional policy changes, cross-cultural pedagogies, or diversification of disciplinary canons. This work repurposes existing resources and strategically engages with what appears to be possible in pursuit of clear and tangible outcomes. This is important work, and scholars, practitioners, and institutions have started to develop useful tools, case studies, theories, and practical resources for engaging it, although much work remains to be done.[10]

The third level examines the paradoxes and tensions that inevitably arise in the process of interventions made in the second level: What new challenges and contradictions emerge? What violences are reproduced? What still appears impossible? How are current limits on institutional change best addressed? What can we learn from these experiments, and how can we avoid reproducing them and instead try something different? From level three, one may either return to level two and try a new and/or revised intervention and/or engage at level four: facing the discomfort and uncertainty about the full depth and complexity of the problems, without needing to immediately return to what is practical or foreseeable (level two). It is at level four that we might learn to surrender to, and be taught by, the false promise of Western mastery and control. Rather than accumulate new knowledge, what may take place here is unlearning, unknowing, and unowning what was once held with certainty. We might ask what we would need to unlearn (or at least bracket) in order to face the world in its full complexity, uncertainty, and provisionality

[10] See, e.g., Haigh (2002); Griffith Institution for Higher Education (2011); Joseph (2012); McKinnon (2012); Jones and Killick (2013); Leask (2015); American Council on Education (2016).

without trying to classify and contain it. It is also here that we might ask, as Silva (2015a) does, "whether or not justice can be imagined from within the available modalities of knowledge" (103). And if the answer is deemed to be no, then a whole other set of questions may arise. In this space there may be a willingness to suspend (even if only temporarily) attachments to a promised futurity premised on continued security, autonomy, and control through knowledge (or anything else). From here, something different may be possible, though it is never guaranteed.

Ultimately, all four levels of engagement are necessary and likely occur simultaneously rather than linearly or in any recognizable pattern.

Conclusion

In this article, I have sought to contextualize and denaturalize contemporary patterns of epistemic dominance that inhere in mainstream internationalization efforts. By situating the deep Euro-supremacism of the existing political economy of knowledge production and valuation in Western, Anglophone higher education (and beyond) within patterns of colonial/racial violence, higher education scholars and practitioners may gain a deeper understanding of the challenges that accompany any effort to intervene and enact different approaches to internationalization. Despite its many gifts, critique cannot in itself transform, or prescribe how to transform, higher education. At best, it can anticipate the arrival of something different by signaling the limit of what appears to be possible, which is often only the limit of what appears possible at the edge of the dominant global imaginary; as such, it can affirm the imperative for imaginaries and responsible, self-reflexive experiments of internationalization otherwise (Silva 2013).

At this limit-space, there is both significant risk and possibility. It is perhaps the space where it is most crucial to be suspicious of one's "good intentions." Once the security, certainty, and futurity that was previously promised by the dominant imaginary has lost its shine, it is tempting to seek security and alternative guarantees elsewhere. In particular, when we are still seeking fulfillment of the imaginary's promises, there is a risk of appropriating difference from outside and then recuperating it back into existing frameworks, betraying and instrumentalizing its gifts. This approach may challenge the content but not the framing of the imaginary. When we have not only denaturalized but have also become disenchanted with the imaginary and its promises, there is much work still to be done, not all of which is intellectual. However, in the interest of legibility, to conclude I offer one final example, a poetic invitation to denaturalize the dominant global imaginary and to experiment at its edges (Silva et al. 2016):

> How can we experience . . .
> ethics with/out the modern subject?

politics with/out the nation-state?
education with/out modern institutions?
survivance with/out capitalism?
imagination with/out the intellect?
being with/out separability?

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