

CHAPTER 2.

CRITIQUING THE CRITICAL:
THE POLITICS OF RACE AND
COLONIALITY IN RHETORIC,
COMPOSITION, AND WRITING
STUDIES RESEARCH TRADITIONS

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In most disciplines, a body of scholarship defines what can be regarded as traditional and “critical” of that tradition. However, when that scholarship has been predicated on White, heteronormative, patriarchal, settler-colonial discourse, even the “critical” can be exclusionary. This colonial disciplinary solipsism is the problem that this chapter seeks to explore. Here, I argue that although certain rhetoric, composition, and writing studies (RCWS) methods claim to be “critical,” when filtered through an epistemic act of decoloniality—epistemic disobedience—it becomes clear that current critical methods are embedded in traditions of Whiteness and Western oriented epistemologies. If one understands epistemological racism as continuing to uncritically support exclusionary research and publication practices, even when claimed to be critical, then RCWS is implicated in racist epistemological acts.

RCWS is a relatively new discipline. Written documentation of its disciplinary origins is tied to the second half of the twentieth century, a conservative and racially tense moment in history when the Conference on College Composition and Communication and its accompanying journal, *CCC*, were initiated. (Ruiz, “Creating a ‘New History’”). The 1950’s are well known for their conservative academic movements, such as New Criticism and Project English (Strain). In this same moment, the “southern strategy,” enduring Jim Crow Laws, and anti-Mexican sentiment in the Southwest characterized the

U.S. political-racial climate.¹ In addition, RCWS is historically and epistemologically situated in dominant disciplinary references, rituals, values, conventions, and beliefs that construct its unique disciplinary cultural literacy (Brodkey; Hirsch). This cultural literacy enables certain historiographies to assert and maintain scholastic hegemony and disciplinary power (Aronowitz and Giroux; Ruiz, “Race”) and, therefore, by default, marginalizes counter histories. This context is provided while considering that RCWS is also known as an interdisciplinary field because it borrows from and incorporates other disciplines and scholarly fields. It is, however, still characterized as most disciplines are—resting upon a static body of foundational epistemological traditions credited to the pioneers of the professionalization of a field largely tied to the first-year composition course (Ruiz, “Race”). Most of these pioneers have been White European males. Following the trajectory of a well-established, White-dominated historical pattern of RCWS, one can discern that its cultural literacy is one that is characterized as a form of cultural capital (Bourdieu) for certain cultural habits and shared norms. Creating disciplinary cultural capital also ensures a type of epistemic exclusivity in that the highest reward will go to those that best fit within Eurocentric epistemic trajectories of the discipline.

In this chapter, it will be important to understand that, positionally speaking, when BIPOC (Black and Indigenous People of Color) perform their academic identities through standard conventions, disciplinary legitimacy, and other actions that ensure professional access, they are immersed in a colonizing practice that results from the historical colonization of intellectual space in which BIPOC often find themselves. For example, in RCWS, BIPOC often must acknowledge Greco-Roman historical and epistemological traditions to give a nod toward scholarly “credibility” and gain a badge of “academic rigor” from their peers (Ruiz and Baca; Sánchez). Further, as I demonstrate below, the “politics of citation” in RCWS still struggles with scholarly recognition and meaningful inclusion of its BIPOC scholars with histories of both/and colonization and displacement (African Americans and other ethnic minorities). Here, we’ve come to the point where we need to call out the White-supremacist origins of RCWS through antiracist methodologies.

Practicing antiracist methodologies within RCWS has various connotations, but it denotes the act of countering racist methodological practices and performing anti-racist epistemic acts, one of which is to examine the institutional politics of RCWS and their affiliate research methodologies that

1 Examples include the Zoot Suit Riots and *Mendez v. Westminster*.

often claim to be “critical” “liberatory” and even “counter-hegemonic” while still practicing racist citation practices by excluding BIPOC works from research engagement. Unlike many of our white counterparts in RCWS, when BIPOC perform acts of intellectual critique and claim to be “critical,” they engage in several practices that perform a systematic analysis of structures of power and privilege operating in some socially constructed disciplinary context. The politics of citation is one of these systemic critical analyses. What is often ignored, however, is that BIPOC scholars must often contend with race and racism within the act of “critique,” by being side-stepped in disciplinary citations practices in works that claim to be “critical.”

For example, let us consider Karl Marx’s critique of social class inequality or Foucault’s critique of the relationship between people, power, and institutions, while exposing the boundedness of human subjects to discursive structures and habits that cannot be easily shed or performed as an “outsider looking in” (Butler). Where is the mention of race in both Marx’s and Foucault’s methods? Often, in both Francophone and German philosophical traditions, the mention of race is subtly embedded by implication in the margins of their most notable contributions or indicated in some obscure lecture notes that end up on some wiki somewhere. In this sense, one might ask, “What does it mean to be critical of what has already been claimed to be “critical” through an antiracist lens?” If one agrees with Foucault, for example, and sees no possibilities for true critique outside the bounds of discourse, what, then, can one make of claims to performing critique of long-standing traditions such as patriarchy, White supremacy, or capitalism? For my purposes here, I’m more inclined to consider critique of the “critical” as a necessity that occurs when disciplines reach a point of “epistemic rupture”—a disciplinary paradigm shift (Kuhn)—in this case the rupture of unquestionable White supremacist origins for both critique and disciplinary validity at the expense of a discipline’s BIPOC members.

RCWS has reached a point where the field’s discourses have become incommensurable with the realities they initially sought to theorize and explain—realities embedded in revolutionary events such as the civil rights movement, the City University of New York (CUNY) and open-admissions, desegregation mandates, challenges to de facto and de jure segregation, and the growth of basic writing, writing centers, and writing programs. Today, we see this incommensurability of White-dominated disciplinary discourses growing even wider through numerous digital movements—#CommunicationSoWhite, #BlackLivesMatter, #MeToo, #CiteBlackWomen, and #DefundthePolice. These movements are again asking the nation to take a long,

hard look at race relations and the role of education in responding to these movements. Writing programs are not immune to this critical examination due to their centrality within higher education.

In such moments, a scholar-researcher might consider the point at which “[o]ne asks about the limits of ways of knowing because one has already run up against a crisis within the epistemological field in which one lives” (Butler 215). In this moment, I argue that critiquing the “critical” is a necessary response to epistemic ruptures. It is a way that critique can challenge long-held traditions and beliefs [and] expose the hidden, silenced, ignored, and “other” (Spencer). In the case of this chapter, the “other” can be both/and bodily and/or epistemological, but they are referred to as “other” because they suffer from a lack of representation in either their bodily and/or material presence and/or through exclusive and exclusionary scholarship. Therefore, I seek to explore ways that both traditional and “critical” methods are in a state of epistemic rupture as decolonial options have provided mechanisms to disrupt both traditional and “critical” RCWS methods, two of which are the decolonial act of delinking and an accompanied performance of a series of engagements with epistemic disobedience.

In order to begin this delinking journey in a moment where colonialism has become pejorative instead of coveted, one should ask, “What does it mean to be “critical” when our current disciplinary paradigm shift calls for pushing race and racism to the center of our philosophical inquiry and epistemological practices?” To begin, consider that current “critical” RCWS methodologies continue to practice racist citation practices, aka “the politics of citation.” White scholars get cited more so than scholars of color, and therefore, their ways of knowing become privileged. In *Reclaiming Composition*, I examined citation practices within *College Composition and Communication (CCC)*, and I found that the same White scholars were cited repeatedly from 1950-1993. In 1993, *CCC* had not yet had a female editor—it was exclusively a White and male epistemological enterprise. Further, there were virtually no authors of color that were most cited (Figure 2.1).

Although 1993 does not seem like that long ago, it is only due to the presence of digitized venues today that more scholars of color are being published. This technological shift, however, does not mean that scholars of color are being cited more. In a study that is currently being performed by Steven Parks in partnership with Literacy in Composition Studies (LiCS), he mentioned that the whiteness of the field is quite evident in the field’s major flagship journals. He referenced 17,000 data points, and this is going to be unsurprising in many respects because most disciplines in the United States have operated similarly.

1950–1964	1965–1979	1980–May 1993
H. Allen (4) D. Lloyd R. Braddock (3) B. Kogan P. Wikelund H. Wilson E. Steinberg (2) V. Rivenbaugh S. Radner	R. Larson (8) R. Lloyd-Jones (6) F. D’Angelo R. de Beaugrande (5) T. M. Sawyer (4) R. Gorrell (3) E. Corbett E. Suderman G. Sloan J. Lauer L. Odell R. Hoover R. Gebhardt W. Ross Winterowd W. Marquardt W. Pixton G. Cannon S. Crowley M. Sternglass A. M. Tibbetts E. Christensen	R. Connors (6) A. Lunsford M. Rose L. Faigley (5) L. Flower M. Hairston C. Berkenkotter (4) D. Stewart S. Stotsky S. Witte C. Anson (3) L. Bridwell-Bowles G. Brossell E. Corbett F. D’Angelo R. Fulkerson J. Hayes J. Hoetker D. Murray L. Peterson L. Podis G. Sloan N. Sommers E. M. White

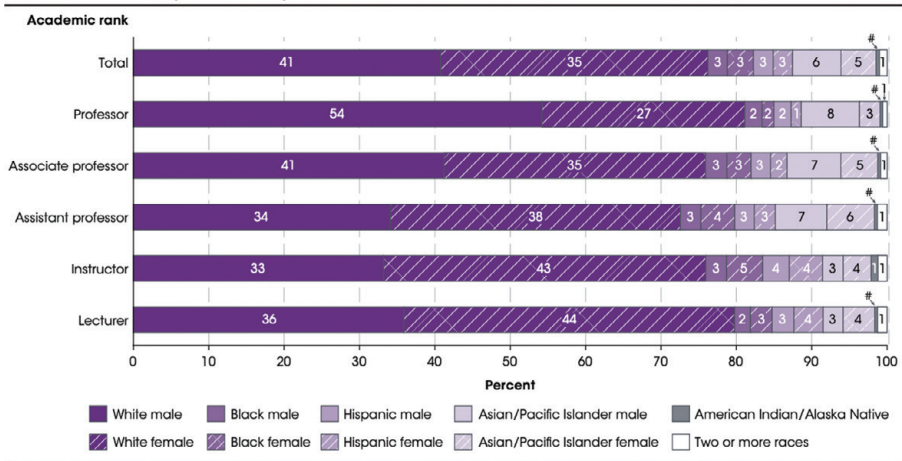
Figure 2.1. Most frequently published authors of major articles. Source: Phillips, Greenberg, and Gibson.

Academia is a White-majority profession (Figure 2.2). Within disciplines marked by whiteness, “critical” topics such as race, class, gender, critical historiography, feminism, social justice, and embodiment challenge normative, objective, or uncritical research agendas that otherwise sustain White heteronormative and patriarchal agendas. Furthermore, these topics are often written about by scholars of color, which was made apparent through my work on writing program administration and race, and this work further reveals why anti-racist methods are few (Garcia de Mueller and Ruiz). To make matters worse, racism in citation practices, aka “the politics of citation,” occurs through excluding citations of minoritized voices and academics of color, and it also happens through citing White authors who do “race work” (see Clary-Lemon; Ruiz and Garcia de Mueller; Prendergast, Villanueva, and Phillips et al.). All of this makes for a racist and colonial discipline in many respects.

In practicing epistemic disobedience, one can disrupt BIPOC invisibility and reclaim research that is performed through, for example, a Chicana perspective. Although I write as a Chicana, anyone can perform antiracist and decolonial methods. As a Chicana within RCWS, I have done research on

race from a decolonial lens (Ruiz, “Race”). However, I have not yet been able to articulate the ways that racism is embedded in research and knowledge production and legitimated in RCWS. In an act of reclamation, I turn to decolonial theory to problematize RCWS’s dominant disciplinary trends. This is an act of decoloniality. I am not “decolonizing RCWS.” More pointedly, I carry out a decolonial antiracist methodology through applying a reciprocal, decolonial gaze (Mignolo) toward three of the field’s common “critical” methodologies, aka “commonplaces” in research practices. These methodologies are historiography, embodiment, and feminism. Looking at them through a decolonial lens is more than “an outsider looking in.” It is a “looking back” at as in a reflection of the antithesis. Doing so reveals RCWS being strongly implicated in what critical race theorist Richard Delgado calls “imperial scholarship” (Chang 28), a citation practice which stems from critical race legal studies scholarship and demonstrates how sanctioned disciplinary knowledge controls both how race appears in research as well as who is permitted to create this knowledge through sanctioned methods—ultimately determining what counts as “making knowledge” and who gets to make it (North). Recovery of oversights in this context becomes an important response to what one does NOT see when looking back.

Figure 2. For each academic rank, the percentage distribution of full-time faculty in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by race/ethnicity and sex: Fall 2017



Rounds to zero.
 NOTE: Sex breakouts excluded for faculty who were American Indian/Alaska Native and of Two or more races because the percentages were 1 percent or less. Degree-granting institutions grant associate’s or higher degrees and participate in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Percentages are based on full-time faculty whose race/ethnicity was known. Detail may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding. Although rounded numbers are displayed, figures are based on unrounded data.
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), IPEDS Spring 2018, Human Resources component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2018*, table 315.20.

Figure 2.2. Characteristics of postsecondary faculty. Source: McFarland et al.

Walter Mignolo's decolonial option of "delinking" is key to this decolonial application because it allows for a specific type of historical recovery: what I call "historical curanderisma."² Mignolo claims that "de-colonial thinking presupposes de-linking (epistemically and politically) from the web of imperial knowledge (theo- and ego-politically grounded) from disciplinary management" (20). Historical curanderisma is what I've named my practice of delinking from dominant disciplinary discourses of whiteness associated with RCWS. I chose the figure of the Curandera to perform this option because it is a healing epistemic practice. Curanderisma refers to an act of indigenous healing performed by one who has dedicated themselves to the arts of holistic medicine and natural homeopathy. A Curandera is akin to a medicine doctor who has also studied the alchemy of botanicals and biological organisms and can function as a horticulturist, life coach, and medicinal and spiritual healer. This person is desired by an individual or group that has fallen under the unfortunate circumstance of a physical sickness or demonic possession, as in the scene in the recent movie *La Llorona* and in many real-life instances (I was once healed from an illness by my great-grandmother, a Curandera). Being that many Mexicans and Mexican Americans practice Catholicism, the idea of demonic possession is not uncommon, and the ability of prayer and healing through religious rituals has deep roots within indigenous cultural histories. The acts of Curanderas are still present today in Latin America and the United States. In line with such spiritual beliefs and practices, there is an element of the metaphysical that is associated with the practice, as is with my "methodological" approach in this chapter. Through words that come from a committed critical historian interested in returning a decolonial gaze with an intent to delink from and relink to a story that empowers rather than negates her existence and for others who have for too long occupied marginal positions in this field, I engage in an alchemy of remaking, recovery, and engaging the politics of race and coloniality in RCWS research traditions.

This type of decolonial work is timely and imperative in the age of Trump, the 45th president of the United States, known for his support of White suprem-

2 Curanderismo is a type of holistic medicinal practice and system associated with Latin America, but more commonly with the indigenous populations of Latin America. The way in which Curanderisma is practiced varies by region (Guatemala, Nicaragua, Honduras, Argentina, Mexico, the southwestern region of the United States, etc.). It is a blend of indigenous spiritual practices, religious beliefs, faith, and prayer with the use of herbs, massage, and other traditional methods of healing. Curanderismo can be used holistically to cure or address various physical, spiritual, psychological, and social needs of the people who use it. The Spanish verb *curar* means to heal. It is a method of healing. It refers to healing. Practicing rituals associated with Curanderismo serves to create a balance between the patient and his or her environment and contributes to sustaining one's health. I'm interested in the branch of Curanderismo that is practiced in Mexico and is based on Aztec, Mayan, and Spanish influences.

acy, hate speech, and xenophobia toward Latinxs, made clear through his inactions toward many deaths and abuses of detained immigrants as well as his inaction toward many highly visible traumatic separations of Latinx families. Due to these inactions, his presidency has negated the idea of a post-racial society. These recent traumas of racism make practicing historical *curanderismo* an opportunity to present more accurate representations of multicultural knowledge production and, by consequence, provide an ethical engagement with the field's tendency towards racist epistemological exclusion. Healing, as I will showcase in this chapter, involves resisting academia's celebration of self-destruction through toxic practices of depreciation (WOC Faculty; Yancy, "Dear White," *Look, A White!*, and "The Ugly Truth"). This method rejects the normalization of trauma inflicted on scholars of color by both implication and exclusion and by pretending that this epistemological exclusionary practice does not create trauma. Recognizing and legitimating the healing potential of such practices will enable scholars, regardless of color, gender, and dis/ability, to counter imposter syndrome, and, instead, will rightfully stigmatize those who deny others' experiences as racist.

Furthermore, historical *curanderismo* is a historical methodological practice that promotes personal and disciplinary healing and can result in what we understand as praxis because of the proposed humanizing impact upon the researcher and the reader. Through decolonial historical recovery, which builds upon my earlier scholarship featured in *Reclaiming Composition for Chicanos/as and other Ethnic Minorities: A Critical History and Pedagogy*, RCWS is called upon to further consider its deep involvement with and perpetuation of colonial methods through continuous legitimation of colonial epistemologies even while claiming to be "diverse," "inclusive," and "critical." Ultimately, I call upon RCWS to rethink its Eurocentric and White disciplinary center that dominates its research methods. I recenter and reclaim minoritized ways of knowing and provide nuanced antiracist ways of being in the world and of conducting research. Doing so allows for a re-mapping of specific geographies, communities, and textual productions for the purpose of healing and sustaining the well-being of professional and personal lives of marginalized scholars who have trouble seeing themselves as legitimate knowledge makers in RCWS.

RCWS' PROBLEMATIC HISTORY WITH RACE AND RACISM

RCWS, like most other disciplinary fields, is diverse but still has marginalized populations that are non-White (Kynard). RCWS also relies upon Eurocentric histories to legitimize its disciplinary status, which is colonial and marginalizes certain groups. The knowledge that is produced by marginalized groups

through their publications is minoritized and, I argue, can be clearly seen when one takes a close look at how race has functioned throughout our disciplinary history. One way to look at this history is through archival research practices, which provide opportunities to see what was taking place behind the scenes of disciplinary creation both racially and politically. Another way to look at this marginalization is to look at what was happening ON the scenes at the front lines of the discipline. These scenes would be cast and directed by the dominant scholarship of RCWS since its inception as a field in 1949, when the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) was founded (Ruiz, Reclaiming 103). However, OFF the scenes of disciplinary textual representations were important responses to civil rights movements for minoritized populations evidenced with the formation of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) Task Force on Racism and Bias in 1969 and the formation of the Black and the Latinx Caucuses (known as the Chicano Teachers of English at this time) the same year. The 1960s marked a historical imperative when NCTE took a much more active role in racial matters, yet the folks who were doing the work of creating these social justice groups were often marginal scholars who have remained marginalized in the present.

In 1964, the NCTE Board of Directors mandated that the “Council and its affiliates be open to all races and ethnicities” (Hook 232). The goal of the task force on racism and bias was to help “to continually bring attention to issues concerning minorities and their representation” (National Council). If one looks at NCTE’s webpage titled “Advocacy for Minority Groups,” there are references to efforts throughout the years that reflect the field’s attempt to be inclusive of marginal populations. For example, there is a commitment to opening the Council to all races and ethnicities and a commitment to hold conferences in places where no racial discrimination exists: “Throughout its life, [NCTE] had attempted to treat all groups — all students, all teachers, all its members — alike. It had, for instance, been one of the first professional organizations to insist that its conventions be housed only in places where there would be no racial discrimination” (Hook 232).

For CCCC, however, one has only to look at the organization’s most recent position statements to see substantial progress toward racial inclusivity to the same extent as NCTE. NCTE’s attempts to show its social justice commitments are enacted by making diversity part of its mission, narratives about its history, and position statements, in which they have a specific category, unlike CCCC. The way the field has not paid enough attention to race and minoritized ways of making knowledge through research methods, partially evidenced by CCCC’s scarce consideration of race in its position statements, has been problematic from the start. Catherine Prendergast’s article “Race: The Absent Presence in

Composition Studies” is still considered to be quite relevant 20 years later. In her article, she admits that

It has always been my experience when reading Shirley Brice Heath’s *Ways With Words* that I have to exert a little extra effort to keep straight which of the focal communities Heath studies—Roadville or Trackton—is the working-class black town and which is the working-class white town; I find myself often flipping back to the introduction where this racial distinction is initially made and then almost immediately dismissed as irrelevant. I have come to think of this extra effort I have to go through to locate race in the first part of *Ways With Words* as emblematic of my experience reading much of the scholarship in composition studies where race seems to function as an absent presence. For while it is often called upon as a category to delineate cultural groups that will be the focal subjects of research studies, the relationship of race to the composing process is seldom fully explored. Instead race becomes subsumed into the powerful tropes of “basic writer,” “stranger” to the academy, or the trope of the generalized, marginalized “other.” (36)

She further argues that race remains undertheorized, unproblematized, and under-investigated in composition research, leaving us with no means to confront the “racialized atmosphere of the university and no way to account for the impact of the persistence of prejudice on writers and texts” (36).

Furthermore, when academics of color do decide to represent their experiences and worldviews through revealing their positionalities which draw upon the notion, the “personal” as “political” (Lorde 4), their work is dismissed as anti-intellectual and non-empirical (Prendergast 42). bell hooks also writes about her experiences at Stanford University, where she struggled to find herself at an Ivy League institution where there are not many Black women, and her desire to keep herself “close to home” in her academics by keeping the average working-class Black woman in mind as her audience keeps her in the realm of skepticism by other mainstream academics who question her resistance to dense theoretical language and academic jargon. hooks demonstrates the challenge of being an academic of color from a working-class background as manifold: there is pressure from the top to sound like them and there is pressure from the bottom to sound like them too. Compounding this tension of feeling both insider and outsider at all times while negotiating academic communal belonging and staying connected to home, Prendergast adds an extra dimension to consider

for those committed to antiracist practice that avoids further marginalization of people of color (POC): “[t]he present challenge for compositionists is to develop theorizations of race that do not reinscribe people of color as either foreign or invisible, nor leave whiteness uninvestigated; only through such work can composition begin to counteract the denial of racism that is part of the classroom, the courts, and a shared colonial inheritance” (51). What might this look like on paper? How can POC reclaim their space while challenging always being placed in the margins as invisible and foreign? One might answer with, “legitimize their stories.”

However, when POC decide to engage the personal as political (Victor Villanueva comes to mind) in RCWS, the field tends to relegate these works to “exceptions to the rule,” “alternative genres,” or “cultural rhetorics,” or reject them altogether and suggest publishing personal works in “creative writing” publication venues that do not have the scholarly parameters that present themselves as objective assessment tools for reviewers to make decisions—aka as “rigorous.” One does not stop to consider how these editorial practices are also racially biased because they fail to represent both the POC author while simultaneously neglecting how this author might engage with the subject matter in ways that demonstrate the journal’s commitment to antiracism. One must only look at the past seven issues of *College English* or *College Composition and Communication* to see this phenomenon in current action. The field is hegemonic, and it is very much invested in maintaining its “scholastic White hegemony.”

In our article “Race, Silence, and Writing Program Administration,” Genevieve Garcia de Mueller and I discuss how scholars have critiqued the problem of how the field talks about race in its scholarly texts. For example,

In “The Racialization of Composition Studies: Scholarly Rhetoric of Race since 1990,” Jennifer Clary Lemon “examines the discourses of the journals *College Composition and Communication* and *College English* since 1990. Her study reveals that the majority of race-related works published in these journals rarely use the actual words “race or racism.” Instead, authors utilize euphemistic language such as “diversity, inclusion, and social justice” when alluding to racialized phenomena (Clary-Lemon W6). (23)

Such language has caused much needed disciplinary discussions about “race” to lose their transformative potential. Later, I discuss how the term can become distanced from its origin of intent, but here, with the word “race” in mind, one thinks of biology, categories of inferiority/superiority, histories of racism, and ethnicity, or should I say that the telos of “race” more often than not becomes

muddled when contentious discussions arise about definitions of diversity and inclusion? The goals of antiracism are understood partially through the terms we employ and agreed upon definitions. In Steve Lamos's book *Interests and Opportunities: Race, Racism, and University Writing Instruction in the Post-Civil Rights Era*, he traces the history of racism in basic writing. Victor Villanueva notices in "The Rhetorics of New Racism" that racism often disguises itself, stating, "the new racism embeds racism within a set of other categories—language, religion, culture, civilizations pluralized and writ large, a set of master tropes (or the master's tropes)" (16). New racism functions differently than simply replacing words with other words to effectively elide their significance and power, as Clary-Lemon's critique notes.

While the former operates at the level of language, the latter, new racism, functions at the level of discourse referred to as "master tropes" in Villanueva's analysis. In short, discussions of race have become further invisible due to the disappearing acts of "race" caused by metaphor, metonymy, and blind discourses of neutrality resulting in a "new racism."

This metaphorical/metonymic problem can be counteracted by scholarship that pays direct attention to race and writing programs. Daniel Barlow, for instance, looks at the "productive potential" of racial inquiry in composition scholarship and pedagogy in "Composing Post-Multiculturalism." He claims that "celebratory multiculturalism" does not provide sufficient opportunities for critical inquiry into race and racism. He agrees with Clary-Lemon, stating that the field looks at "race" as a discursive problem, and while this is a productive point of critique, it still does not move the field forward in a way that gets beyond either celebratory multiculturalism or discursive polemics. Race still seems to be a problem that is complex, context dependent, and avoided as a point of departure, with exceptions such as composition scholars who have focused on rhetorics of race that challenge outdated, celebratory multicultural rhetorics, and provide writing pedagogies with critical race dimensions (Smitherman; Gilyard; Kennedy, Ratcliffe, and Middleton; Martinez; Prendergast; Jones Royster; Parks). Such critical expansions are the addition of critical race theory, whiteness studies, and critical historical research, which look to add the missing voices of those considered absent from composition pedagogy and scholarship (Prendergast qtd. in Ruiz). (23)

If RCWS scholarly practices continue to marginalize the work of POC scholars, it continues to be imperialist because it is and continues to be dominated by Whites. One recent example of this type of scholastic imperialism is noted in Doug Hesse's recent article "Journals in Composition Studies, Thirty-Five Years After." Its bibliography contains one person of color. It is important then to question the implications of this scholarship for other racial populations that are

also part of those bodies of knowledge (Ruiz, *Reclaiming* 36). Another example of marginalization is how I recently had to “call out” CompPile, a notable resource for works related to the RCWS scholarship, for not including two of my recently published books and for not properly cataloguing the NCTE/CCCC Latinx Caucus bibliography. It was not until late February, 2020 that the Latinx Caucus bibliography was listed on the CompPile bibliography.

Continuing with the official documentation of a negligent field of scholarship when it comes to the inclusion of POC and their topics of research interest, in the article “Chronicling a Discipline’s Genesis,” from *College Composition and Communication* (CCC), mentioned above, Phillips et al. claim that RCWS mainstream scholarship works “towards its support, its enlargement, or its overthrow” (454). This article takes inventory of who is cited, what subjects are most prominent, and the implications of this exclusivity in publishing. In short, CCC was exclusive in the way many scholarly journals were at this time. The minority voice was the exception and not the rule, and I argue that this is still the case.

One does not have to look far to locate voices of scholars of color mostly concentrated in special issue sections of mainstream RCWS journals such as *College English* and the *Journal of Advanced Composition* (now out of print). I could go on and on about how one of my manuscripts was outright rejected without having been read by the CCC editor or reviewers, or how my colleague’s proposal on a special issue of race in writing program administration (WPA) was admittedly ignored because the editors were not “well-equipped” to carry out such a contentious full-blown publication on “race,” but the point is, as I have just alluded to, there are real gatekeepers at work doing real gatekeeping in popular RCWS journals that are said to be unbiased and “diverse.”

I recently wrote about the multiple rejections of Felipe de Ortego y Gasca’s work by two *College English* editors at different moments in history because his work did not fit the mission of the journal or there was already one White man being published on a Latinx research question (“Huevos con Chorizo”). Also, the recent National Communications Association upheaval concerning the *Rhetoric of Public Affairs* editor’s statement about rigor being at odds with identity-politics or diversity lucidly demonstrates how journals are invested in keeping a certain type of scholastic identity: in this case that meant White and male. For more information about this controversy, see our discussion about Medhurst in Chapter 1, as well as Collen Flaherty’s *Inside Higher Ed* article, “When White Scholars Pick White Scholars,” in which it is noted that, due to Medhurst’s implied racism, the journal should be boycotted, and he should resign.

At CCC 2017, a prestigious member sitting on a roundtable I attended about editorship composed of top scholars in the field stated that they wanted to open the gates to more women and more diversity of scholarship. However,

not once did they mention the diversity of scholars. Diversity in this case meant diversity of subject matter. Only recently, as of summer 2018, has it been mentioned by this prestigious member's mentor that the politics of citation needs to be attended to (Chang). It can be deduced, then, that the politics of citation have very much to contribute to the ideas of imperial and colonial scholarship as well as to the conventions that are set forth by the discipline that result in a White majority being in control of idea dissemination and legitimacy. By default, this marginalizes important works by scholars of color who may be working to disrupt a White hegemonic epistemological tradition or may be trying to articulate something very notable about how to bring alternative and diverse pedagogies into our institutions that are continuously becoming more and more diverse and whose students occupy our classrooms. One cannot simply claim that people of color are not producing work. The Latinx Caucus bibliography, for example, has over 500 citations and is only recently being taken on as a project to add to legitimized bibliographies such as those found in CompPile. Such legitimized textual and digital locations have long operated as hegemonic and textual places and can be regarded as colonial in that they sanction what methods can be used to convey official practices of the field while marginalizing "alternative" methods, which are regarded as non-official and "undocumented." Whether this is done intentionally or not is beyond consideration of the mere fact that, currently, certain groups are virtually invisible and delegitimized and by default de-legitimized.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: DECOLONIAL DELINKING AND EPISTEMIC DISOBEDIENCE AS ANTIRACIST METHODOLOGY

Through recognizing these limited epistemological spaces, I now engage the concept of epistemic disobedience, drawn from Walter D. Mignolo's theory of decolonial options, in order to problematize the colonial epistemologies that legitimize traditional research methods in RCWS. It is directly related to the practice of historical *curanderismo*. Epistemic disobedience operates by the "unveiling of epistemic silences of Western epistemology and affirming the epistemic rights of the racially devalued and considering de-colonial options to allow the silences to build arguments to confront those who take 'originality' as the ultimate criterion for the final judgment" (4). What this decolonial heuristic asks of its practitioners is to understand the primacy and provincialism of Western epistemology as a veil that has effectively hidden other forms of making knowledge and living in the world. Those trying to reclaim their colonized identities, for example, are given the support and space to do so with an openness to bring Western epistemology into a crisis or rupture that allows for a sincere decolo-

nial reclamation to occur. When this rupture takes place, points of origin can be called into question, and the very concept of origins is exposed as a colonial narrative mired in multiple silences and multifarious meanings. In engaging this task of reclamation, I assert a decolonial emergence of looking at the ways our field currently does research in order to cause a similar rupture in the origin and function of research methods that are claimed to be objective, as in the case of historiography, and “critical,” as in feminist methodologies.

Through a decolonial lens, I see how RCWS traditions are deeply steeped in empirical and objective methodologies that are founded upon the pursuits and gains of colonialist actions—read: white supremacy, Manifest Destiny, and genocide and destruction of civilizations intimately tied to the histories of many compositionists of color, who have had their voices silenced, particularly African Americans and Latinxs. Scholars in positions of power in RCWS have been guilty of perpetuating a deafening silence of minoritized voices and experiences that do not align with traditional Western values. Although the field has grown and expanded to be more inclusive of minoritized voices, approaches, and research areas, there is much work to be done in aligning what we say we value and what we demonstrate to value through positions of power, policy, engagement with community, and even values expressed in prominent spaces of the field.³

In his article “Epistemic Disobedience, Independent Thought and De-Colonial Freedom,” Mignolo claims that Western epistemology has hidden self-serving interests and that the work of de-colonial thinking is to reveal such epistemic silences in order to affirm “the epistemic rights of the racially devalued” (4). In other words, Western ways of creating knowledge have been established as the norm by those whom they serve. Decolonial thinking advocates for marginalized groups to not only make visible this self-serving norm, but also to challenge it to value other ways of knowing. Mignolo points to two paths, de-westernization and de-colonial options, and the main point of departure is that the former does not question what is eliminated for the sake of modernization, while the latter “starts from the principle that the regeneration of life shall prevail over primacy of the production and reproduction of goods at the cost of life” (3).

Equipped with a Chicana mindset, it is my intent to perform a healing of the trauma of being silenced as a colonized woman of color. It is important to

3 What I refer to here is the professed need for more minoritized people as editors of prominent journals, as chairs of departments, and as heads of professional organizations; policies such as tenure and promotion that value community work and nontraditional and collaborative research; resources that allow academics to engage with their communities to benefit the communities, not just to provide research for the academic; and atrocious discussions on listservs and in executive committees that present a complete disregard for minoritized people’s voices and ways of creating knowledge.

note that I am building from decolonial options and not de-westernization, and it is important to point out the nuance of decoloniality in consideration of colonial wounds. Mignolo claims that those engaging in a decolonial option have one commonality: colonial wounds, which are the effects of groups of people historically “classified as underdeveloped economically and mentally” (3). If I start from a point of colonial wounds, then the decolonial option is based upon a reaction to a colonial legacy. It seeks to heal wounds and reclaim wellness and well-roundedness. Therefore, colonial wounds are the remnant effects of a colonial legacy, and these wounds provide a commonality for those engaging in a decolonial option. As a decolonial option assumes a delinking from imperial knowledge, I can see that the work of decolonial options and delinking is in reaction to colonial legacies. Therefore, delinking and decolonial options can also be construed as methodologies that do not aim to completely remove the colonial legacy, but instead acknowledge and challenge its effects on colonial subjects in colonial spaces, which include colonial epistemological hegemony and maintenance in RCWS. They are both options within the methodological framework of historical curanderisma.

Decolonial epistemologies, then, ask those who suffer from colonial wounds to challenge normalized Eurocentric ways of knowing and to value other ways of knowing. Within RCWS, claims to knowledge have been directly connected to histories of colonialism and continue to colonize alternative perspectives by relegating them to the margins of illegitimacy (Baca; Connal; Prendergast; Ramirez; Royster and Williams; Ruiz). However, as Mignolo suggests, it is not enough to change the conversation, but to change the terms of the conversation, and in order to do that, I must call into question the control of knowledge (4). And in order to do that, Mignolo claims I must shift the focus onto the knower and, therefore, the “assumptions that sustain locus enunciations” (4), also known as commonplaces. Presented below then is a decolonial focus on three different commonplace “critical” methods that are commonly used and written about within RCWS. The three methodological critiques that I provide below question who controls knowledge in the field and suggest other ways of producing knowledge.

In order to assist myself and my reader in the process of decolonial delinking, this “Historical Curanderisma toolkit” informs my practice to better confront the epistemic trauma often expressed by “colonized scholars,” who do not see themselves in claimed critical methodologies. These scholars should:

1. Understand that canonical notions of Western epistemology are in service to those whom they benefit because they derive from colonial actions and relations.

2. Encourage scholars to practice shifting the center of understanding knowledge creation from the West to the East, which involves an unwavering commitment to cultural and epistemological research and reclamation.
3. Be willing to continually shatter and delink from colonial scholarship practices through critical self-reflection from old notions of the colonial self with a profound commitment to constant ontological renewal and spiritual recovery.
4. Be willing to constantly return the gaze, as I do with Jessica Enoch's work, from colonized to the colonizer.
5. Consider and recognize whose colonial stories are being told or examined and by whom.
6. Embrace critical self-reflection.
7. Contemplate their place (e.g., how they are impacted and implicated) within the research question they are attempting to answer.

CRITICAL HISTORIOGRAPHY'S METHODOLOGICAL LIMITATIONS IN RCWS

While I critique Critical Historiography in RCWS here, I want to be clear that historical curanderisma serves as my method of choice to effectively delink from commonplace and critical methodologies. Furthermore, I acknowledge the rich and vast tradition of both quantitative and qualitative research methods, which create epistemologies of RCWS (Banks; Glenn and Ratcliffe; Heath; Kirsch; Moss; Sternglass). However, here, I want to look at "critical" historical methodologies common in the field, particularly those that critique traditional histories written by John Brereton, Robert Connors, Albert Kitzhaber and "critiqued" by Lynn Z. Bloom, Richard Ohmann, Wallace Douglas, Lester Faigley, and Sharon Crowley, as well as by those who have challenged an exclusive history of rhetorical studies within the US, namely Cheryl Glenn, Krista Ratcliffe, and Melissa Lanetta.

In RCWS, scholars have discussed the history of the field for a long time and continue to revise this history to be more inclusive. Although the field addresses some "critical" and "alternative" historical studies and has worked to critically reclaim stories of those who have been erased by dominant histories and narratives, it still has distance and epistemological space to transverse before it can claim to understand the colonial worldviews it purports and maintains through its imperialistic scholarship traditions discussed above.

As we noted in the introduction, many scholars have dedicated their scholarship to writing histories of composition studies (John Brereton, Albert Kitzhaber,

Robert Connors, Richard Ohmann, Wallace Douglass, Sharon Crowley, Lynn Bloom, and Susan Miller). When this Western elite trajectory is presented as the *only* history of composition, “other” histories are effectively erased. I have worked to recover them in *Reclaiming Composition*. However, while there has been reclamation work of histories that are non-elitist, such as those associated with the Normal schools or those that take place in alternative geographical landscapes, the existing methodological work has not yet acted on behalf of methodologies that work to reclaim lost/erased knowledges and rhetorical traditions. Marie Louise Pratt, Susan Romano, and Victor Villanueva stand out as some of the only exceptions, in that their work focuses on alternative knowledges associated with indigenous epistemologies.

Villanueva, for example, acknowledges colonial history when he recounts the indigenous Inca people’s history associated with Peru and the Aztecs of Tenochtitlan or ancient Mexico in his article “On the Rhetoric and Precedence of Racism.” Furthermore, works by Damián Baca, Ellen Cushman, Raúl Sánchez, and myself explore histories of reclamation focusing upon Latinx and indigenous rhetorical contributions. These works have attempted to challenge colonial definitions used in the field’s scholarship, and, while some histories have been critical in noting absences with regard to location, gender, and class (Bloom; Douglass; Faigley; Gold; Miller; Ohmann), few address the absence of race in these histories (Garcia de Mueller and Ruiz; Ruiz, *Reclaiming*). Still, these “critical” histories of class and pedagogical variety are regarded as providing “critical” and unofficial perspectives to the elitist “Harvard history” because they have worked to recover silences. However, I contend that they still do not question the extent of their “critiques” or the types of knowledge production they are complacent to. Ultimately, current histories of RCWS are limited in scope and adhere to the Western tradition or elitist locations and do so at the expense of ceding the fact that histories of rhetoric and composition studies existed “elsewhere and otherwise” (Baca; Sánchez).

Western, elitist traditions of knowledge making can be ideologically ruptured if one engages in the decolonial option to shift the geopolitical center of “epistemological” discoveries and practices away from the Western Hemisphere and the Eastern United States. *However, I caution against an identity politics approach to epistemological recentering.* In other words, I am not suggesting a method that makes broad generalizations about groups of people based on superficial, prescriptive identity categories, nor am I arguing for replacing one way of knowing with another because it is superior. However, I suggest that decentering the currently valued way of knowing in our field and in academia and re-centering other ways of knowing will glean nuanced understandings of the world that may facilitate knowledge production in positive ways for racially minoritized people.

Historical *curanderismo* allows for this knowledge to come to the fore when, as a researcher, I intentionally delink from a normative Western center from which to gaze using a historical method that privileges Aztec consciousness and belief systems. This delinking exercise is the “medicine” in the decolonial practice of performing decolonial, epistemic disobedience and engaging the healing method of “*curandera*” historiography. Medicinal history is a decolonial method that allows for the practice of historical reclamation and healing by recentering knowledge production of the indigenous Nahua, the Aztec, or the East (Morales). For example, historical *curanderismo* as an act of decolonial delinking and reclaiming history allows for a comparison between Western and non-Western understandings of the human relationship to the universe and particularly to human existence here on earth.

Many indigenous of the Americas conceived of the human relationship to the earth quite differently than Europeans. For example, Rene Descartes, famous for his contributions to rational thought and to The Enlightenment, as well as the quote “I think, therefore, I am,” or “*cogito ergo sum*,” or “*je pense, donc je suis*,” exemplifies what is known as the Cartesian split. There is no equivalent for this type of split in Aztec thought and philosophy. The smoky mirror, for example, which is associated with Tezcatlipoca, signifies introspection and reflection, but it does so holistically, as it is one of the four aspects of Nahui Ollin, which means “harmony” in Nahuatl, the Aztec indigenous language. This comparison is classified as “medicinal” because it also heals that which was severed through colonial relations and colonial renditions of human relationships to the earth. When Christians imposed their belief systems on the Americas to facilitate colonial projects, Aztec belief systems were undermined and demonized: they were said to have worshipped many gods and practiced the most heinous and inhuman crimes (Casas; León-Portilla; Sahagún).

Historical *curanderismo* allows these biased, ill-informed renditions of Aztec religious practices to lose legitimacy when their colonial motives are exposed, and further allows one to heal and regain the symbiotic Aztec worldview and philosophy, which are characterized by cosmological conceptions of the human relationship to the land and to the heavens rather than an egocentric, Western view of the autonomous individual. Unlike Westernized individuals who are said to be only good or bad or light or dark in modern human philosophy, Aztecs embraced duality. For example, duality, also known as “both/and,” was a much privileged and natural concept for the Aztec goddess Coatlicue (later named Tonantzi) and other female goddesses; however, through colonization, binary opposites such as good and evil were the only concepts available. It can be argued then that for Latinx researchers in RCWS, both Aztec philosophies and the Aztec spirit died through colonization, when the human became objectified

as an object, aka “thingafied” (Yancy, “Colonial Gazing”), to be enslaved and de-legitimized so as to not get in the way and assist in colonial pursuits of land, bodies, and natural resources such as gold.

It’s hard to perform this task of deep self-reflection while delinking, so before moving on to limiting Western notions of embodiment methodology, it is useful to invoke Gloria Anzaldúa’s refusal of dichotomies and her promotion of both/and approaches to the world. As a Chicana, Mestiza, Anzaldúa is able to transverse borders as a bicultural, tricultural, pluriversal queer women. She states that Mestizos are the best suited to occupy several worldviews at once because the Chicana community is composed of individuals who occupy the many spaces of the colonized, colonizer, indigenous, European, documented, undocumented, straight, queer, etc., and are, therefore, accustomed to crossing multiple borders through their corporeal experience of occupying a body that is characterized by these many identities and experiences.⁴ Therefore, I look at Chicana as an example of a population that has been forcefully removed and displaced from not only their land and their history, but also from their humanity; they are a colonized population who are direct descendants of the colonized indigenous of the Americas to various extents and generational status. As mentioned above, the Chicana’s relationship to the earth and the way they view their relationship to the earth is not the same as a Cartesian mind and body split or a postmodern understanding of a conglomeration of meaningless subject positions.

Although subjected to many stereotypes and essentialist notions of identity and mannerisms such as language, dress, documented status, and range of intellectual interests and abilities, the bottom line is that Chicana in the US have been forcibly removed from their intimate ties to the land in the name of capitalism, which views land as a resource in which to extract goods and resources for profit. This forced removal, both physical and spiritual, has caused a double displacement for Chicana who are intimately tied to the history and lands of the Americas. Therefore, the reclaiming of history through indigenous methods is very much a spiritual practice as it is an intellectual practice because it draws upon indigenous ways of knowing and of making knowledge, also known as methods and methodologies. It is akin to the practice of *Curanderismo* because it invites the practice of healing and serves as a type of “medicinal” practice that cures and revives while it reclaims the practices which were already in existence before colonization. Next, I discuss the “critical” method and theory of embodi-

4 Drawing upon Ruben Salazar’s definition of Chicano/a, the term Chicana brings an added element to the word Chicano. According to Salazar, a Chicano/a is a Mexican- American with a non-Anglo view of him/herself. When the “x” replaces the o/a, it removes the gender binary and recognizes the European imposition of gender codes brought upon the indigenous by Spanish colonizers.

ment, and while I discuss each of the methods singularly, I am fully aware of the connections between the mind, body, and spirit that I have just briefly touched upon so far, and that will continue to be problematized with each proceeding method below. Also, while I've just explained medicinal history as a way to decolonize and delink from RCWS critical historiographic methodologies, I continue to use this same medicinal decolonial methodology to delink from both embodiment and feminist methodological critiques.

WHOSE BODY? THEORIES AND METHODS OF EMBODIMENT AND THE CARTESIAN MIND/BODY SPLIT

Frida Khalo is, in my opinion, the best example of an embodied, BIWOC (BIWOC: Black and/or Indigenous Woman of Color) and third-world, feminist colonial trauma. She embodies interdisciplinary methodology. Period.

In this section, I would like to consider three commonplaces of embodiment theory as discussed in the field of RCWS. According to Abby Knoblauch, scholars in RCWS talk about and access theories of embodiment in three ways: embodied language, embodied knowledge, and embodied rhetoric. Each of these serves the purpose of critical inquiry and knowledge production that seeks to bring the previously ignored body into the realm of objectified knowledge that can be valued for its own sake, possibly by being completely divorced from corporeal considerations as in the case of embodied language. As a matter of fact, many RCWS scholars claim these practices as non-traditional and departing rationalist notions of knowledge making because as Cartesian logic goes, the body cannot be conceived of except for the existence of the mind. As the common adage goes, "I think, therefore I am"; through such conception, the body itself becomes objectified and has little relevance in claiming space toward the pursuit of learning and knowledge making. Theories and practices of embodiment then seek to reclaim that which is lost through such divisive thinking which leads to divisive as opposed to holistic methodologies.

Knowledge from a Cartesian perspective, then, is disembodied in rationalist circles and Western scientific epistemic traditions. Knoblauch notes however, that "[s]cholars such as Foucault and Butler would of course remind me that bodies are constructed, that social positionalities are performed, and that there is no unified body that needs to or could stand in for another" (60). Foucault would call these types of distinctions biopolitics in that bodies are divided the way they are in service to broader power structures that benefit some bodies and denigrate others. "When he first employed the term 'biopolitics' in the mid-1970s, he meant to identify a new kind of power which is carried forward by technologies and discourses of security that take the life of populations as their

object and play a central role in the emergence of modern racism and eugenics” (Lemm and Vetter 40). An in-depth consideration of the history of biopolitics is beyond the scope of this chapter, but I suggest that there are connections between the discursive manipulation of bodies and the embodied rhetoric that Knoblauch advocates for at the end of her article. Interestingly, she alludes to biopolitics as she quotes bell hooks who points out that “‘the person who is most powerful has the privilege of denying their body’ ([hooks] 137). Who is asked to deny the body and who is asked to reveal it is a question I believe we must continually ask ourselves” (59)?

In a more dated book (2003), *The Teacher’s Body: Embodiment, Authority, and Identity in the Academy*, Freedman and Holmes provide a list of considerations of embodiment that have been written and researched about relating specifically to the college teacher, which most professionals who are members of CCCC can relate to because, as Knoblauch notes, the concept of embodiment has an established history in RCWS. As far as bodily reality considerations, the list includes: “cancer, and/or cartwheels and body-piercing [tattoos], ED, pregnancy miscarriage, aging, youth, beauty, arthritis, depression, AIDS, heart disease, physical intimidation, diabetes, infertility, sleep deprivation, mobility impairment, paralysis, deafness, blindness, post-traumatic stress, rape, anorexia—many situations seen and unseen and many situations beyond those described in this volume [race, sexual orientation]” (6). I included what I felt was a glaring absence in this list in brackets, and in this book, there are eighteen chapters; however, only one chapter is specifically focused upon the racialized Caribbean female body. Race is mentioned several times throughout the book, but the close analysis only occurs in this chapter. Part of this oversight has to do with imperial scholarship practices (Ruiz, *Reclaiming* 170-72); however, that only serves as a partial explanation. The other reason for the lack of embodiment rhetoric as it specifically relates to the racialized body has to do with the three commonplaces that get accessed when embodiment theory is the framework used for epistemological discovery, otherwise known as methodology: embodied language, embodied knowledge, and embodied rhetoric.

Embodied rhetoric seems to be the most in-line with the practice of reclaiming the body’s contribution to knowledge making. Knoblauch defines embodied rhetorical practice as

[L]ocating a text in the body (understanding the importance of embodied knowledge) and . . . locating the body in the text
[;] writers utilizing an embodied rhetoric work against what might be seen as the potential hegemony of (some) academic discourse, thereby beginning to enact [Adrienne] Rich’s politics

of location, [which] must ‘challenge our conception of *who* we are in our work,’ and must be ‘accompanied by a rigorously reflexive examination of ourselves as researchers.’ (142)

Here, one begins to see connections between the colonial influence on the ideological and spiritual denigration of indigenous populations such as the Aztecs, who believed in more holistic notions of the human species. For example, Aztecs thought of human life as part of a cycle that was a magical and miraculous cosmological conglomeration of mind, body, and spirit—all three intimately tied to the land and the cosmos.

One only has to look so far as the Aztec sunstone to see the ways in which all three of these elements are interconnected and dare to not be separated out of fear of cosmological discord and resultant existential and bodily imbalance. Centuries have passed since colonialism has witnessed the ways this discord and separation of mind and body have been detrimental, not only to the survival of indigenous populations, but also to the modern world that is constantly in crisis-mode due to capitalism’s colonial influence. Colonial pursuit destroyed and delegitimized indigenous knowledge, philosophy, and people native to this land relying on rhetorical constructs such as “religious salvation” that eventually became discredited with the reign of science, which had the effect of separating the mind, the spirit, and the body. However, while these connections are absent in current considerations of theories of embodiment, there have been a small number of studies that have come forward which acknowledge the connection between colonialism and the body, claiming that colonialism created the idea of disease that grew directly out of the role of disease dissemination during colonial pursuits (Ramirez).

While this discussion is also beyond the scope of this chapter, a book titled *Romanticism and Colonial Disease* by Alan Bewell is worth a brief mention. As one studies the “success” of colonialism, it is common knowledge that disease played an instrumental role in genocide of indigenous bodies in mass numbers. Bewell notes that smallpox embodies an experience that was repeated in different places at different times throughout the colonial period. To a degree that historical and literary critics have not adequately recognized, colonial experience was profoundly structured by disease, both as metaphor and as reality. For different people at different times, it was an age of epidemiological crisis. In the legend, one glimpses what it meant for a people to undergo total social collapse, the destruction of children, wives, and warriors.

Bewell further personifies smallpox as a colonial disease as being able to state that “no people who have looked on me [smallpox disease] will never be the same” (2). As the field continues in its development of theories of embodi-

ment, medical humanities, and the decoloniality of science, such studies seem to be further warranted as we continue to discuss rhetorics of science that are part and parcel of embodied rhetoric and biopolitics in general. However, in an effort to reclaim the holistic human aspect of indigenous epistemologies that account for the connection between the Aztec philosophical view of the cosmos to the mind, body, and spirit, I turn to Sean Arce's powerful piece, "Xicana/o Indigenous Epistemologies: Toward a Decolonizing and Liberatory Education for Xicana/o Youth."

In this article, Sean Arce explores the power of "recognition and embracing of the Xicano/Xicana connection to the land of this continent, that which reifies their existence and humanity as Indigenous."⁵ (25) For Chicanxs, it can be detrimental to their conception of their humanity if they are not allowed to reclaim their native connection to this land we call the United States cosmologically, spirituality and physically. As a matter of fact, Arce argues that provided the ability to reclaim indigenous notions of the spirit, Chicanxs can challenge an educational system that he claims is based on the dehumanization of those with colonial bodies and histories.

This type of historical reclamation calls upon both Chicane educators and non-Chicane educators to realize that the connection of the Chicane body to the land is an act of reclamation that is essential for Chicanxs who have lost their way in a dehumanizing, colonial educational system. In his article, Arce quotes Berta-Avila, who says that spiritual and material manipulation is what causes educational oppression: "The experiences of oppression in the United States can be described as a mental/spiritual and social/material domination that is fueled by manipulation and alienation" (Berta-Avila 2). The erasure of native beliefs and traditions in the name of both nation and state building has been detrimental for Chicanxs who seek to decolonize and reclaim their identities.

This reclamation process is especially difficult within educational institutions that do not recognize Chicanxs as Native Americans who are native to this land. It is disempowering when one group's worldview is discounted and outright ignored, and when their "methodologies" for understanding their humanity are shunned, and when the world around them and their place within it are de-legitimized. Arce expands this notion:

Xicanas/os are indigenous to this land on which they live. The land is the connection to their identity and the understanding of life. This connection is a threat to the growth of capitalism in the United States, thus making it necessary to impose on Xicanas/Xicanos a dehumanizing cultural hegemony. When

5 "Xicano/Xicana" is more decolonial way to identify as Chicano/Chicana.

Xicana/Xicanos enter the schooling system, they come with a sense of displacement. Xicana/Xicanos are not sure how to view themselves. (25)

An embodied rhetorical practice that recognizes the ways Chicanxs are forced to deny the histories of their own bodies could be one step toward encouraging a decolonial theory of embodiment that looks at the body of the indigenous as one that has been colonized, traumatized, divorced from their own land, and de-legitimized in the name of both capitalism and a democracy that values profit over people and schooling systems that support a neoliberal political agenda. An embodied rhetorical practice is a praxis that acknowledges this reality for minoritized populations. It is one step closer to performing an antiracist method that relies on decolonial options, such as epistemic delinking, to achieve the goal of antiracist scholarship. It is an engagement with Curandera praxis as healing praxis.

FEMINISM'S CLAIMED CRITICAL PRACTICE AND THE COLONIZATION OF INTERSECTIONALITY

In order to effectively decolonize, we need to collectively decolonize. To support that point, I want to briefly touch upon the increasingly popular concept of intersectional feminism (a term invented by attorney, scholar, and activist Kimberle Crenshaw in the 1980s) before I go back to make a connection with embodied rhetoric and feminist theory and scholarship within RCWS. Women of color do not often see themselves in White-dominated feminist movements, and this is the power of intersectionality: it allows women of color to account for their particular feminisms. However, the term “intersectionality” is suffering from appropriation and dilution, which leads to a kind of delusion about its practical applicability, purpose, and function. While it is not unheard of that academics borrow concepts in order to metaphorically apply them to practices not initially connected to the concept, such as the concept of “diversity,” for example, when one is committed to performing antiracist research methods, this type of borrowing, also known as appropriation, cannot occur without racist consequences. Intersectional feminism is inseparable from race because its reason for existing was to be able to account for Black Woman experience with workplace discrimination in the 1980s. Creating and defining intersectionality was a specific attempt to counter “single-axis” analyses that overlook multiple forms of oppression that Black Women face, especially when they are from a middle-to lower social class. In her groundbreaking essay, “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination

Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics” published in *The University of Chicago Legal Forum*, Crenshaw points to the analytical limitation of a single categorical axis, or the opposite of an intersectional analysis:

With Black women as the starting point, it becomes more apparent how dominant conceptions of discrimination condition us to think about subordination as disadvantage occurring along a single categorical axis. I want to suggest further that this single-axis framework erases Black women in the conceptualization, identification and remediation of race and sex discrimination by limiting inquiry to the experiences of otherwise-privileged members of the group. (140)

In the end, Crenshaw advocates embracing the intersection of sources of marginalization. More specifically, she points to the need for an intersectional feminism and the need for racial subordination to be analyzed along with sexism and patriarchy: “If any real efforts are to be made to free Black people of the constraints and conditions that characterize racial subordination, then theories and strategies purporting to reflect the Black community’s needs must include an analysis of sexism and patriarchy. Similarly, feminism must include an analysis of race if it hopes to express the aspirations of non-white women” (166). I provide these two quotes at length because I have noticed trends in feminist circles that tend to use this term in ways that claim to be critical-feminist practice and point to the exclusion of women, queer, and trans populations in prominent understandings of both first-wave (19th century to mid-20th century) and second-wave (1960 and beyond) feminism.

This trend has also been documented by Elisa Lopez in “The Colonization of Intersectionality,” in which she claims that “intersectionality has been taken from its originator- a Black Woman- and has been re-appropriated in order to serve the interests of white people.” Divorcing the term “intersectionality” from its focus upon women of color takes away its power and that in itself is an act of colonization by appropriation of the term for White feminist purposes. Sirma Blige also wrote about how, in addition to foregoing the plight of Black Women invisibility, current feminist movements overlook important historical realities for women of color by coining new feminist movements that lack critical self-reflection by focusing on all women being subjected to the same experience regardless of race. In “Intersectionality Undone: Saving Intersectionality from Feminist Intersectionality Studies,” published in the Du Bois Review, she explores political feminist movements such as Slutwalk and the Occupy movement, both of which she claims that “[d]espite their best intentions and claims of inclusiveness and solidarity . . . have fallen short of intersectional reflexivity and accountability, and prompted their

own kinds of silencing, exclusion or misrepresentation of subordinated groups” (406). She claims that these movements have been divorced from an intersectional analysis because they overlook the racial elements of being a “slut” or of what it means to already “occupy” a space of resistance, as many women of color have done since before and after first and second wave feminism.

While I turn to these examples to note a trend in social justice movements that claim to be critical and intersectional, I also briefly note my reflection for how I’ve seen this phenomenon occur in my own field. For example, in my interactions with other feminists in the field who have claimed an interest in intersections between medical rhetorics, feminism, and writing, the term “intersectionality” was used to discuss the intersections of medical procedures and processes that pertain to White women’s bodies without ever exploring dimensions of race within their analyses, which has the effect of universalizing their findings by not accounting for the racial dimensions of their stories/studies. If their approaches were intersectional as in considering both White and non-White bodies, they might have considered that in *Medicalizing Blackness: Making Racial Difference in the Atlantic World, 1780-1840*, Rana A. Hogarth claims that “whether by design or by chance, physicians’ objectification of black people’s bodies in slave societies became an essential component to the development of the medical profession in the Americas” (1-2).

In *Medical Imagery and Fragmentation: Modernism, Scientific Discourse, and the Mexican/Indigenous Body, 1870-1940s*, Dora Ramirez claims that between the years of 1870-1940, Mexican writers saw themselves as “transnational authors” attempting to grasp the impact of imperial expansion on both Mexico and the United States. With such a goal in mind, “Mexican women writers focused on the modernist construction of the body and brought in aspects of how the soul (through racial, gendered, national, political, and socioeconomic lenses) was (re) constructed as a way to manage the health and space of Mexican/Indigenous populations and as a way for modernization to progress into an industrial era” (1). Those claiming to be feminists in the field then are overlooking possibilities for antiracist dimensions of the initial definition of intersectional feminism as specifically referring to Black Women and acknowledging the inseparable analytic of race and gender as necessary overlapping identity characteristics in need of mutual and complementary analyses for a more accurate representation of their interdependency. This type of appropriation of the term has been called the “colonization of intersectionality” (Lopez; Utt) and the “depoliticization” of intersectionality (Bilge).

The appropriation of this term creates a distance from Crenshaw’s reason for creating the analytical possibilities of intersectionality as an antiracist method. Although many feminists are behaving as if the concept of intersectionality can be both generalizable and widely applied as a mere metacognitive task in

many disciplinary circles, that's not really the point of applying an intersectional framework. Those who use the term are tasked with actively working to dismantle and transform intersectional oppressions that are specific to women of color because, currently, there are no frames of reference with which to account for the invisibility of women of color created by the failure of identity politics to account for gender and race.

In RCWS, the use of intersectional analyses has been used in this way. See "The Queer Turn in Composition Studies: Reviewing and Assessing an Emerging Scholarship," for example (Alexander and Wallace). When the term is colonized in this way, it can become diluted, and those who use it for other purposes can become delusional, thinking that they are practicing another sort of "critical" scholarship that is "critical" because it claims to be "intersectional." As such, looking back at the reasons for the creation of this term would demonstrate that it was created out of a dire necessity to recognize the female of color, particularly the female of color that has suffered discrimination and racism, or, more recently, the embodied representation of the "female of color who has suffered police brutality" (Ersula Ore comes to mind as a participant in the Coalition of Feminist Scholars in the History of Rhetoric and Composition (CFSHRC) 2017 workshop "Intersectionality within Writing Programs and Practices.")⁶

I wanted to cover this danger of appropriation briefly because it is one that threatens the potential of decolonial options that aims to epistemically delink from Western notions of official knowledge, and I would carry this official label so far as to implicate Western feminism, also known as "White feminism" or "mainstream feminism."

Commenting upon the ways that White feminism diminishes the experience of women of color, Crenshaw states that White women share many of the same social characteristics as White men, except for gender, and White women participate in the silencing of other women who don't share their social status:

The value of feminist theory to Black women is diminished because it evolves from a white racial context that is seldom acknowledged. Not only are women of color in fact overlooked, but their exclusion is reinforced when white women speak for and as women. The authoritative universal voice-usually white male subjectivity masquerading as non-racial, non-gendered objectivity-is merely transferred to those who, but for gender, share many of the same cultural, economic and social characteristics. (154)

6 This workshop review confirms Ore's participation (see <http://bit.ly/3jk9m1f>).

Given that Crenshaw's essay dates back three decades, one must wonder how far feminism has traversed to account for its limited application and who have been the women who have fought for their recognition in a limited feminist tradition.

Like Crenshaw asked then, RCWS scholars need to ask the question, "If this is so, how can the claims that 'women are,' 'women believe' and 'women need' be made when such claims are inapplicable or unresponsive to the needs, interests and experiences of Black women?" (154). It is beyond the scope of this chapter to give a complete survey of the range of feminist scholarship that is practiced within RCWS; however, I hope it will suffice to say that most feminist scholarship in the field is complicit in contributing to this problem of universal applicability to RCWS scholars who identify as women of color. They are complicit because they continue to contribute to the current rampant problem of inclusive "politics of citation," also known as imperial scholarship, regardless of the "types" of feminist scholarship referred to in the introduction that claim to be inclusive and critical. When one examines the field's most popular scholarly venues, one cannot miss glaring absences of a genuine intersectional approach that considers not only the female but the minoritized female who practices a minoritized, intersectional feminism. In the pursuit of antiracist research methods, this is an abomination to the many historically marginalized women who are RCWS scholars, such as myself and fellow co-author Alexandria Lockett. The result of this oversight has been a blatant neglect of many women who occupy histories tied to colonialism, and the effect of this exclusivity in the field currently is a type of continued colonization and imposed silence (Enoch; Ramirez; Royster; Ruiz, Reclaiming).

I want to briefly turn back to the notion of an embodied rhetoric before going on to examine one example of a White feminist's "critical" attempt to introduce the voice of Mexican female rhetors into the field. (As a decolonial scholar, I give myself permission to play with structure a bit.) Aside from embodied rhetoric, there are other ways one could discuss the role of positionality as a method of triangulation and a way to avoid appropriation and unethical research, but I choose to talk about positionality through Knoblauch's call for embodied rhetoric because it postulates that the body of the researcher is a very important part of the research process and resultant findings. She states that "[w]hile not appropriate for all purposes, an embodied rhetoric that draws attention to embodied knowledge—specific material conditions, lived experiences, positionalities, and/or standpoints—can highlight difference instead of erasing it in favor of an assumed privileged discourse" (62). In short, when one fails to divulge their particular relationship to the "bodies" of their research, they also divorce their body from the research analysis and they, therefore, erroneously make claims about the research that, although they are meant to be widely generalizable, are only a partial examination in that the researcher is situated in their own form of embodied rhetoric, which encom-

passes their upbringing, their social class, their privilege, and their education; not to mention, such an embodied rhetor is contributing to a body of knowledge that they have the most familiarity with.

Knoblauch confirms the need to acknowledge these intersectional connections: “The writer’s positionality within the academy and her social positionality are not necessarily mutually exclusive. In fact, social positionality often affects standing within the academy, and standing within the academy often affects the ways in which one is ‘allowed’ or sanctioned to write . . .” (61). In the case of RCWS, its “body of knowledge” has often gained legitimacy from a Western hegemonic Greco-Roman rhetorical tradition. However, as Knoblauch notes, “Embodied rhetoric, when functioning *as* rhetoric, connects the personal to the larger social realm, and makes more visible the sources of *all* of our knowledge” (62).

When one fails to account for their own positionality, which is often expected to be a part of the triangulation of ethical research,

[t]he disembodied view from nowhere further assumes that, because bodies do not matter, ‘any *body* can stand in for another’ (Banks 38). In some ways, this is a comforting thought. As members of minority groups struggle for recognition within the academy, the lack of embodiment in prose might lead one to believe that we’re all on a level playing field. To be able to erase or ignore markers of difference, at least in written texts, might imply a sort of race/gender/sexuality blindness. (Knoblauch 58-59)

I am sometimes seduced by the thought of erasing the body, my body, in my texts because some of the markers of my identity are less valued than others. However, this is not possible, for my name as author reveals my position as a colonized female with a history of genocide, dispossession, cultural annihilation, trauma, and oppression.

My embodiment is always different than a White woman’s embodiment, and the ability to acknowledge this openly in my research gives me more credibility than someone who pretends that they can stand in for another without revealing their social standing and limited view. If one cannot admit that their research methods, no matter how scientific or objective, are hindered by their own terministic screen, one is not performing research that is antiracist or intersectional. Positively seen as a mirror of one’s mind, terministic screens are epistemically situated and sanctioned by Western notions of the rational mind without the body: they are not value-free and they reside within the body of the researcher. The aim in decolonial research, then, is to depart from any division of the two (body and mind) in order to delink from accepted norms of research and to perform embodied rhetoric that is reflective, intersectional, and decolonial.

Such self-reflection has been difficult for White feminists to demonstrate in their scholarship as noted earlier by Prendergast regarding the work of Shirley Brice Heath. However, for women of color who are working toward decolonizing research methods, self-reflection is a survival mechanism for the colonized mind, body, and spirit that is rendered invisible in academia more often than not. As a woman of color seeking to practice decoloniality, I would like to raise one of the philosophical indigenous symbols of the Aztec quadrant, which is visible in the Aztec sunstone, also known as Mexica Sun Stone (Arce 32-36): Tezcatlipoca, which is also known as the “smoky mirror.” The smoky obsidian mirror is materially imagined to be a hard, dark, glass-like volcanic rock formed by the rapid solidification of lava without crystallization. However, the significance of this mirror reaches beyond its material appearance.

The significance of the mirror and reflection, in this case, is accompanied by a constant flux or movement that serves to shatter any static image rendered by glass mirrors. This kind of movement is what characterizes the “nahui ollin” or movement, of which the action of Tezcatlipoca is one action of four. If one looks at the symbol for movement in Aztec pictographic language, it resembles a mirror that is in constant movement, and this is the same of critical self-reflection in which one is called upon to see themselves as not only a body, but also a mind and a spirit that is in constant flux, always growing, always learning, and not only acting but also being acted upon. This type of self-reflection embraces duality and provides perceptual, spiritual, and cognitive options that are dynamic and closely associated with the cosmos. The mirror can be said to be the cosmos staring back at us; it is considered a powerful tool toward the continuing development of consciousness. It calms while it confronts the inner self-war; it allows one to conquer the limitations of oneself and therefore embraces multiplicity in making meaning of one’s experience. It governs both what we know and do not know. It allows us to see and to be seen.

The Ollin symbol represents generational change and congregation and a coming together as a cycle that both attracts and repels like protons, electrons, and neutrons constantly rotating around a nucleus (Figure 2.3). In the symbol, one can discern both direction and displacement as a type of self-reflection that allows one to grow, expand, contract, disappear, reappear, and transform in a symbiotic manner much like the cosmos. As the cosmos influence the seasons and the motion of the ocean, so do they govern our bodily functions, our present moment, and the resulting memory that leaves subconscious marks upon our psyche, never leaving one the same as before they met the mirror of self-reflection: Tezcatlipoca, the smoking obsidian mirror. In it, dual forces meet together; its dual essence forces a natural integration of two intertwined, inseparable forces such as mother and father, bodily cell unification and division, or resistance and free movement, similar to the Taoist Chinese concept of Yin and Yang.



Figure 2.3. “Ollin” Plate 10 of the Codex Borbonicus. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

Moving along with this critique of “critical” feminism, I want to mention why both methodological practices associated with ethical feminist research practice, namely, intersectionality and self-reflection, are not altogether new for twenty-first century RCWS practitioners; therefore, both of these methods should already be a part of the mores of feminist research and practice. However, when looking at the inclusion of Mexican women in the field, it is evident that Mexican women have yet to be recognized as contributing to the rhetorical traditions recognized in RCWS. Given this absent presence, as one can deduce that Mexican women rhetors existed on both sides of the Mexican-American border, it seems that the researcher would have an obvious ethical responsibility to perform such research with intersectional and self-reflective practices that are textually represented in any research endeavor that is contributing to this neglected area of study.

Given this context, I want to briefly consider Jessica Enoch’s article, “Para la Mujer,” published in 2004. The stated goal of this article is to demonstrate how three women, Renterfa, Ramirez, and Astrea, argued for new opportunities for themselves and their readers. It proceeds through definitional arguments, common in current-traditional frameworks. It also aims at defining a new Chicana feminist rhetoric. However, when analyzed for intersectional and self-reflective practices, the article proves to be lacking in both areas. Furthermore, this piece colonizes the analysis of these women by situating their challenge to define themselves for themselves within a Greco-Roman tradition. Specifically, this type of colonial framing and legitimating occurred like this:

Of course, to pinpoint definition as a method of argumentation is not new. Aristotle and Cicero both cite definition as one of the *koinoi topoi* (common topics)-one of the seats of argument or “the ‘regions,’ as it were, from which arguments are drawn” (Cicero, *Topica* 1:5-11). Aristotle teaches that when one defines, one explains or argues the essence of something; one signifies “the what-it-is-to-be” . . . Instead, my interests lie in the ways Renteria, Ramirez, and Astrea’s definitional claims illustrate a Chicana feminist rhetoric—a rhetoric that infuses rhetorics of/from color with concerns of gender and class (21).

It is notable that Enoch brings up the concerns of gender and class to be included with rhetorics of color in order to define a Chicana feminist rhetoric (21). However, when thinking about the role of self-reflection as critical feminist practice, the intersectional approach falls short in that Enoch does not address her own privileged position in being published in a journal that has a history of being complicit in colonial and imperial scholarship practices discussed at the start of this chapter whilst the subject matter is about Mexican women’s rhetoric. For a specific example of these practices, see an “unofficial” account offered by the father of Chicano literature, Felipe Ortego y Gasca’s “Huevos con Chorizo: A Letter to Richard Ohmann.”

Unfortunately, without knowledge of previous Chicanos who have been rejected when writing about topics pertinent to Chicano literary representation, Enoch provides very little knowledge of Chicano history to provide a grounded connection between Chicana feminist rhetoric and the rhetoric that she analyzes, which occurred in the early 1900s, at least 60 years before the popularity of the term Chicano and the resultant creation of a Chicana feminist. This is an oversight that, for most Chicana studies scholars, is unacceptable. As a matter of fact, whenever a Chicana writes about the concept of Chicanismo or Chicana history, due to scholarly convention in this field, they must clarify in which sense they are using the concept. They are expected to acknowledge the creation of the term as an identity that was forged at least 50 years after the Mexican American War, although the fragmented Mexican experience occurred after the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, as Enoch notes that

even though I continue to call these women “Mexican,” because that is how they designate themselves in their writings, I see that their work in 1910 and 1911 fortifies and elucidates a Chicana feminist rhetorical tradition . . . These Mexican women lived more than fifty years before the term “Chi-

cana” was formulated as a result of both the Chicano student movement and the feminist movement of the late 1960s and 1970s. (21)

The reader never gets a sense of how Enoch is using the political term Chicana, and the focus seems to be more so upon restating the classed position of those Mexican women able to write and publish at this time. The historical context around this privilege is also absent. However, the word “Chicana” appears in the title and is used 56 times in the article.

Further, she claims that the three women focused upon use definitional arguments to redefine what it means to be Mexican but does so from an Aristotelian point of view even while saying that they are creating their own rhetorical tradition: that of a Chicana rhetorical tradition. She compares these women to Anzaldúa because they embrace contradictions and are challenging traditional roles while also facing criticism for doing so, yet she still grounds these women within traditional feminist legitimation when she admits that Mexican women have not learned all they know from White women or White feminism. In the end, this publication is problematic because Enoch claims that the three “Chicana rhetoricians” are creating their own tradition, yet she states that her goal is not to merely enter them into the existing rhetorical cannon. However, this is what actually ends up happening in this case while Enoch does not question the authority from which she grounds them in.

With these reasons in mind, Enoch’s treatment of “pre-Chicanas” is not a critical decolonial treatment of Chicanas, though she cites Emma Pérez’s *The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas into History* in a footnote:

Emma Pérez notes that the word feminista appeared in Mexico at the beginning of the century. Perez also makes it clear that Mexican women “did not become aware of gender-specific issues only through their contact with European feminists. Mexican feminism has always taken its own cultural forms.” (footnote 6, 35)

She also misses the colonial point altogether, recolonizing these women and keeping them inscribed in a colonial matrix of power. She is trying to be critical but, instead, she maintains hegemonic legitimacy within a Greco-Roman rhetorical tradition and the current-traditional heuristic of definitional arguments. Her positionality is basically that of a researcher turning their White feminist gaze upon an exoticized marginal community.

In *Imperial Leather*, McClintock addresses the common oversight that occurs in colonial societies where White feminists claim to be critical but cannot

escape their position as “complicit both as colonizers and colonized, privileged and restricted, acted upon and acting” (7). I also wonder why Enoch did not discuss Anzaldúa’s claim to dualistic thinking and her discussion of *Nepantla* and *La Facultad*. Discussing these terms would show a better-grounded attempt and employ both feminist practices of intersectionality and self-reflection more closely associated with a more well-rounded, grounded, and critically and historically informed analysis that would work toward decolonial ends and an antiracist methodological practice. This type of oversight touched upon in this chapter can occur in critical historiographic, embodiment, and feminist methodologies when

1. White supremacist spaces of academia ignore and routinely reject publications by scholars of color.
2. White scholars are given the green light on researching communities with which they are not a part of while scholars of color are silenced and discredited.
3. White heteronormative research practices are continuously repeated at the expense of considering alternative research practices.
4. One only seeks out the advice of scholars of color for translation purposes.
5. No one calls out all of these racist practices within academia.
6. A researcher fails to be truly self-reflexive in their research.
7. Editorial boards don’t have diverse enough representation to be able to call out these oversights.
8. Scholars are not historically conscious of their limited ways of knowing and making knowledge in settler-colonial environments.
9. Books like this one don’t get published.

The decolonial option of historical *curanderismo*, an act of epistemic disobedience, functions as a decolonial response to colonial methods in RCWS, and as such, performs both healing and reclamation practices of colonized people’s ways of making knowledge and ways of being in the world. In addition, performing decolonial epistemic disobedience is an alternative way to critically engage in reclamation. I offer these options as possible methods because they contribute to a growing body of sustainable decolonial methodologies, and they contribute to more equitable and inclusive research and citation practices for BIPOC. They also increase ethos in RCWS, a discipline that has always claimed to be inclusive, antiracist, and accommodating.

In the next chapter, James Sanchez models systematic approaches to connecting personal experience with research, which effectively disrupts the notion that

we can somehow do research without focusing intently on how race and racism affects the way we make knowledge in the world. In Chapter 4, Christopher Carter discusses the politics around surveillance and race to prompt an awareness of how antiracism might combat disinformation. As Carter shows, truth-telling about racially charged incidents of police brutality involves a conflict between “official” interpretations of events vs. citizen-recorded events that show what “really” happened. This conflict clearly illustrates that control over data is what’s at stake in an almost ubiquitously surveilled reality. In other words, researchers can ask, “Can data be neutral?” and “Can data be presented from a neutral position?” According to Alexandria Lockett’s analysis of Black Twitter as a counter-response to mainstream journalistic reporting in Chapter 5, the answer would be “no” (see also “Scaling Black Feminisms” and “I am Not a Computer Programmer”).

The political nature of information is multidimensional and increasingly complex. While some users of technology are claiming to have become a part of a consciously “woke” society, prompted by the web’s massive and free archive of knowledge to be consumed, they continue to elude the ways in which becoming “woke” through digital means comes with a cost: being surveilled. It is the driving force of our current information economy: an information economy that is heavily entrenched in political processes—political debates, political positions, and political motives. While data is often claimed to be neutral and serves as an empirical mirror, critical researchers often ask if information can be presented apolitically. Whether one would like to think of digital spaces as neutral conveyors of information (both critical and objective), or as digitized spaces that function like the Wild Wild West, both Lockett and Carter further remind us in Chapters 4 and 5, that we live in a digital information society that is riddled with cultural codes when engaged by both human and non-human participants, which are deeply embedded and implicated in political and racialized discourses. #BlackLivesMatter, #SayHerName, #BlackintheIvory, and #ShutdownSTEM are just a few examples of resistance responses to current political and racialized realities. However, I wonder, as Lockett does in Chapter 5, who is participating in these movements? How can we be sure? Are they even human?

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