HOW COLONIZATION FOSTERED PUBLIC MASS GUN VIOLENCE IN THE US

(AND WHAT EDUCATION AND SOCIETY CAN DO ABOUT IT)

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Abstract
    This paper positions public mass gun violence (PMGV) as an intergenerational consequence of the violence of colonization, coloniality, and slavery in the United States. I map how the shooter's white privilege, alongside his white/male fragility, combined with a national consciousness built on an ethos of colonization and coloniality, leads him to believe he has unearned "rights" to the social riches of the center.

    I proffer that most of us who benefit from capitalist, neo-liberal, patriarchal state and social institutions are complicit in co-creating the conditions that produce PMGV's gunboys and gunmen because

in order to benefit from these institutions, we perpetuate a system of insiders and outsiders. As illustrated, some possibilities for allaying violence are grounded in practicing critical self-reflection and capacities for discomfort.

   This research comes as a response to the United States' recent increase of public mass gun violence (PMGV) that is both feeding on and perpetuating a heightened state of fear that regenerates the public's anxieties. I cumulatively define[*] PMGV as gun violence that occurs in a public but somewhat confined area, that physically impacts a minimum of three or more people which can include the gunman[**]—most of whom are random targets who symbolically represent the shooter's source of humiliation or "social strain" (Lankford, 2016, p. 174). Though no official governmental profile of a mass shooter has been developed, PMGV is most often perpetuated by White males (Bjelopera et al., 2013). PMGV's regeneration of the public's anxieties fosters the expansion of chaotic institutional policies, practices, and rhetoric that too often 1) reduce creative thinking around PMGV to either/or dichotomous debates that center the Second Amendment (e.g., "the right to bear arms" vs "gun control"); and 2) permit more guns in the hands of the masses so as to "combat" our current gun crisis.[***] Such de-linked, myopic thinking erroneously assumes that there might be one problem and thus one "solution" to PMGV. Myopic thinking fails to link PMGV with larger systemic issues, practices, and histories of violence on what has become US territory.

   I ground this paper in two contentions. The first is that PMGV, is an intergenerational consequence of the violence of colonization, coloniality, and slavery in the United States. This history of US "origination" so committed to capitalism, is further extended through imperialism, neoliberalism, militarism, sexism, toxic masculinity/patriarchy, racism and others, is imperative to understanding tributaries of contemporary violence, including PMGV. PMGV begins before the trigger is pulled. It shows up inside and outside the body of the shooter and emerges from colonization, coloniality, and slavery's historic and

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1 To date, a universal term, definition or quantification of the phenomenon remains unestablished.

2 I developed a definition of PMGV accordingly: 1) The 112 Congress passed legislation that defines "*mass* killing" as *three* or people more killed in a single incident, regardless of weapon. 2) I include injured *and* killed in my calculation because survival does not mean a shooting incident never happened. It was a mass shooting regardless of lives lost. 3) I include the gunman in my calculation (via suicide, "suicide by cop," or other intervention) to reveal that the violence starts within and outside the shooter before he pulls the trigger. In this way, he reveals that he is part of a societal cycle of violence, not an anomaly, not a "lone wolf" perpetrator of violence.

3 E.g.: Texas Senate Bill No. 11 (S.B. 11) known as the "campus carry" allows licensed gun holders to bear arms on Texas college/university campuses.

continued practices of epistemic, cultural, physical, psychic, spiritual, social, structural, and intergenerational violence. To be clear, I am not espousing that White boys and men represent the "newly" colonized. Rather, I argue that the *indignities* of colonization, coloniality, and slavery could not be maintained in the temporal, geographic, or bodily specific (i.e., cultural/racial) allocations for which they were originally designed. As I address throughout the paper, indignities of colonization have progressed beyond intended delineations to now include fragile White boys and men.

Secondly, I proffer that those of us from middle and upper socioeconomic statuses (SES's) who willingly participate in capitalist, neo-liberal, patriarchal state structures and social institutions, are complicit in the co-construction and co-creation of the conditions that generate PMGV's gunmen and gunboys, because in order to exist in such a capacity we perpetuate a system of insiders and outsiders. These two assertions swirl together through the common nexus of violence and oppression and require the complicity of the masses to thrive. Our complicity in perpetuating the problem simultaneously indicates that we are capable actors in allaying the very conditions that produce said violence.

Whereas a goal of this paper is to provide a more holistic account of PMGV for the sake of exposing how history does not *end* but creates tributaries into the future, another is to speak out against dominant social/institutional configurations that operate on violent divisions (e.g. toxic masculinity, capitalism). A third goal of this paper is to initiate more expansive, critical dialogues that address the power of the institution of education in co-creating violence (25% of PMGVs have occurred on school/university grounds [Schmidt, 2014]) as well as its potential to allay violence. I am hopeful that expansive thinking about education in the face of PMGV will counter common knee-jerk reactions found in US social and educational institutions following public mass shooting incidents, and better yet, prevent shootings to begin with. Shooting incidents too often lead to pedagogical paralysis in US schools, universities, and governments cauterizing the potential for deep processing of challenging emotions and relations as they

pertain to complex social issues for fear of "saying the wrong thing" or "provoking another incident."[*]

While I largely reflect on the role of education[**] in the realm of PMGV, I do not do so without simultaneously acknowledging its relationship with other institutional conductors of societal norms. Like buoys on the water, the institution of education is connected to religious, state, military, political, economic, media, and familial institutions. In response, I integrate decolonial theory, critical theory, critical emotional praxis, and transnational feminist scholarship into this work, because whereas law enforcement only accounts for physical violence, said theories build on each other to name and address psychological, spiritual, epistemic, economic, emotional, gendered and systemic violences. Specifically, I turn to decolonial theory for its analysis of violence that begins with land divisions and seeps into human vs. "sub-human" categorizations that still prosper today (Santos, 2007, p. 433). Next, critical theory in this text builds on decolonial theory allowing us to critique and change society in part by acknowledging society's "asymmetries of power and privilege" (Curry-Stevens, 2004, p. 622). Critical emotion studies reveal the hierarchicalization of emotions wherein value is assigned to all that is male/masculine ("rational") and lesser/no value to that which is female/feminine ("irrational"). Critical emotion studies also reveal how emotions are co-opted so that the people reify state norms and thus participate in finite visions of patriotism. Lastly, transnational feminist theory builds on the aforementioned theories and illustrates how the violence of colonization is forced not just through land divisions, but imposed through bodily divisions that privilege "first" world ("White") over "third" world ("other") values as well as masculinity over femininity; both espousals are important to understanding the PMGV shooter. Engaging these theories collectively more thoroughly illuminates institutional complicities from multiple perspectives and deepens insight into the consequences of long-term, intergenerational, systematized, state-sponsored violence. These

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1 For example, University of Houston's Faculty Senate responded to PMGV by passing S.B. 11 with recommendations that could threaten academic freedom (Flaherty, 2016).
2 Though much of my emphasis is on higher education, I cannot segregate it from k-12 or non-traditional learning environments because the rivers of knowledge and bureaucracy flow between institutions.

theories also lend themselves to suggestions—offered at the end of the paper—for allaying violence beyond the currently limited debates around gun rights vs. gun control.

MAPPING A STORY OF DIVISIONS: CREATING THE "OTHER"

ENDURING DIVISIONS

I ground my trajectory of PMGV in Santos's (2007) theory of the "abyssal divide" in which he describes a fierce colonization effort designed to separate society's insiders from society's outsiders—one that did not end with the colonial period. He describes the abyssal divide as a construction of modern western thinking, whereby insiders are accepted as centered and normative, but simultaneously constructs outsiders—the Indigenous, the colonized—as "nonexistent" and thus a project for radical exclusion (p. 1). Santos (2007) describes binary thinking as a method for advancing the abyssal divide:

> [w]hat most fundamentally characterizes abyssal thinking is thus the impossibility of the co-presence of the two sides of the line. To the extent that it prevails, *this* side of the line only prevails by exhausting the field of relevant reality. Beyond it, there is only nonexistence, invisibility, non−dialectical absence. (p. 1, italics mine)

This erasure of nuanced thinking through a forced reliance on oppositional thought illustrates not only epistemological violence, but also violence against the "ethics of possibility" which allows for relationships to turn the unknown into the known (Antwi, 2016).

The abyssal divide renders a fierce distinction between two social realities. The first being the "western" reality which is accepted as centered but simultaneously produces the latter—the Indigenous, the colonized [the marginalized]—as "nonexistent" and thus a project for radical exclusion for the west's survival (Santos, 2007, p. 1). Such constructions intentionally render outsiders as impotent non-members of society. Some means for carrying out tactics of colonial division can be seen through the historic and contemporary progression of (White) patriarchal factors that ensure land occupation (of settlers

and the wealthy) through capitalism, imperialism, and neoliberalism, racism, militarism, ableism, heteronormativity and gender binaries that rank masculinity over femininity. Colonial divisions are also seen through historic and contemporary denials of Other ways of knowing which may otherwise blur the divisive thought used to create a system of insiders and outsiders. Such divisions have historically and contemporarily prioritized violence and hegemony to assert power and control so as to implement hierarchies that ensure the advancement of the center/insiders (and—to a lesser degree—those willing to assimilate to the center's values) and the elimination of "Others" (Donald, 2012).

Donald (2012) speaks of a similar phenomenon which extends from divisions. He describes "pedagogies of the fort" developed by settlers to assimilate or eliminate (Canada's) Indigenous population. Donald (2012) tracks the nation state as it systemically funnels fort pedagogies into schools (p. 99). He pronounces "[c]olonial frontier logics are those epistemological assumptions and presuppositions, derived from the colonial project of dividing the world according to racial and cultural categorizations, which serve to naturalize assumed divides and thus contribute to their social and institutional perpetuation**"** (Donald, 2012, p. 92). Fort pedagogies describe the historical, mythical, and symbolic significance of forts and fortresses constructed by settlers to "assert sovereignty over an area or people, to physically separate insiders from outsiders, and to provide surveillance over a border area" (p. 98). Fort pedagogy thus expands upon this logic of elimination as it aims to sort insiders and outsiders through an insistence that outsiders must either assimilate to be included "or [be] excluded in order for progress and development to take place in the necessary ways" (Donald, 2012, pp. 101, 104;).

COLONIZATION AND COLONIALITY'S CONTEMPORARY TRIBUTARIES: THE STORY OF BECOMING A GUNBOY OR A GUNMAN

No one becomes who they are in isolation. (Mehta, 2016)

Here I reveal my analysis of how the abyssal divide (Santos, 2007) and fort pedagogies (Donald, 2012) have expanded beyond Indigenous and racial distinctions to compose a broader composition of marginalization. I argue that many PMGV shooters are by-products of an expansion of abyssal divisions—or at least, they perceive themselves to be. To understand this, we must think about how the expansion of divisions are intended to fortify colonization, imperialism, capitalism and other power imbalances so that power and domination remain in the hands of a few. Such securitization can only be ensured through ever-evolving distinctions of what it means to be "inside" vs. "outside" the dominant group and relies on the evolution of systems of oppression. Thus, the expansion of divisions also includes all that is not masculine: odd, poor, uneducated, feminine, queer, differently-abled, and so forth. While random school shooters[*] in particular are mostly White and of some other privileges, they (and I would argue PMGV shooters generally) are frequently comprised of non-masculine identities (Kimmel & Mahler, 2003). Perhaps Santos (2007) would consider many of the aforementioned identities "non-abyssal exclusions" because some of them are produced within a realm of privilege (e.g. whiteness) (pp. 11). Conceivably the most imperative detail to addressing and preventing the phenomenon of PMGV is that while the White gun*man* is produced within a realm of privilege, he *perceives* himself to be disenfranchised and subsisting on the marginalized side of the line despite his belief that he is entitled to the privileges of the center. This is demonstrated when the shooter retaliates at workplaces and schools against the "targets that symbolize the source of [his] strain and failures" (Lankford, 2016, p. 180).

I am mindful not to appropriate or water down articulations of divisions used to describe violence against people who have been targeted for marginalization. Nor is my goal to further advance the White gun problem into the political spotlight at the expense of gun violence that takes place in communities of Color. Instead, I endeavor to connect the reality of a country predicated on stolen land and chattel slavery, with the reality that we are "collectively conditioned *not* to know that every comfort of our lives is acquired with the

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1 A particular subset of public mass shooters

blood of conquered, subjugated, enslaved, or exterminated people, an exploitation that continues today" (Anzaldúa, 2002, p. 555, italics mine). This "not … know[ing]" impedes our ability to think deeply about the roots of today's violent eruptions such as PMGV. "Not … know[ing]" also obstructs our ability to trace methods of delineation as they morph and get taken up by other endeavors aimed at securing the new center, the new dominant status quo. This is where the vulnerability of the White man/boy becomes relevant to PMGV.

Contributing to the construction of the gun*man*/gun*boy*'s identity is a fragility that illustrates the expansion of oppressions to reach White males. Here I illustrate the damaging potential of fragile identities by expanding upon DiAngelo's (2011) theory of "White fragility." White fragility describes the inability of Whites to cope with discomfort that arises in racial discourses, thus resorting to defensive behaviors. I assert that the notion of fragility extends beyond race because its insular nature "reduce[s] psychosocial stamina" and diminishes the practice of critical engagement with adversity in general (DiAngelo, 2011, p. 56). Thus, fragility—particularly the aspect of reduced psychosocial stamina—extends to masculinity and subjects of patriarchy* which I describe as *male fragility***. Male fragility is witnessed in rape culture which accommodates male perpetrators of sexual violence (e.g., when judges deliver lenient sentences deeming perpetrators to have "suffered enough"). Male fragility incubates toxic masculinity's homeostasis of violence and dominance rather than promoting the healthy social, spiritual, emotional development of boys and men that would foster productive emotional coping skills and respect for Others.

White fragility and male fragility are hardly two separate entities: they are iterations of each other in the mirror of patriarchy where one image perpetuates the other. The PMGV shooter is likely the product of two contrived forces that were created to benefit him

1 I do not engage the term "patriarchy" in this paper as a means to discount colonization, racism, classism, or others as central projects in the oppression of multiple marginalized groups. Quite the opposite. Instead, I engage the term to name the predominantly White male *body/psyche* in which colonial and other principles of oppression are honed. I further name the predominantly White female (often "feminist") willing counterpart. Both entities continue to enforce colonization, colonial values, and colonial divisions.
2 I engage the western gender construct of "male," via masculinity, not the male *sex*.

during early colonization on what was later named "United States" territory, but with the evolution of divisions, now excludes him. What happens next is not the same for all people, in fact, PMGV comprises a minute percentage of shootings. While many marginalized groups develop a sense of resilience, functional coping mechanisms and healthy resistance (e.g., the Movement for Black Lives; Standing Rock), in the case of the White gunboy/gunman relinquished to society's margins, his fragilities combined with life's aberrations are metabolized into violent revolt. Because the PMGV shooter is created in patriarchy's poor psychosocial stamina, because of his "expectation of belonging" (O'Donnell, 2015, p. 478), because he straddles the line of masculinity's outsider seeking to be on the inside, and because he is too fragile to exist anywhere outside the center, he engages the ultimate in masculinity, the oppressor's "model of 'manhood'"—guns and violence—to retaliate against his own social elimination from his perceived right to the social center (Freire, 2000, p. 28; Harriford & Thompson, 2008).

Bolstering this contention, Kimmel and Mahler (2003) make an astute connection between masculinity and gun violence in their analysis of secondary media reports pertaining to random school shootings that took place between 1982 and 2001. In their study, they found that the gunboys shared an overwhelming similarity in their treatment by others prior to their violence. Kimmel and Mahler (2003) write:

> Nearly all had stories of being constantly bullied, beat up, and, most significantly … "gay-baited." Nearly all had stories of being mercilessly and constantly teased, picked on, and threatened. And most strikingly, it was *not* because they were gay … but because they were *different* from the other boys—shy, bookish, honor students, artistic, musical, theatrical, nonathletic, "geekish," or weird. Theirs are stories of "cultural marginalization" based on criteria for adequate gender performance, specifically the enactment of codes of masculinity. (p. 1445, italics original)

Kimmel and Mahler's analysis illuminates how the path of expansion of social divisions and hierarchies, heretofore described, fosters a unique desire for societal inclusion by the newly oppressed. Still, I

proceed cautiously so as to avoid oversimplifications between being bullied and gun violence. As Kara@karawrite (2018) articulates, "[fat kids], LGBTQ kids, kids of color, disabled kids, poor kids, girl kids are bullied" yet they are not the ones shooting.

Harriford and Thompson (2008) expand on Kimmel and Mahler's (2003) contention via the Columbine gunboys' 1999 mass high school shooting. They address how the local Jefferson County military culture—including strict adhesions to gender binaries—seeped into the student ranking system. Gender performances simultaneously perpetuated social and spiritual exclusion through gay baiting and elimination of the "other" characterized as oddballs, or "sissies." Through the humiliation of the gunboys, we can trace how the expanse of the abyssal divide widens beyond race and Indigeneity to much of what is not deemed "masculine." We witness how the gunboys are not only a product of the social institutions they seek to avenge, we also witness their uptake of masculinity (guns) in order to assimilate into the hyper-masculine system that has socially annihilated them (Harriford and Thompson, 2008). In summation, we need to recognize that in a culture of masculinity and militarism that is perpetuated by colonization and coloniality, society constructs the oddball, the outsider, the weirdo in order to center the norm.

Addressing desires for inclusion, Adorno (2005 [1966]) in "Education After Auschwitz," speaks of the "pressure[s] of civilization" on individuals: in an effort to fit in, and reduce the risks of social annihilation—the fragile—co-weave their own web of limitation in a socialized world that leaves no room for difference (p. 2). Adorno (2005 [1966]) elaborates on the violence that results from the "claustrophobia of humanity" as a:

> feeling of being incarcerated in a thoroughly socialized, closely woven, netlike environment. The denser the weave, the more one wants to escape it, whereas it is precisely its close weave that prevents any escape. This intensifies the fury against civilization. The revolt against it is violent and irrational. (p. 2)

I call on Adorno because we both pivot from the belief that the state shares responsibility in producing (fragile) aggressors. In Adorno's

statement, we witness how societal disease is siphoned to the individual.

THE CAPITAL OF POSSESSION: CONNECTING THE PAST WITH THE PRESENT

Freire (2000) contends that, when first acknowledging struggle, the oppressed often become oppressors. In the case of PMGV, the shooter cycles from one side of a figure-eight (oppressed) to the other (oppressor). However, if we as a society were able to help him slow down and unlock where the two loops of the figure-eight bottle-neck at the center, we could alternatively see him not cycle from oppressed to oppressor, but instead "striv[e] for [healthy] liberation" and transcend society's pre-determined boundaries of the two sides of the figure-eight (Freire, p. 27). Yet to truly assist the gunboy/gunman in resisting society's patriarchal shaping, a shaping in which the "ideal is to be men; but for them, to be men is to be oppressors" (Freire, 2000, p. 26) we must untwist society's figure-eight. We must positively shift the toxic system of insiders and outsiders.

Linking coloniality's past with the present and helping to further illustrate the development of the PMGV shooter's liminal identity, Freire (2000) contends that when the dominant dehumanize Others through oppression, they existentially dehumanize the self. For the dominant, *to exist* is *to possess*. In their pursuit to transform Others and living beings into objects of control, the oppressors "suffocate [the self] and no longer *are*; they merely *have*" (Freire, p. 41). This dehumanization of the self remains unprocessed by the dominant because their "possessive consciousness" is normalized through an intergenerational transmission of *assumed* rights. Freire's notion of possession materializes in the PMGV shooter via the embodied longitudinal effects of the colonizer having imposed historic violence on others through possession. To fully comprehend this, we must consider western logics (epigenetics) and Other epistemologies (Indigenous, Mestiza) that teach about the impact of violence on intergenerational scales. Through time, the physical, emotional, psychological, cultural, epistemic, psychic, spiritual, and structural violence forced on Other bodies by the colonizer—the "victor"—bleed through "different worlds" (Anzaldúa, 2002, p, 541) becoming

re-embodied and integrated into the victor's self, subjectivity, and next of kin. I posit that this bleed-through takes place because the violence of the oppressor stays in him through trauma's cellular and psychic memory—perhaps even at an epigenetic level[*]. This is not to suggest biological essentialism, but to suggest that—like epigenetics—behaviors from one generation may have consequences on the next. Hundreds of years of injustices cannot leave the dominant untouched, unharmed, and unscathed from his own traumatizing indignities to the Other. Specifically, when relating this to PMGV, "if our bodies take in hatred, violence and greed then our bodies will reflect the symptoms of these destructive energies" (Duran, 2015).

With these considerations, we see how violence progresses beyond the intended colonial delineations to now include fragile White boys and men who are detached from self and community. This combined with the aforementioned shooter's white privilege, alongside his white, male fragility, combined with his connection to his predecessors, tricks him into believing he has unearned "rights" to the social riches of the center.

THINKING CRITICALLY ABOUT SCHOOLS AS SITES OF LEARNING

They put a hot wire to my head

'Cos of the things I did and said

And made these feelings go away

Model citizen in every way.

-John Lydon (Public Image Ltd.), Rise, 1986

Moving forward, I posit resisting seductive temptations to see the PMGV gunboy/gunman outside of ourselves and in isolation from the greater socio-political, cultural, institutional network of influence. Neither the PMGV shooter, nor schools can be delinked from their broader historic or contemporary contexts. Before considering education and schooling as necessary sites for the development of critical thinking, we must think critically about the violent role of

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1 Whether or not related, the ethos of whiteness is passed down to him.

schooling in the fortification of the state**.** Schools on US soil are often located on sites of conquest, colonization, and slavery. Bekerman (2008) establishes that schools represent sites where sovereign states have assimilated "different local groups inhabiting the areas they were successful in subordinating to their power, under one flag, one language and one narrative" (p. iv). Korczak (in Vucic, 2017) espouses that mass schooling represents "an institution thoroughly nationalist-capitalist, that [is] first and foremost [loyal to] … central bureaucrats and patriotic-chauvinists" (p. 174). Because the US was established on the attempted annihilation of Indigenous peoples for their land, and slavery for the economic gain of White settler men, analyses of US state motivations for the development of schooling (where a specific strand of patriotism is taught) must take patriarchy, capitalism, and colonization into consideration. Further, in particular cases, universities and other national symbols have been built and maintained by the free and forced labor of chattel slavery. These violent histories and practices that have contributed to the brick and mortar construction of schools have seeped into the walls of the academy, to brandish violent epistemologies that sought the exclusion of women, people of Color, individuals who practice faiths outside of the dominant culture, LGBTQ folks, differently-abled, those experiencing poverty, and their ways of knowing from the academy (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1997). We see how schools are sites for the practice of homogenization of thought and learned loyalty to the "powerful machinery" (Bekerman, 2008, p. x) of the state through numerous acts, such as pledging national allegiance and the domestication of emotions so as "not to question authority, and not resist those who have power" (Boler, 1999, p. 33). Further, the politics of dominant groups are peddled into classrooms as *true* and *complete* accounts of history despite their failure "to represent events within the contexts that actually produced them" (Stanley, 2006, p. 35). In these ways, schools serve as sites of homogenization, classification, regulation, and emotional control via their respective nation states (Bekerman & Zembylas, 2012; Boler, 1999; Zembylas, 2008). Boler (1999) creates a link between schools as conductors of "social order" for the nation state and concludes that "social control is … achieved not only through explicit force, violence, and coercion but by

engineering our 'consent' to this control" (xiv). Her statement speaks to the obvious and insidious ways that violence is enacted through social institutions.

SCHOOLS AS HOPEFUL SPACES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF "CRITICAL SELF-REFLECTION"

> If the nation state constructs the other as an object *of hate*, extermination or violence, education must be the dialogue with the other. (Visvanathan, 2000, p. 3604)

To counter the conditions that lead to social constrictions and subsequent atrocities, Adorno (2005 [1966]) calls for a pedagogy that emphasizes critical self-reflection. In his address, Adorno insists that education has the capacity to generate critical thinking so as to "come to know the mechanisms that render people capable of such deeds" and prevent brutalities (p. 2). Another reason we need to reimagine how education is conducted is that "the capacities needed to deal with catastrophes have to be nurtured" (Greene, 1995, p. 13). We cannot *combat* gun violence by building walls, delineating differences, or ignoring our own complicity in the development of violence. The following are some ways we can think about making realistic changes to our daily practices of teaching *and* learning from the perspectives of practitioners, a community educator, and a student. Healing, just as the origination of the problem, needs to be intergenerational. Importantly, each of these scenarios—which strive for critical self-reflection— requires an engagement with discomfort, rather than an avoidance of discomfort.

Before outlining possibilities for prevention, I am mindful of two contentions. The first is to reiterate that it is not the responsibility of educators to be the sole healers of gun violence. Teaching for critical self-reflection should be practiced in (in)formal spaces beyond the institution of education so as to reach politicians and others in positions of power, caregivers, parents/guardians, families, and communities at large. It is crucial that we problem-solve beyond the limited logics put forth by bureaucratic governments and agencies who essentially bottleneck possibilities for prevention and healing through the maintenance of binary arguments focused solely on gun

control vs. gun rights associated with the Second Amendment. In other words, we need to work collectively from multiple sectors of society, perspectives, and lived experiences to—as holistically as possible—address and allay the conditions that contribute to PMGV, which will likely have positive implications for assuaging other forms of violence as well. Simultaneously, *one* of many social institutions we can operate from is education, and because institutionalized education has historically been a part of the problem, it needs to be part of the solution.

Secondly, I am not arguing that the problems which culminate in PMGV originate in systems, but that prevention and healing is up to individuals. This would let violent and historic systems of capitalism, imperialism, neoliberalism, racism and militarism off the hook. It is true that when governments fail to provide safe and healthy societies for all citizens and residents the "responsibilities of the state for public services are transferred onto individuals" (Raddon & Harrison, 2015, p.139). We most frequently see this neo-liberal transference from state to individual when the state calls for citizens to arm themselves rather than alleviate the causes of violence. Instead, my proposal suggests a shift in responsibility *not* to the individual person, but invites collectives and institutions to commit to working around the bureaucratic bottlenecking previously described. Some ways to initiate this are through curriculum changes and teacher training programs. Moreover, instead of letting aggressive systems off the hook, I posit that my suggestions hold these systems accountable when the people demand more sane, engaged, and caring institutional representation at all levels. Because it is a literal matter of life and death, if the state will not provide safety for the people, *we the people* will need to advance our own gun violence prevention and healing through collectives. Examples of collectives' successes (that influenced laws) can be found in various civil rights movements in the United States and elsewhere. The following suggestions carry the potential for intergenerational sustainability if we develop more civic-minded, critical, long-term thinkers who insist upon voting in and becoming the next generation of healthy leadership both within state systems and beyond.

Boler (1999) reflects on the responsibility of educators as "part of an apparatus that produces the next wave of workers and thinkers" (p. 140; Apple, 1982). She espouses that education institutions should commit to community by developing emotional epistemologies in students but acknowledges that such institutions are deeply committed to developing the "necessary behavioral requirements that enables bureaucracy" (1999, p. 140). Boler also posits that:

> as long as we continue to embody with docility the norms that appear so innocent and "apolitical," we offer students no better vision of how to transform either their own pain and rage or how to enact upon the world the alternative visions each carries. (1999, pp. 149-150)

Boler (1999) maintains an ardent commitment to the "primary goals of education" being the development of "emotional literacy and … challenging powerlessness" (p. 149). I contend that helping students cultivate healthy emotional literacy also fosters their ability to cope with adversity without seeking deadly retaliation such as in cases of PMGV. Congruently, Adorno (2005 [1966]) addresses the necessity of having emotions rather than obstructing them in educational environments: "When anxiety is not repressed, when one permits oneself to have … all the anxiety that this reality warrants, then precisely by doing that, much of the destructive effect of unconscious and displaced anxiety will probably disappear" (p. 6). In this light, emotional literacy—acknowledging and working with emotions in healthy ways—first normalizes the having of shady, ugly emotions rather than shaming them, and thus allays the potential that such emotions become stuffed until they are expressed in disastrous ways, as in PMGV.

Similarly—though warning against "overoptimism"—O'Donnell (2015) encourages discourses of *vulnerability* in educative spaces (including beyond the academy) to "affect and transform common responses to vulnerability and affliction" (p. 482). O'Donnell's position requires a commitment to the constant deepening and development of self in order to teach others well. In academia this could shift the competitive nature of teaching and research in higher education from an artificial fostering of "publish or perish" to a deep

philosophical engagement with the world that would expectantly enhance one's teaching and research, and therefore, students' learning. This deep philosophical engagement would extend beyond the walls of academe enhancing society in ways allowing us to see violence and systemic disorder and mitigate it rather than allowing it to fester into interpersonal violence.

Giroux (2015) puts forth a "pedagogy of disruption" which is "a cosmopolitan, imaginative, public affirming pedagogy that demands a critical and engaged interaction with the world [along with a] responsibility for challenging structures of domination and for alleviating human suffering." A pedagogy of disruption engages teaching as a political commitment to the social world. It acknowledges multiple histories and (in)justices, creating a connection between the personal/private and public/political. This pedagogy supports O'Donnell's (2015) approach as it necessarily recognizes pain and "human injury inside and outside of the academy" (Giroux, 2015). As Giroux (2015) contends, "this is a view of education that should disturb, inspire and energize." Though Giroux asserts that academics should be "unafraid" of pushing controversy, I posit that those of us who speak out, *are* likely to experience fear or other emotions. Having emotional responses is an acceptable, healthy, organic consequence of being in community with each other. Emotions offer an opportunity to learn physiologically through our bodies. We can observe how emotions might shift through in/action and learn to interpret their signals as they morph into new ways of knowing. Stepping into our discomfort can help us better guide our students in their own deep processing of emotions and relations. By doing so, we normalize the having of unpleasant emotions. We further develop the capacity to convey the necessity of staying with difficult feelings, rather than seeking to exterminate uncomfortable feelings through the annihilation of others.

While addressing the natural discomforts that arise from being in community with each other, we should ponder Chinnery's (2006) cautionary reflection that schools often foster a romanticized notion of "community" which promotes the finding of *similarities* between dominant and non-dominant groups. This effort camouflages the

dominants' expectation that the outsider/marginalized should assimilate (Chinnery, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 2009). Topical notions of community also alleviate the dominant class from experiencing the discomforts of ambiguity when the Other does not assimilate (Chinnery, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 2009.). Too much comfort can deny the dominants' responsibility to grow and risks re-centering Freire's notion of *possession* via domination of the other as a core existential purpose. Chinnery's (2006) proposal for living with discomfort is meaningful in a society that often seeks to outpace discomfort. She explains that as educators:

> we need to suffer with [the students] in the tension of not knowing who they/we are, and with the impossibility of ever truly knowing the other. For it is precisely the capacity to receive the other *as other*, to resist the impulse to reduce the other to the same ... that allows for the possibility of community without identity. (p. 336)

Chinnery's suggestion requires being mindful enough to confront desires to pigeonhole students' identities and instead develop skills of introspection so that we can acknowledge discomfort as a natural element of being equipped with emotions and being in community with each other. Acknowledging discomfort as a messenger that bears information instead of an experience to be avoided, serves to develop our capacities for deep processing of embodied emotions and relations. Like the aforementioned strategies, deep processing of emotions can foster an understanding of the full potential of our emotions and our abilities to assist others to be with their emotions in constructive ways.

The following reveals how one student transformed her college into a site for critical self-reflection and deep learning through silent performance art. Mohanty (2003) describes the performance of Yance Ford, a female, student of Color, and feminist activist. In *This Invisible World,* Ford built herself into a tight cage suspended 10 feet above the ground in a campus building to publicize her pursuit of liberation from "being colonized at the college" (p. 206). Unlike schooling that reinforces loyalty to the nation through cognitive homogenization and dilution of critical thinking, Ford's work emphasized that her "colonized" existence cannot be denied or diluted

to make the dominant class feel comfortable (Tuck & Yang, 2012). Work such as Ford's is multidimensional: it can offer the spectator an embodied learning experience, sending signals of validation to other marginalized students while simultaneously circulating feelings of grief, embarrassment, anger, resistance, humiliation, etc. in viewers from the dominant class. Again, if uncomfortable feelings experienced by the dominant class are well processed, it can normalize and build that class's capacities for discomfort. This has the potential to drain the fragility found in whiteness and toxic masculinity and instead fill those capacities with more productive energies.

Admittedly, my suggestions here are limited and should be considered in combination with more holistic forms of preventing and healing violence. Whereas the ideas in this paper intend to meaningfully grow our capacities for discomfort, I implore readers to also work beyond this concept and consider for example, the integrated teachings of M. Jacqui Alexander (2006) on pedagogies of crossing; Cynthia Dillard's (2006) work on endarkened feminist epistemologies, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson's (2014) reflections on land as pedagogy; and Michael Marker's (2018) writing on the layered physical and metaphysical wisdom located in place and place-ness. Though varied, collectively these works encompass transgenerational memory, sentience, ancestry, spirit, metaphysics, and land. Rather than operating on artificial and false divisions between self and Other, human and non-human, these works reveal the necessity of embracing the continuity that simultaneously exists *between* self and Other, human and non-human. The authors' reflections thrust us into engagements with ontologies, epistemologies, and cosmologies that stretch beyond western logics. Further, they humble western, Eurocentric justifications for various forms of violence and domination because they essentially reveal that such domination is akin to insisting that one use their own hands to harm and dismember their own legs— despite all being a part of the same body. Entering these insights and cosmologies can lead us to new possibilities, allow us to transform into more healing, holistic relationships with ourselves and the Other— whatever or whomever the "Other" may be.

CONCLUSION

I have argued that public mass gun violence is an intergenerational consequence of the violence of colonization, coloniality, and slavery in the United States. I proffer that the modern-day shooter's proclivity for violence is also shaped by his White fragility (DiAngelo, 2011) and male fragility which convinces him that he is entitled to the rights of the social center. Our participation in divisive systems such as capitalism implicates many of us—individuals and groups—in the co-creation of the conditions that generate PMGV gunboys and gunmen, because in order to exist in a system of capitalism, we perpetuate a system of insiders and outsiders. Simultaneously, our complicity suggests that we have the power to make effective and meaningful societal changes. A society and education system that engages practices of critical self-reflection has the potential to build capacities for discomfort and—in combination with other interventions mentioned in this paper—help allay violence before it begins. Simultaneously, the institution of education should not be charged with promoting critical self-reflection in isolation of other social and institutional realms.

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