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Toward A Loving Framework: An Expansion of Epistemologies

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Toward A Loving Framework: An Expansion of Epistemologies

by

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

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Abstract

For centuries, colonization has been told as a story of triumph, of success, of modernization. The telling of this particular story is predicated on the belief that only white colonizers were capable of possessing, and thus deserving of, humanity. Indigenous peoples, in turn, were classified as primitive, as savages. Contemporaneous to the aforementioned brutality were successive intellectual movements in which white thinkers across the European continent gave intellectual meaning to their dominance. The epistemological standard set by these movements, and inherited by psychology and psychotherapy, was wrapped in standards of morality and humanity that excluded the knowledges of nonwhite people. Utilizing a Black feminist lens, this dissertation sought to expand epistemology as it has been understood and recognized in academia. This dissertation examined the academic discourse of contemporary psychotherapy and investigated the relationship between language, love, and power.

This dissertation explores where the academic discourse of psychotherapeutic journals is complicit in white Western epistemological understanding and where it explodes and undermines it by being loving, as understood by a Black feminist ontoepistemology. Twenty-six texts were collected from a five-year period, spanning 2015 to 2020, a period which captures the end of Barack Obama's presidency, the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement, and the span of Donald Trump's presidency. A Black feminist ontoepistemology was utilized to interpret the data and answer the following research questions: How is the concept of love represented in Western psychotherapeutic journals? What does a critical discourse analysis of these texts reveal about sociohistorical and interpersonal level power dynamics, particularly in relation to white supremacy?

The following are among the findings of the analysis: The discourse encourages engagement with linguistic shortcuts, wherein concepts like oppression and bigotry are conduits to discuss intrapsychic experiences. The discourse frames whiteness as the center of experience and marginalizes Blackness, Indigenosity, and other nonwhite perspectives. The discourse is vague about what constitutes love and inconsistent about its appropriateness in the work. Ultimately, the discourse of the texts in this analysis suggests there is more work to do, more areas in the discipline to disrupt, and more love to give.

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Preface

In a couple of years, I will be recognized as a psychologist, tasked with thinking deeply about the wellbeing of others. A couple of centuries ago, I would have been considered a savage by some, deemed incapable of thinking at all. These facts are at the crux of this dissertation project. In the many years between the rise of colonization and the current social landscape, white Western epistemologies have ravaged the minds, souls, and bodies of Black and Indigenous peoples. While Black and Indigenous epistemologies have always existed, they have been purposefully imbued with means of preservation and protection in the time since colonization. They have celebrated and acknowledged the very humanity colonization sought to strip. They have been loving.

Old white men have created structures of knowledge - seeking to define the very parameters of knowledge in the process - that have influenced research, academia, and the field of psychology the world over (Fanon, 1952; Smith, 1999; Jones, 2015; Evans-Winters, 2019). In each of these contexts, the consequences of whiteness often go unquestioned, unexamined, and unchallenged. By engaging critically with one of the most influential Western tools - language - I seek to engage critically with the power structures it continually upholds. By utilizing a Black feminist ontoepistemology, I seek to expand epistemology as it has been understood and recognized in academia.

This dissertation examines the academic discourse of contemporary psychotherapy and investigates the relationship between language, love, and power.

This dissertation is non-traditional. The writing in this dissertation will include knowledge legitimized by white academia and knowledge legitimized by my experiences (Evans-Winters, 2019), through living and surviving in the complex ways I have. My own stories have been woven into the stories of colonization, research, and the other major themes of this work.

This dissertation is disruptive.

This dissertation is loving.

Introduction

My name is Faithlynn Morris. I am a fourth-year doctoral student in clinical psychology. I have two master's degrees, one of which I've earned on my way to this doctorate. That means I've been in a lot of

classrooms, read a lot of textbooks. It means I know the difference between CBT and psychodynamic orientations and enough about both to know I lean dynamically and still appreciate a good downward arrow. It means I regularly ask questions like, “What’s coming up for you right now?” and “Where do you feel that in your body?” It means I say things like “cautionary tale” and “parallel process” in everyday conversation. It means I am sharpening my therapist tongue. It means I know a few things about a few things. It means I have so much more to learn.

My name is Faithlynn Morris. I am a Black woman. I have 29 years of experience. That means I’ve been in a lot of spaces, read a lot of rooms. It means I know the difference between microaggressions and macroaggressions and enough about both to lean away from “well-meaning” and appreciate transparency when it comes. It means I regularly ask questions like, “What is coming up for me?” and “Where do I feel this in my soul?” It means I say things like “decolonization” and “shared humanity” in everyday conversation. It means I have been sharpened by my mothers’ tongues. It means I know a lot of things about a lot of things. It means I have so much to say about what I’ve learned.

I am writing a dissertation. You are reading this dissertation. And who you are has been a source of great turmoil for me. Because if you - reader, audience - are white psychology, white academe, then we already have beef. Because for almost three decades, you have instructed me, in lectures and in life, to doubt myself, to apologize for my presence, to dim my light when it shone too brightly for you. In fairness, you started it, white academe, and your offspring white psychology just compounded it all. White psychology, you taught me about categorization. You taught me that, to many, I will always be categorized as a “therapist of color” instead of a “training therapist.” You taught me that, based on this categorization, my professors and peers will anticipate I am speaking about race when I am not and recoil in protest when I am. You taught me that it is easier to make me one-dimensional and flat than it is to appreciate me for my robustness, my fullness. So I am not writing for you, white psychology and white academe. It is too stressful. You can read it, sure, but it’s not *for* you, you know? You are welcome to stay and grapple, if you so choose.

I am writing this dissertation for my sister, whose loving was cut short and who survives in spirit. I am writing this dissertation for my brother, who academia dismissed and the system displaced. They have always been proud.

I am writing this dissertation for me. For the mes who have come before and the mes who are to come after and the mes in the struggle right now. For this me. The me who thinks so often about taking up space. In class, in academia more broadly. I am already taking up space, all the time. Now I am here to *claim* space.

So, welcome. To my dissertation, my poem, my love letter.

Faithlynn Morris,

Nekeisha's sister, Maria's daughter, Victoria's granddaughter, Leanora's great-granddaughter

Black woman, training therapist

Colonization: An Intrusion

I continue to be surprised by just how discomfited I am by a white man's presence. It is an early Spring day. I am at the park, playing music in the parking lot. My driver-side door is open, my shoes are off. A white family parked directly in front of me is leaving. Mom and Dad pack their three curly-haired blonde children into the SUV, which is also white. Dad gets behind the wheel, but then exits, cigarette between his lips and lighter in hand. He walks forward, toward the hood of my car, instead of back, toward the open space behind his own. Immediately, I feel he is too close. Secondarily, I have the impulse to shrink. Should I turn my music down? Close my door? Put my shoes on? No. The confidence with which he has approached this space has misled us both into thinking it is his. Or that he has more claim to it than I do. Wrong on both counts. This confidence has wreaked havoc for centuries. It is as misplaced today as it has always been. I do not move. 2Pac's "California Love" continues to bump.

White supremacy can most succinctly be described as the proliferation of "histories, systems, and structures of power that are specific for white men and women" (Liu, 2017). These histories, systems, and structures of power have been forced upon cultures and communities the world over through means violent and vile. These means are known euphemistically as colonization. Colonization, often used interchangeably with the term colonialism, is defined by Merriam Webster as the process of "establish[ing] a colony," and "the control by one power over a dependent area" (Merriam Webster, n.d.). Even here, with a source as casual and easily accessible as an online dictionary, language is being utilized to both soften and favor colonization. The words in this definition do not quite capture the entirety of the process, likely intentionally so. In these definitions, *things* are the clearest focus; "colonies" and "areas" are *things* that obfuscate the presence of *people*. The *people* of England, France, Italy, Spain, and Portugal descended upon Indigenous *peoples* across

the world with weapons, disease, and malintent and proceeded to “disconnect them from their histories, their landscapes, their languages, their social relations and their own ways of thinking, feeling, and interacting with the world” (Smith, 1999, p. 28). It is estimated around 56 million people, or “90 percent of the indigeneous population,” were killed after colonizers began their domination in the 15th and 16th centuries (Pruitt, 2019). That factoid is pulled from a History.com article titled, “How Colonization’s Death Toll May Have Affected Earth’s Climate.” Somehow, even here, the significance of that “death toll” - that millions upon millions of people were brutalized and killed - is secondary to the effect there *may* have been on the climate. The numbers are a blip on the way to arguing a larger point, on the way to getting to *the* point. The numbers are just that - numbers. Instead of people, instead of stories, instead of histories, they are statistics that can be relegated to the first paragraph of an article tagged in the “Weather” section on a national news source.

This is what colonization does. I use the present tense here because the acts of centuries past are constantly reified when we - the collective we - participate in its falsehoods. Colonization is still alive when the lives of the Indigenous and melanated are a footnote in what is insisted upon as a larger, more important story. For centuries, colonization has been told as a story of triumph, of success, of modernization. Schoolchildren in the United States are still singing along to the Columbus Day ditty in which the titular colonizer had “his dream come true” and “his heart filled with joyful pride” upon arriving in the Americas (Scholastic.com, 2019). Every time those stories are told (or sung), even more stories and more lives are erased.

Colonization effectively erased and eradicated many human lives by contesting they were never human to begin with. Humanity, instead of being viewed as an inherent characteristic of all peoples, became a construct, one that could be ascribed to some and taken from others. Smith (1999) writes, “Ideas about what counted as human in association with the power to define people as human or not human were already encoded in imperial and colonial discourses...These classification systems came to shape relationships between imperial powers and indigenous societies” (p. 25). These relationships were predicated on the belief that only white colonizers were capable of possessing, and thus deserving of, humanity. Indigenous peoples, in turn, were classified as primitive, as savages. The circular logic of white colonizers begins and ends with, “I say so, therefore it is so.” A similar framing is underlined in the Cartesian proclamation, “I think, therefore I am.”

When I first learned about Rene Descartes, the French mathematician and philosopher, I learned about his contribution to psychology. Along with hundreds of other psychology undergraduate students, I learned he was responsible for introducing the mind-body problem, for asserting the mind did, in fact, have something to do with the functions of the body. I did not learn that this problem, this dualism, was grounded in thinking that did not have *me* in mind. I did not learn that the second part of his quote may well have been, “You do not think, therefore you are not.”

This, though, is precisely what colonization communicated. What distinguished human from savage was the very ability to think. Smith states a purported characteristic of the “savage” was “that we could not use our minds or intellect...By lacking such virtues we disqualified ourselves, not just from civilization but from humanity itself” (1999, p. 25). Pseudosciences were employed to concretize this belief and hail it as fact. In craniometry, “skulls were measured and weighed to prove that ‘primitive’ minds were smaller than the European mind” (Smith, 1999, p. 82). In phrenology, various bumps and indentations on skulls were correlated with psychological and characterological differences. It is no surprise that European skulls were associated with beauty and intelligence while Indigenous skulls were associated with depravity and ineducability (Kittowsky, 2017). In physiognomy, facial attributes were examined for insights into personality. In 1797, French physician Jean-Joseph Sue said of non-Europeans, “Bizarre customs only add to the natural ugliness of these different peoples, which in the moral as well as the physical seem to have no affinity with perfection” (Staum, 2003). An important theme presents itself here, in these pseudoscientific annals. At every turn, whiteness has sought to assert itself in efforts to better know itself.

The flimsy, insecure nature of whiteness has made an indelible mark on the very concept of civilization. Civilization, Smith writes, “entered Anglo-French usage in the second part of the eighteenth century, enabling the distinction to be drawn between those who saw themselves as civilized and those whom they then regarded as the ‘savages’ abroad and at home” (1999, p. 66). In the twentieth century, many of these distinctions were reified in the musings of Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis and decidedly one of the most widely known names in the fields of psychology and psychiatry. In his 1913 work *Totem and Taboo*, Freud refers to the purported practices of “Pacific, Australian, and African cultures” as uncivilized, “citing aspects of these cultures...as supporting evidence for his argument about such matters as defilement,

prohibitions against incest, and patterns of exogamy and endogamy” (Said, 2003, p. 15). He speaks to the development of civilization directly in another work, *Civilization and its Discontents*. Originally published in 1930, Freud explores the relationship between the individual and the state of their environment. He notes the “progress of voyages of discovery [which] led to contact with primitive peoples and races” and suggests that these primitive peoples did have a civilization, but one that was different from the “superior civilization” of European colonizers (Freud, 1930). He further describes the “development of civilization” as a “special process, comparable to the normal maturation of the individual” (Freud, 1930). In this framework, it is not just the territory, but man himself, that evolves from primitive to civilized to superior. A similar hierarchy had already been utilized for centuries prior, in which Indigenous peoples were classified as “human, almost human, or sub-human,” their status being dependent upon whether a “soul” was present and the peoples in question “could therefore be ‘offered’ salvation and whether or not they were educable and could be offered schooling” (Smith, 1999, p. 60). The sub-human, or “primal man,” as he is also referred to by Freud, is overcome with aggressive, violent, and sexual urges, which stand in contrast to the ideal qualities of a stable civilization. Freud writes, “[Aggressiveness] reigned almost without limit in primitive times” and says of the primitive man, there are “no restrictions of instinct” (Freud, 1930). Freud’s conceptualization of the psyche fits neatly here. As he had earlier expounded upon in his 1923 paper *The Ego and the Id*, the mind can be understood in three parts: the id, the ego, and the superego (Freud, 1923). The id, Freud suggested, is the seat of the mind’s most base, instinctual urges. The parental superego, on the opposite end of the spectrum, aims to reign in the urges of the id, while the reasonable ego manages the two, modifying appropriately for the social context. The id then, which is explicitly referred to as “primitive” in some contexts, is most closely aligned with the primal man and his unchecked aggression.

Perhaps the greatest irony, of course, is that it was the unchecked aggression and violence of colonizers that led to “civilization.” But what whiteness lacks in self-awareness, it makes up for in self-imposition. In the process of appointing themselves civilized, colonizers also assigned themselves the duty of

controlling for - and just outright controlling - the “primitive.”¹ The “civilized” tasked themselves with reordering what Indigenous peoples had already known as their own truths and rebranding them as knowledge.

The Lions and the Hunters: A Contention

In the Winter 1994 issue of *The Paris Review*, the prolific Nigerian novelist and poet Chinua Achebe shares the following about the origins of his craft:

“[I] grew older and began to read about adventures in which I didn’t know that I was supposed to be on the side of those savages who were encountered by the good white man. I instinctively took sides with the white people. They were fine! They were excellent. They were intelligent. The others were not . . . they were stupid and ugly. That was the way I was introduced to the danger of not having your own stories. There is that great proverb—that until the lions have their own historians, the history of the hunt will always glorify the hunter. That did not come to me until much later. Once I realized that, I had to be a writer. I had to be that historian. It’s not one man’s job. It’s not one person’s job. But it is something we have to do, so that the story of the hunt will also reflect the agony, the travail—the bravery, even, of the lions” (Achebe, 1994).

History, as the word itself and Achebe’s recollection suggest, is about stories. History is the culmination of stories told at any given time about any given people, event, or experience. Knowledge, the offspring of history, is what we accept as truth from those stories. As Achebe underlines, the history that colonization tells is one of good white men facing off against savages. There was a hunt, says history. White men were triumphant because of their fineness, their excellence, their intelligence, says knowledge. It is worth noting this history speaks not of the hunt of humans, but that of animals, of lions. Achebe’s efforts to imbue the story of the lion with emotion and complexity seek to restore humanity where it had been stripped long ago.

This stripping of humanity is part and parcel with colonialist histories. Of history, Smith writes, “It is a story of the powerful and how they became powerful, and then how they use their power to keep them in positions in which they can continue to dominate others. It is because of this relationship with power that we have been excluded, marginalized and Othered” (1999, p. 34). Implicit in this understanding of history is the assumption that white men are the rightful arbiters of history, that power and dominance are birthrights instead of consequences of brutality. Contemporaneous to the aforementioned brutality were successive intellectual movements in which white men across the European continent gave intellectual meaning to their dominance. One of the earliest was renaissance humanism, a movement that began in Italy in the 14th century and spread

¹ You might think of them as a governing superego, perhaps.

through the rest of Europe over the next three hundred years. Renaissance humanism, grounded in the study of Greek and Roman civilization, centered “grammar, rhetoric, poetry, history, [and] moral philosophy” as its major tenets (Rabil, 2010). An especial emphasis was placed on text, particularly the reproduction of Grecian manuscripts and the writing of “elegant letters which were copied all over Europe” (Rabil, 2010). From this period we get the human-centered language we still use today: *humanism*, *humanities*. In its conception, the intellectual pursuit of the humanities was intended to “[testify] to the eminence of man over the rest of creation” (Summit, 2012). What is omitted, of course, is that “man” refers solely to “white man” and “the rest of creation” includes millions of people who had not yet risen to the status of human in the eyes of those white men.

Renaissance humanism was followed by what is now referred to as the Age of Enlightenment, a period spanning the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries that “[stressed] the importance of reason and science” (Squicciarini & Voigtlander, 2014, p. 6). Philosopher Immanuel Kant described the Age of Enlightenment, also referred to as the Age of Reason, as “man’s emergence” from immaturity (Le Mouël, 2018, p. 287). This “emergence” of (white) man into the proverbial and symbolic “light” further reified its humanist roots. To be mature, to be human, was to possess the ability to reason. Kant expounded on this further, arguing that reason was the driving principle of morality (Johnston & Cureton, 2019). Reasoning, to be clear, was grounded in specific practices, namely empiricism, an Enlightenment foothold that posits knowledge can be obtained only through tangible sensory experiences (Peter, 2017). The other practices that took hold during this period were rationalism, which argues that “rational intuitions” are the center of knowledge, and positivism, which asserts that all knowledge can and should be understood as scientific observations (Hjørland, 2008, p. 130).

Though the Age of Enlightenment is often noted for its shift away from religious modes of engaging with the world (Bristow, 2017), its shift toward scientific modes of engagement is just as, if not more, compelling. The epistemological standard set by The Enlightenment was wrapped in standards of morality and humanity that assumed “European society represented a paragon of intellectual and social progress that other peoples would do well to emulate” (Douthwaite, 2002, p. 1). For Indigenous peoples, emulating this “progress” was not a choice. In the process of colonizing lands, white men also colonized knowledge, “constantly reaffirm[ing] the West’s views of itself as the centre of legitimate knowledge, the arbiter of what

counts as knowledge and the source of ‘civilized’ knowledge” (Smith, 1999, p. 63). This is a standard that continues to dominate myriad, if not all, academic disciplines as we know them today. In enforcing one epistemological standard, “the effect...was to silence (for ever in some cases) or to suppress the ways of knowing, of many different indigenous peoples” (Smith, 1999, p. 69).

Research, then, is its own story of lion and hunter. As Smith states, the origins of Western research “[assume] that Western ideas about the most fundamental things are the only ideas possible to hold, certainly the only rational ideas, and the only ideas which can make sense of the world, of reality, of social life and of human beings” (1999, p. 56). Rationality, already established as a tenet of Western intellectualism, is assumed to be in the hands (and minds) of the researcher and researcher alone. It is an approach, Smith continues, “which still conveys a sense of innate superiority and an overabundance of desire to bring progress into the lives of indigenous peoples - spiritually, intellectually, socially and economically” (1999, p. 56). It would seem that, for centuries, white researchers have convinced themselves that if their subjects were capable of *doing* research, they would not be fit to *be* researched. The historical role of the researcher then was not just to observe culture, but to do so because its subjects were deemed incapable. Villenas (1996) describes “the Lone Ethnographer” who “returned home to write a ‘true’ account of the culture,” adding that such researchers “have rarely asked what the researched think about how their lives are being interpreted and described in text” (p. 713).

It is difficult to determine to what extent these researchers actually believed they were well-intentioned and to what extent they did not bother with such pretense. If the White men who believed themselves to be the arbiters of civilization felt they were performing a service, the service was always the same - maintaining whiteness as the center of power and keeping “lesser” populations in their appropriate place. Much like civilization, Smith describes research as “a powerful invention,” one that “traditionally benefited the researcher, and the knowledge base of the dominant group in society.” From this powerful position, she continues, researchers have “the power to distort, to make invisible, to overlook, to exaggerate and to draw conclusions, based not on factual data, but on assumptions, hidden value judgements, and often downright misunderstandings. They have the potential to extend knowledge or to perpetuate ignorance” (1999,

p. 176). As explored earlier, this knowledge is specific to, and in service of, white modes of knowing and thus directly at odds with other, non-white modes of knowing.

Smith highlights distance as a significant concept in Western research, its roots planted firmly in colonial rule. She states, “Distance...separated the individuals and power from the subjects they governed. It was also impersonal, rational and extremely effective. In research the concept of distance is most important as it applies the neutrality and objectivity on behalf of the researcher” (1999, p. 56). Morgan (1997) highlights a similar stance in the 16th and 17th century observations of European colonizers, who prided themselves on their “cultural” (and surely their moral) distance from natives (p. 173). Colombian philosopher Santiago Castro-Gomez characterizes this as the “hubris of the zero point,” the place from which European researchers constructed knowledge about native peoples, thinking themselves innocent in the process (Mignolo, 2009, p. 2). The more distance from the “subject,” the more legitimate the research is presumed to be².

Research - as conducted and written by white men and informed by Western epistemologies - did not function to bridge the gap between different populations, but rather to keep the gap as wide as possible. Smith states, “Research is not an innocent or distant academic exercise but an activity that has something at stake that occurs in a set of political and social conditions” (1999, p. 5). Research is not just a collection of statistics and data; it is often a call and a justification to act, to fix, to enforce. I would like to implicate psychology here. Four centuries ago, measurements gathered about the sizes of Black skulls were used as a justification for brutality. Five decades ago, numbers assembled about Black households and inferences made about urban Black psychology were used as a justification for increased government interference in communities of color (Moynihan, 1965). And just 27 years ago, in my own lifetime, psychologist Richard J. Herrnstein co-authored *The Bell Curve*, in which he and political scientist Charles Murray argued that Black kids were less intelligent than their white peers because of genetic predispositions (1994). It is worth stating again - research is not innocent. Psychiatrist and philosopher Frantz Fanon asserts, “What matters...is not to collect facts and behavior, but to find their meaning” (1952, p. 129). In the Western pursuit of finding and ascribing meaning, the outcome has largely been the same - the construction and maintenance of the Other.

² Similar stances in therapeutic work will be explored later in this project.

Other(s): A Linguistic Separation

A syllabus is posted. The course is titled “Diversity.” The following modules will be covered: *The Development of Mexican Identity, The Minority Experience, Race and Racism, Indian Culture and Psychoanalysis, East Asian Identities, Black in America*. My head aches.

As a student of white Western psychology, I have been taught that the processes of individuation, of separation, of becoming a unique entity, are normative. I have been taught that much of how the self is constructed is by negotiating who and what it is not - parents, siblings, schoolmates, etc. I have been taught this process is messy, significant, and universal. I was not taught this process is itself a vestige of Western ways of engaging.

Hall writes, “The West's sense of itself - its identity - was formed not by the internal processes that gradually molded Western European countries into a distinct type of society, but also through Europe's sense of difference from other worlds - how it came to represent itself in relation to these ‘others’” (1992, p. 188). The way Europe came to represent itself was singular - as a dominating authority. In describing the relationship between “the Orient” (Asia, North Africa, and the Middle East) and “the Occident” (the West), Said identifies the domains of political, cultural, and moral power as sources of European strength and identity (pg. 20). It was across these domains that colonizing Europeans codified their difference from, and built their identity in relation to, the inferior Other. Villenas (1996) asserts that the Other and the “Western White self” are “simultaneously co-constructed, the first being judged against the latter” (p. 715). This configuration highlights the many ways in which whiteness continues to be incapable of knowing itself, of grounding itself, without its relationship to the Other. Whiteness knows not of its own intelligence without the presence of the Other’s brainlessness. Whiteness knows not of its beauty without the presence of the Other’s ugliness. Whiteness knows not of its own civilized nature without the Other’s primitiveness. Whiteness knows not of its own humanity without the deprivation of the Other’s humanity (see also: Fanon, 1952; Hall, 1992; Morrison, 1992; Smith, 1999; hooks, 2000).

Fanon argues the Other is a container for what is too threatening to reconcile within oneself, a concept known in Jungian thought as “the Shadow” (Conger, 2005). Fanon writes, “In the remotest depth of the European unconscious an inordinately black hollow has been made in which the most immoral impulses, the most shameful desires lie dormant. Jung consistently identifies the foreign with the obscure, with the tendency

to evil...In the degree to which I find in myself something unheard-of, something reprehensible, only one solution remains for me: to get rid of it, to ascribe its origin to someone else” (1952, p. 147). Leary (2012) says further of this solution, “[D]isavowed wishes are projected onto an Other who must then be contained or controlled in order to maintain a sense of safety and superiority” (p. 283). In this process, the Other is further deprived of humanity and agency. The Other “is always made object, appropriated, interpreted, taken over by those in power, by those who dominate” (Villenas, 1996, p. 717). The Other is flat and voiceless, imbued only with characteristics designated by the dominant. Hall (1992) highlights the liberties of such designations: “It was as if everything which Europeans represented as attractive and enticing about the natives could also be used to represent the exact opposite: their barbarous and depraved character” (p. 213). The Other is at the whim of its purported superior, who himself is impulsive and hasty, a far cry from the rationality he holds dear.

The relationship to the Other is predicated on the notion of distance, specifically distance from the humanity, sanctity, and morality of the White Western Self. In colonization, this distance facilitated brutality against those considered soulless. In research, the same distance facilitates objectifying under the guise of objectivity, under the purported stance of neutrality. In therapy, the distance is aptly referred to as therapeutic neutrality. This concept can be defined as “the idea that the therapist is an authority who studies the patient’s mind from outside the relationship, comes up with objective findings about it, and then reveals these facts to the patient—all from a neutral position” (Katz, 2010, p. 306). Though some assert this position “communicates deep respect for the patient” (Katz, 2010, p. 308), others have described this role as “Distant Expert” (Greenspan, 1986, p. 6). In this role, the ideal therapist “is disciplined, distant, unemotional, immaculately in control...He possesses a body of wisdom...He sits outside this door, unruffled and cool. He is Father Knows Best” (Greenspan, 1986, p. 6). A clinical manual published in 2010 urges therapists to find a balance between “emotional coldness” and “technically neutral” (Cabaniss, Cherry, Douglas & Schwartz, p. 95). It is not accidental that the distant, all-knowing expert in this therapeutic framework is both male and preoccupied with notions of discipline, wisdom, and control. Like his “expert” predecessors, he is also white. Annie Lee Jones, a Black female analyst, writes of the importance of forgoing the “traditional restraints” associated with therapeutic distance in order to “use herself and her relationship to the outside world in her clinical practice”

(2020, p. 77) She goes on to describe her attempts to “suspend the experience of [her]self in order to occupy the space of analyst” (Jones, 2020, p. 78). In my own therapeutic training, I have felt a pull to do the same.

In the vast majority of the literature I have encountered in my clinical learning, the therapist is positioned and centered as white. The texts that are written expressly for the purpose of “cultural competency” tell the reader, assumed to be white, how to interact with Black clients, Latinx clients, Asian clients. Instructions abound on navigating distrust of authority and other “cultural” attitudes that may impede the therapeutic relationship. It is a remnant of historical Othering that such disruptive impediments are most overtly associated with non-white clients. These texts are neither talking to nor written for me. They are written from the position of whiteness, the position of engaging with the Other, of having accumulated knowledge on how the Other operates before regurgitating and reifying it for therapists training and trained alike. I have not been assigned readings that explore how therapists of color should engage with white clients or how therapists who themselves would be considered Other should navigate power dynamics in the therapeutic space. While white therapists are encouraged to explore their comfort assuming a(nother) position of power, therapists of color are trained to act as if we can assume the same and then left alone to navigate the realities of having that position undermined. That power is so focal in training is itself a consequence of white supremacy. Texts written under the guise of “competency” do not encourage therapists to learn more about other cultures. They are instead protocols in preparedness, efforts to avoid being displaced by other cultures. They are manuals in maintaining distance.

Location, Location, Location

My third-year clinical externship was at Rosie’s, the affectionately named women’s jail on Rikers Island. Midway through my training there, I was assigned a patient who had been placed on suicide watch and it was my job to assess if the designation was to be lifted. I was told in advance she was “difficult.” This was not my experience of her. I was struck first by how small she was. It was hard for me to imagine she was in her early twenties and harder still to imagine she was a mother of two. The longer I sat with her, the more moved I was by the details of her story. That she had been in and out of foster care since she was 9 years old. That she didn’t think she was mentally ill, but knew there was something called “oppositional defiant disorder” on her records. That she had written “lawyers 4 rape” on the piece of paper she carried with her, myriad phone numbers surrounding the words. I did not think she was difficult, but I was certain her life had been. I shared as much with a white colleague after meeting with this patient. “Oh, she got you,” the colleague said as she shook her head in disappointment. She proceeded to explain to me how “manipulative” *they* can be, how I should be cognizant of this trait in future. In this conversation, it was presumed that I was more like her in her

distant whiteness than I was like this patient in her incarcerated Blackness. It was presumed that to be moved by this patient's humanity was to be "got." It was presumed she and I shared the same (di)stance. We did not.

The distance I have elucidated up until this point has been distance not *for* me, but *from* me. In the eyes of the white Western self - the academic self, the researching self, the therapeutic self - I am the Other, the primitive, the savage, the "cultural." In order for me to do this work with integrity, I must first acknowledge my inability to be distant and my disinterest in attempting. We are all implicated in the work we do, particularly the academic work we do, regardless of our positionality. Said writes, "No one has ever devised a method for detaching the scholar from the circumstances of life, from the fact of his involvement...with a class, a set of beliefs, a social position, or from the mere activity of being a member of a society" (1978, p. 19). My particular positionality is one in which I am constantly negotiating my insider and outsider statuses, one in which I am constantly reminded of these statuses. Villenas (1996) states, "While qualitative researchers...theorize about their own privilege in relation to their research participants, the 'native' ethnographer must deal with her own marginalizing experiences and identities in relation to dominant society. This 'native' ethnographer is potentially both the colonizer, in her university cloak, and the colonized, as a member of the very community that is made 'other' in her research" (p. 712). To think of myself as the colonizer, even potentially, is distressing. But white supremacy has stamped itself on every stage of my academic career. In the time since I have become aware of this, I have thought of myself as actively confronting it, purposefully resisting it. And still, there are moments - along with the many that preceded my awareness - where I have spoken words and perpetuated beliefs of the colonizer.

"The therapist sits in the most comfortable chair," training clinicians in my program are told. I've repeated this adage many times, reminded my classmates of it on occasions where they doubted their abilities, and whispered it to myself as something of a mantra. And each time I said it, I believed it. That *we*, as therapists, have a right to the most comfortable chair, that this authority can ground us in moments where we feel shaken or rattled. I have had enough clinical experience now that I see this saying a bit differently. My chair doesn't feel quite so comfortable in moments where I am stumped or thrown by a client's disclosure. But, as an insider, I can pull from technique and theory I have learned over the years. I can readjust my chair. Other times, my chair feels like it is being yanked out from under me, like when I am berated by older white women

or called slurs by younger white women. As an outsider, the chair is a performative prop, its legs dissolving in the righteous white venom spewed at me. As an outsider, I am left to my own devices to negotiate the line between therapeutic and violent.

I have seen firsthand just how differently my peers have navigated cross-cultural therapeutic exchanges. I can recall a conversation in which a white male classmate, frustrated with what he perceived as a lack of progress in his work with a Latina client, said it wasn't "natural" for his client to develop a transference toward him. It was her deficit, he concluded, a consequence of her difference. As an insider, I was able to speak the language of psychodynamic therapy and insist a transference was there, that maybe he just had to give it more time to reveal itself. As an outsider, I was able to hear what he had just revealed to me about what relationships, and with whom, he perceived as "natural." As an outsider, I wondered if he thought I deserved a chair next to his.

In each moment of my professional career, I am insider and outsider. A self in my own eyes and Other to some lookers-on. I am researcher and researched, existing fully in the experience of both/and. It is with these identities, at these locations, that I embark on this work. "Our place in the world shapes how we consume and produce knowledge as well as how we choose to disseminate knowledge," writes Evans-Winters (2019). It also shapes what we consider knowledge.

Surviving: An Ontoepistemology

It does not matter what day it is. Another innocent Black person has been killed by the police. The video of his her their our death is being spread across social media platforms and reputable news stations alike. There are no trigger warnings. Only the swiftest of fingers and the most intentional of eyes will be able to escape the immediacy of the brutality. But on the tips of those fingers and behind the darkness of those eyes is the reality that there is no escape. That to be Black is to see the slump of life leaving a body and to hear the groans of a last breath without ever pressing play. To be Black is to be filled with as much fear as rage, as much defeat as fight. To be a Black student on this day, whatever day it is, is to sit in a classroom shouldering centuries' worth of pain while white counterparts check in with one another about the weather. Or maybe it's a TV show. Or maybe it's plans for the weekend? I cannot hear over the sound of my foreparents' tears.

In her work *Black Feminism in Qualitative Inquiry: A Mosaic for Writing Our Daughter's Body*, Dr. Venus Evans-Winters writes, "One of the biggest myths feeding the psyches of educators is that young Black people enter classrooms and the learning process as blank slates" (2019). Like all things created by white

supremacy, this myth is no accident. As has been stated previously, white colonizers sought to, and did, silence and suppress ways of knowing that were not their own (Smith, 1999, p. 69). As a result, stories of white domination became history and the tools of that domination became knowledge. Historically, the notion of a blank slate, or “*tabula rasa*,” most often associated with the English philosopher John Locke, posits that humans are born without the capacity to appropriately navigate the social world. In his work, Locke spoke of the necessity to develop “the moral values” of a child, to have them “do good and avoid evil” (Androne, 2014, p. 75).

A blank slate suggests not just that something *can* be added, but that it *must* be. As John Locke was a prominent voice during the Enlightenment, it follows that morality and education were so closely linked in his musings. It follows further that amorality and ineducability continue to be linked in the experiences of people once considered savages. Evans-Winters writes, “[E]ducation policymakers and teacher education programs set out to bring structure and discipline, a work ethic, and moral character to countless Black children in *urban ghettos*. By the 1970s and 1980s, teachers became determined (or maybe mandated) to deliver students...from destitution and into salvation” (2019, p. 48). This delivery into salvation is predicated on the centering, and celebration, of whiteness. The first line of the previously cited article on *tabula rasa* states quite definitively, “John Locke is one of the most important thinkers of the world” (Androne, 2014, p. 75). If I were actually a blank slate, I would be inclined to accept this assertion as fact. I would have nothing to challenge it, no other sources of knowledge from which to pull. As a young Black student, I learned that Columbus was a pioneer, that the Founding Fathers were the paragons of righteousness, and that white abolitionists were the heroes in tales of slavery. The classes where I learned these *opinions* were often called “U.S. History,” some of them with the extra status of being Advanced Placement, and it was my duty to learn them as such, internalize them as history. In those histories, people who looked like me were usually being discovered, enslaved, or freed. Always passive, always voiceless.

I was learning a different history at home. At home, my mother spoke of Queen Nanny of the Maroons, Marcus Garvey, Norman Manley. In this history, people who looked like me were leaders, revolutionaries, and intellectuals. In this history, people who looked like me were only ever active and only ever empowered with voice. Evans-Winters writes, “...younger Black people enter formal education

environments with acquired tastes, beliefs, habits of mind, and understandings of the social world, all of which are informed by our upbringing within our families and communities. We do not enter the classroom as culturally deficient or as empty vessels” (2019, p. 48). I have never entered a classroom as a blank slate. It is whiteness that has sought to render me blank.

It is worth noting that, for Black students, dehumanizing messages are often more direct and insidious than just the content of lesson plans. For example, the literal attacks on Black hair in the academic space have been well-documented. For far too long, Black students have been suspended, expelled, and had their hair forcibly cut by white educators for not adhering to purported standards of appropriateness (Alvarez, 2019). I will share my own experience. When I was in the second grade, my hair adorned in the colorful beads of many young Black girls’ childhoods, my white teacher told me I needed to “get [my] hair out of [my] face” as my Connecticut elementary school was “not Africa, where they don’t read.” Now, this comment was misguided for several reasons. The most glaring, of course, is that “they” *do* read in Africa, whichever African nation one should choose as an example. Further, I was an advanced reader for my age and grade and no hairstyle was going to change that. That she thought the hair in my face was more of an obstruction than the straight bangs of the Melissas and Maggies in the class is not lost on me.³ As a child, I knew what my teacher had said to me was wrong, but I didn’t know why. Even at that age, I had the beginnings of an emotional attunement many Black kids develop in response to racist interactions. As an adult, I can see another process at work. It would seem that my teacher was attempting to rescue me - by bringing me closer to the promised land of assimilation and white acceptance - and also that she was inviting me to see whiteness as the center of all experience.

This has been a recurring theme in my academic life, attempts at such indoctrination, interactions with white authority figures that assume common knowledge and shared understandings of engagement. A similar assumption is inherent in the concept of the collective unconscious, a widely regarded psychological contribution from Swiss analyst Carl Jung. Jung describes the collective unconscious as a “psychic system of a collective, universal, and impersonal nature which is identical in all individuals. The collective unconscious does not develop individually but is inherited” (Jung, 1936). Though he states there is a more individualized

³ Also, my beads were *fly*. Any suggestion from someone who could not see the plainness of that fact certainly did not hold any merit.

“immediate consciousness,” the collective unconscious governs “modes of behaviour that are more or less the same everywhere and in all individuals” (Jung, 1936). While Jung’s conceptualization has been challenged on philosophical grounds (Mills, 2018), I’ve yet to see it challenged on sociohistorical grounds. One might argue that Jung’s collective unconscious is not actual universality, but rather a white man’s view on universality, therefore rendering it insufficient, myopic, and merely an insight into the unconscious of whiteness, not humanness⁴. Alternately, Evans-Winters highlights the presence of a collective consciousness, more readily accessible than the unconscious, “passed down by the generations from the continent of Africa” and grounded in “one’s ability to mitigate and alleviate a shared burden” (2019, p. 37).

For centuries, this shared burden was the task of surviving, of living long enough to contribute to a next generation. “Survival,” says Audre Lorde (1984), “is not an academic skill.” I have learned as much in my lifetime. There was no textbook that could have told my seven-year-old self how to survive that interaction with my teacher, how to come to school the next day with my beads and pride intact. There was no textbook to explain how to survive interactions with white adults unnerved and threatened by my Black presence, my Black intelligence. There was no textbook to help me deconstruct the pang of unease I would feel as white people began to call me “articulate” with surprise and glee in their voice. There was no textbook to aid me in surviving white people who did not hear me speak, who would clutch their bags and suitcases and look behind them as they fidgeted next to me in the elevator or picked up the pace in front of me on the sidewalk. There was no textbook to show me what affluent neighborhoods I shouldn’t walk in or drive to or explore too late at night or at any time of the day, lest my bodily safety be on the line. There was no textbook to help me recite the words to say or not say or the ways to move or not move in the presence of a white authority figure, self-imposed or otherwise, who might see my survival as a threat to their own.

No, I learned this knowledge from my parents, biological and communal. Leary (2007) writes of the preparation Black girls receive “to develop the resiliency to deal with racism...to understand how racism works without internalizing negative perceptions of their own competence and desirability” (p. 546). I learned this knowledge from my peers, exchanging recollections of racial trauma over 25 cent juices and ring pops. I

⁴ One might argue.

learned this knowledge from my body, from the plunges to the depths of my stomach and the heat radiating off my body that cautioned me before I could even find words. My survival - in white spaces, in academic spaces, in therapeutic spaces - is predicated on *this* knowledge. The exchange of this knowledge is rooted in the awareness that my humanity exists - that I am a human, not a savage or some version of primitive man or an object to be studied. I am not approximating humanity; I am already there.

This is love.

Love is the recognition of humanity. Love is the restoration of humanity. Love is a means to survive, grounded in the history that insists my survival matters.

Ancestry

I am peeling potatoes

I look down

And see

My mother/s hands

- - - - -
What do I write of my mothers?

I write that I am sorry.

It is difficult to get a clear picture of African women before colonization. African historians refer to the 16th century as “an era of great ancestresses” for Akan communities, a term that refers to the peoples of current-day Ghana and the Ivory Coast (Akyeampong & Fofack, 2012, p. 5). Within these communities, female leaders, known as “queen mothers,” held “social and political authority” and were considered experts in agricultural production (Akyeampong & Fofack, 2012, p. 6). Across the continent, women “dominated the majority of the labor pool and were responsible for maintaining the family and a large part of the family’s financial well-being” (Flood, 2016). This information comes from only two sources that took me great effort to locate. The literature is already limited and what does exist is often obscured from public engagement behind academic paywalls - a white Western gatekeeping method to keep knowledge among the few and away from the many - and 404 error pages. Colonization continues to impede, to silence. I will insert my own knowledge here. Before colonization, African women lived and thrived. They were leaders and teachers, mothers and organizers. They were complex and full. They were human.

As stated, colonization was the force that sought to undermine and strip the humanity of Indigenous peoples. In an examination of the writings of white colonizers between 1500 and 1770, Jennifer L. Morgan states, “Writers who articulated religious and moral justifications for the slave trade simultaneously grappled with the character of the female African body - a body both desirable and repulsive, available and untouchable, productive and reproductive, beautiful and black” (1997, p. 170). These colonizers wrote of their conflicting desire and repulsion in extreme fashion. The physical attributes of Black women are described thusly: “breasts [that] dragged on the ground when she walked and could be thrown over her shoulder,” “shape and sexuality [that] evidenced her savagery,” and beauty that hid “her monstrosity” (Morgan, 1997, p. 170). One of the most famous cases of this white sexual Othering is that of Sara Baartmann, a young South African woman who was taken to Europe in the early nineteenth century and put on display as an exhibition for English and French audiences. Crowds gathered to gaze upon and fondle Sara, whose “primitive genitalia” and “enlarged buttocks” solidified the “missing link in evolutionary classificatory discourses” and “affirm[ed] black inferiority” (Ponzanesi, 2005, p. 171). The purported savagery of Black women “castigate[d] the incivility of both men and women: all Africans were savage...Black female sexuality alone might have been enough to implicate the entire continent” (Morgan, 1997, p. 183). Morgan continues, “Confronted with an Africa they needed to exploit, European writers turned to black women as evidence of a cultural inferiority that ultimately became encoded as racial difference” (1997, p. 191). In the centuries since, this “evidence” has been reified as knowledge, as ways of knowing and interacting with Black women.

This knowledge, including the assertion that “enslavement was the only means of civility” (Morgan, 1997, p. 189), has continued to wreak havoc for all Black people; I will focus specifically on Black women. The impact of “erroneous observations about African women’s propensity for easy birth” and “pain-free childbearing” (Morgan, 1997, pp. 185, 191) can be traced through history. In the mid-19th century, physician J. Marion Sims performed vaginal procedures on fourteen enslaved women, some of them up to 30 times, none of them with anesthesia (Spettel & White, 2011, p. 2424)⁵. Considered in centuries past to be physically stronger than white women (Morgan, 1997, p. 184), Black women today are less likely to receive physician

⁵ Sims is still referred to as “the father of gynecology.”

recommendations for breast cancer testing, regardless of their level of risk (McCarthy et al., 2016). Not surprisingly, Black women are more likely to die from cancer, including breast cancer, than white female counterparts (Asiedu et al., 2015). According to data from the CDC, Black mothers are 3.2 times more likely to experience “pregnancy-related death” than white mothers (Chuck, 2020). Further, Black babies have the highest infant mortality rate in the country. A baby born to a Black woman with a professional degree is three times more likely to die in infancy than a baby born to a white woman with a high school diploma (Smith, Bentley-Edwards, El-Amin, & Darity, 2018, p. 1). The statistics are no less dire across contexts. Black women are more likely to experience sexual assault (Neal-Barnett, 2018) and intimate partner violence (Lacey et al., 2015, p. 2) than women of other ethnic groups. Along with male counterparts, Black women are more likely to be diagnosed with psychotic disorders than mood disorders and less likely to be offered therapy or psychiatric medication (American Psychological Association, 2017).

These statistics were difficult to write. To compile these facts in such a fashion that makes them “flow” was an arduous task. I do not want these words to flow. They are jagged, raw reminders of my history and painful glimpses into my potential future. To my mothers, I say I am sorry.

I write that I am thankful.

In 1892, author, educator, and activist Anna J. Cooper described the “unique position” of the Black woman, who is “confronted by both a woman question and a race problem, and is yet an unknown or an unacknowledged factor in both” (Taylor, 2017, p. 5). The uniqueness of this positionality has informed the direction, action, and very spirit of the Black feminism movement, which aims to acknowledge Black women in all of our complexity. In the early 1970s, the National Black Feminist Organization (NBFO) and the Combahee River Collective (CRC) - named for a raid led by Harriet Tubman that freed almost 800 enslaved people - formed in response to “the failure of White feminist organizations to adequately respond to racism in the United States”⁶ (Taylor, 2017, p. 4). The Collective adopted a more radical stance than the NBFO and called for the “reorganization of society based on the collective needs” of Black women, “the most

⁶bell hooks describes a longstanding trend in feminist discourse, wherein “[w]hite women...who for the most part make and articulate feminist theory, have little or no understanding of white supremacy as a racial politic, of the psychological impact of class, of their political status within a racist, sexist, capitalist state” (1984, p. 4).

oppressed.” If you could “free the most oppressed people in society,” they asserted, “then you would have to free everyone” (Taylor, 2017, p. 5). This emphasis on freedom was not an abstract musing, but rather a goal grounded in the experiences of Black women who had lived and died deprived of their freedom. In the 1970s, when Black liberation movements most often centered Black men, “Black women’s social positions made them disproportionately susceptible to...poverty, illness, violence, sexual assault, and inadequate healthcare and housing” (Taylor, 2017, p. 8). Taylor continues, “Black women have always embodied, if only in their physical manifestation, an adversary stance to white male rule and have actively resisted its inroads upon them and their communities in both dramatic and subtle ways” (2017, p. 16). At every turn, white male rule has sought to other, fetishize, and degrade the humanity of Black women. The recognition of this humanity - love - is the very foundation of Black feminism. The CRC states, “Our politics evolve from a healthy love for ourselves, our sisters and our community...To be recognized as human, lovely human, is enough” (Taylor, 2017, p. 18, 19). Evans-Winters writes that in the pursuit of this recognition and “self-determination,” “Black women have relied on creative and alternative ways of constructing and legitimating knowledge claims that serve to portray our shared socio-political cultural experiences” (2019, p. 22).

These creative and alternative ways have involved expanding and extending existing movements - the Black liberation movement, the white feminist movement, the anticapitalist theories of Marx - as well as legitimizing experiences through our own language. A decade after the inception of the NBFO and Combahee River Collective, and nearly a century after Cooper spoke of “compounded oppression” (Taylor, 2017, p. 5), author and activist Alice Walker coined the term *womanism*. In 1983 Walker defined womanism in the following ways:

- “1. From womanish. (Opp. of “girlish”, i.e., frivolous, irresponsible, not serious.) A black feminist or feminist of color. From the black folk expression of mothers to female children, “You acting womanish,” i.e., like a woman. Usually referring to outrageous, audacious, courageous or willful behavior. Wanting to know more and in great depth than is considered “good” for one. Interested in grown-up doings. Acting grown up. Being grown up. Interchangeable with another black folk expression: “You trying to be grown.” Responsible. In charge. Serious.
2. Also: A woman who loves other women, sexually and/or nonsexually. Appreciates and prefers women’s culture, women’s emotional flexibility (values tears as natural counterbalance of laughter), and women’s strength. Sometimes loves individual men, sexually and/or nonsexually. Committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female. Not a separatist, except periodically, for health. Traditionally universalist, as in: “Mama, why are we brown, pink, and yellow, and our cousins are white, beige, and black?” Ans.: “Well, you know the colored race is just like a flower garden, with

every color flower represented.” Traditionally capable, as in: “Mama, I’m walking to Canada and I’m taking you and a bunch of other slaves with me.” Reply: “It wouldn’t be the first time.”

3. Loves music. Loves dance. Loves the moon. Loves the Spirit. Loves love and food and roundness. Loves struggle. Loves the Folk. Loves herself. Regardless.

4. Womanist is to feminist as purple to lavender.”

Though originally featured in Walker’s collection of essays *In Search of Our Mothers’ Gardens*, I retrieved this definition from a Dutch scholar, whose work, for some reason, is among the top results for searches of Walker and womanism. Directly under the definition, the scholar refers to Walker’s words as “chaotic enumeration...which makes it difficult to fully grasp what Walker is saying” (Torfs, 2008, p. 18). This dismissal immediately others Walker, her perspective, and her knowledge. As an insider, a Black woman and womanist who is grown up and loves other women and appreciates women’s emotional flexibility and is committed to survival and wholeness and loves music and dance and the Spirit and love and food and roundness and the struggle and the Folk and myself regardless and is filled with striations of purple on my days good and bad, I fully grasped what Walker was saying.

Walker’s use of language is free in precisely the way Black women have always strived to be. It is whimsical and expansive and true. It is also just one term in a set of many that Black women have contributed through the decades. In 1977, the Combahee River Collective’s statement of purpose was the first text to use the term *identity politics*, framed at the time as “not just about who you were...[but] also about what you could do to confront the oppression you were facing” (Taylor, 2017, p. 8). In 1989, Kimberle Crenshaw introduced the term *intersectionality*, capturing “the multidimensionality of Black women’s experiences” (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 131) and underlining “the idea that multiple oppressions reinforce each other to create new categories of suffering” (Taylor, 2017, p. 4). In 2010, Moya Bailey named the “misogyny directed towards black women where race and gender both play roles in bias” *misogynoir* (Mwanza, 2018). These terms are now common parlance in academic and social circles alike, and they are all rooted in the struggle and specificity of Black women’s experiences.

Audre Lorde describes poetry as “illumination,” the process through which “we give name to those ideas which are - until the poem - nameless and formless, about to be birthed, but already felt” (Lorde, 1984, p. 36). Black feminism is poetry. To my mothers, I say thank you for your work.

I write that I am still going.

It is my tradition to expand. It is my tradition to make heard what has been silenced and make seen what has been overlooked. I am a student of the world before I am a student of psychology and it is with this hierarchy that I engage with the undertaking of this dissertation. A research paradigm is understood as an individual researcher's "worldview," which is itself "the perspective, or thinking, or school of thought, or set of shared beliefs that informs the meaning or interpretation of research data" (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017, p. 26). My research paradigm - my worldview - is critical in nature, which means it "seeks to address the political, social and economic issues, which lead to social oppression, conflict, struggle, and power structures at whatever levels these might occur" (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017, p. 35). To be critical in this fashion is to practice the modes of engaging I have known my entire life. My ways of being - my ontology - have directly shaped my ways of knowing - my epistemology - and produced an ontoepistemology grounded firmly in Black feminist thought and practice. My lived experiences - a term that itself captures ontoepistemology - have taught me to "conscientiously question, resist, and reject ideologies and taken-for-granted assumptions handed down by White scholars or those trained in Eurocentric paradigms" (Evans-Winters, 2019).

White supremacy and its white Western epistemologies have sought to first deny the presence of my Black mind and then dismiss the humanity of my Black body. White supremacy and its white Western epistemologies have sought to deem me disruptive. And, in this one respect, White supremacy is correct. I am here to disrupt. bell hooks writes, "It is essential...that black women recognize the special vantage point our marginality gives us and make use of this perspective to criticize the dominant racist, classist, sexist hegemony as well as to envision and create a counter-hegemony" (hooks, 2000, p. 16). I am only marginalized because white supremacy has made it so. It is this very affront that has contributed to my knowledge. White supremacy was not designed to ensure my academic or professional success, but, like all marginalized peoples who obtain some success, I know its designs very well. I know that, as Evans-Winters writes, "Western science would never accept an African womanist worldview where the 'subject' herself claims to transcend time and place, or a worldview where the notion of time and place are themselves scientific constructions open to critique, questioning, and manipulation" (2019). I also know that I do transcend time and place, that I am the nexus between my ancestresses and the daughters I may birth in spirit alone. I know that, where Western science

does not accept me, generations of women past urge me to keep pushing ahead, to critique and question and transform with the tools they have given me. These women have equipped me with creativity and resourcefulness. They have given me imagination. To my mothers, I say I will see it through.

Imagination: A Liberation

When I was twelve years old, I sat in the office of my white male guidance counselor. There, he told me, with great earnestness, that I should aspire only to community college and, with just as much earnestness, that I should be proud if I even made it that far. It did not matter that my name featured on the Honor Roll every marking period I had attended that school. It did not matter that I was twelve and had years between this meeting and any college applications. As far as he was concerned, he was doing me a service. He was not the first white man to tell a Black girl she should aspire to less. He has not been the last. Like all of those men who came before him and those who have come after, his imagination was too white and too weak.

Black feminist ontoepistemology *is* imagination. Black women have imagined new worlds, new freedoms, and allocated or created the resources to realize them. My very existence is the product of Black women who dared to dream of a future, who dared to dream of life beyond their own circumstances. Evans-Winters refers to these dreams and others as “an imagination of emancipation” (2019, p. 53). As researchers, Evans-Winters states, Black women “bring our lived realities” into the process (2019, p. 17). We also bring our lived realities into the therapeutic space, including our imagination of emancipation. In writing this, it occurs to me there is not much more beyond emancipation. To be free, from narratives and confines imposed on us by ourselves and others, is to touch the magic of our existence.

In her work, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*, Toni Morrison explores the mutuality between text and reader. The literary imagination, as she describes it, “implies a shareable world and an endlessly flexible language” (Morrison, 1992, p. xii). Within this shareable world, meaning is made, horizons expanded, and risks taken. Though the writer is responsible for creating the imaginative landscape, the reader also has responsibility. It is the work of the reader to be alert and engaged, it is the work of the reader to grapple with the limits (or limitlessness) of this landscape. The reader, too, must have imaginative capacity. This triangulated relationship, between writer and reader and imagination, is analogous to the therapeutic relationship. If therapy is the act of imagining - of hoping for and working towards different life circumstances, of *reimagining* and reframing those circumstances as they are currently understood - both therapist and client have responsibility. White Western epistemology would seek to ascribe rank to therapist

and client in this configuration, to decide who is the reader and who is the writer. Morrison's conceptualization, however, suggests the writer is not necessarily in service to the reader, just that the two are mutually engaged. Embarking on imaginative work, then, requires leveling the playing field. This has never been a strong suit of whiteness.

Morrison makes note of the areas where "imagination sabotages itself, locks its own gates, pollutes its own vision" (Morrison, 1992, p. xi). The shared and created space between reader and writer does not exist in isolation. The very act of imagining is grounded in already established ways of knowing. The ability to conceive of limitlessness is informed by imposed limits in the everyday, non-imagined world. In the therapeutic space, too, then, there is not just the shared imagination, but the very forces that have informed the respective imaginations of therapist and client. For many therapists, the therapeutic imagination is grounded in, and centered around, white Western epistemology. Smith defines the "center" as the "orientation to the system of power" (Smith, 1999, p. 53) while Morrison refers to centering as the "inadequacy and force of the imaginative act" (Morrison, 1992, p. xiii). Within the system of power that is Western epistemology, the imagination itself is a means to assert power and, much like the very invention of whiteness, is wholly preoccupied with power. The center - the designated seat and the vantage point from which all else is understood and examined - highlights the rigidity and limited nature of white Western imagination. I can recall a white male graduate professor urging the class to "imagine a Black female therapist" while he contemplated how such a unicorn might navigate a particular situation. His statement communicated that whiteness was the therapeutic center. That I, despite sitting there in the classroom, was to be imagined.

As a therapy client, I've endured similarly limited imaginations. After months of managing my white male therapist's shock and disbelief at my experiences of racism⁷, I told him I would not be returning, that the burden had become too much. These circumstances were not unique; as microaggressions (just one product of a limited imagination) against Black clients increase, the satisfaction with the therapeutic relationship decreases (Constantine, 2007, p.1). It was too bad, he told me. "I was looking forward to growing from you."

⁷ "But it's the 21st century...and *New York!*" he exclaimed once.

In this arrangement, I bore the burden of expanding my therapist's imagination, while he sat in the center, in his comfortable chair.

These experiences have not turned me away from the field, thankfully. Therapy is a magical, wondrous, imaginative endeavor, and I am blessed to partake. To touch this magic and wonder, the therapist must be open to being moved, to challenging and expanding their own imagination.

The Ability to Jig: A Loving Stance

During a recent phone call, my mother shared with me a reflection. She had been thinking, she said, about my tendency to dance in public, sometimes even when there is no music. I could hear the dance in her own voice as she described many a scene in shopping center or supermarket or movie theater where I would begin to move, to sway, to bounce. She noted this was something I had inherited from her - oftentimes that moving and swaying and bouncing was in tandem with her own - and said she realized she, too, had inherited it from her mother. It is important to mention that I am descended from a long line of Jamaican warrior women with tongues as sharp as the cutlasses they carried. These were women hardened by life's circumstances who found, or created, means to survive. My mother, herself a survivor in many ways, is no exception. On this particular phone call, she attributed this survival, in part, to our capacity to dance, even when the music isn't so loud. She called it "the ability to jig."

In her 1978 essay, "Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power," Audre Lorde speaks of the erotic in its original Greek conception, defining it as "the personification of love in all its aspects." She goes on to describe the erotic as "an assertion of the life force of women" (Lorde, 1984, p. 55). Baldwin refers to sensuality in similar terms in his seminal work *The Fire Next Time*. He says, "To be sensual, I think, is to respect and rejoice in the force of life, of life itself, and to be present in all one does, from the effort of loving to the baking of bread" (Baldwin, 1963). Both Baldwin and Lorde use language often associated with the sexual, with the carnal. "Sensual," "erotic." And instead of feeling lascivious, as they might through an othering white lens, they feel like a reclamation.

Hypersexualized images of Black folks continue to be proliferated centuries after white colonizers made the practice commonplace. Black men continue to be whittled down to fantasies about their genitalia while Black women are still disassembled for our lips, our breasts, our bottoms. Black queer folks often have the compounded experience of being further sexualized, their queerness an audacious challenge to a heteronormative arrangement of bodies. It does not seem accidental then that Lorde and Baldwin - both Black, both queer - would center the body instead of dismember it, make it whole instead of appraise its parts.

The life forces described by Baldwin and Lorde are not static, but dynamic. They encourage not just doing and engaging, but the presence of vitality. Lorde calls for a “celebration,” Baldwin for “rejoice.” Both speak of a love for life, the very experience that allows for love at all. In *The Art of Loving*, psychoanalyst Erich Fromm asserts that this love, which he aptly describes as honey, is the earliest love. When the infant is fed milk, Fromm states, they are also provided “the first aspect of love, that of care and affirmation” (Fromm, 1956, p. 46). Those that are lucky enough - “a minority” - get honey, too, an appreciation for “the sweetness of life, the love for it and the happiness in being alive.” He makes the distinction further between “the love for life, and not only the wish to remain alive” (Fromm, 1956, p. 46). The honey that Fromm discusses is not passed down just from mother to infant, but from foremother to forechild, from generation to generation. This honey is imbued with ways of knowing and ways of being that become the very life forces Baldwin and Lorde describe. If honey is sweet for all, it is also subversive for the oppressed. It is subversive when we create, when we bake bread, and when we dance in the supermarket. It is subversive when we share meaningful space with others.

If the Western therapeutic stance is distanced and distancing, cool and clinical, the loving stance is full of imagination and intention. The loving stance jigs and defies.

Love: A Restoration

“You taught me that love is predicated on a recognition of humanity, an insistence on shared personhood, the bravery to be seen, and the intention to see.” - from a goodbye letter I journaled for my patients at Rikers, March 13, 2020

Despite its white Western foundation, there are areas in the present therapeutic landscape that are loving in nature. I’m not talking about humanistic psychology, which is focused on themes of personal growth and self-actualization and which some (Rockwell, 2019, p. 335) have asserted is rooted in self-love. I’m talking about love for people who, in the eyes of whiteness, did not rise to the level of having a “self.” I’m a fan of unconditional positive regard, but I’m not talking about Rogerian person-centered therapy, where Rogers proposed “human beings become persons through a process of personal growth and self-discovery” (Barresi, 1999). I’m talking about love for those who were never considered human beings or persons and

deprived of opportunities for growth and discovery. I'm not talking about love as a neuroscientific exchange between two parties and their "intelligence[s] that some call soul" (Quillman, 2018, p.1). I'm talking about love for people whose neuroscience was doubted and who were determined to have no intelligence, no soul. I'm talking about the stuff that is disruptive. The stuff bell hooks writes about as part of a "love ethic," which "presupposes that everyone has the right to be free" (hooks, 2000, p. 87). I'm talking about love as the act of celebrating freedom, for people historically stripped of the notion.

Optimal psychology, introduced by Linda James Myers, goes "beyond the limits of the prevailing western cultural worldview to acknowledge the spiritual aspects of being" and highlights "the resilience of people acknowledging African descent who face the unique experience of chattel enslavement that denied their humanity, and yet subsequently survived" (Myers & Speight, 2010, p. 70). Optimal psychology directly questions "knowledge, how one knows, human identity, [and] what is of value" (Myers & Speight, 2010, p. 72). It is not coincidental that Linda James Myers is a Black woman, that her assertion of what is optimal challenges Western frameworks and both validates and centers African epistemologies. Affirmative therapy, in which LGBT patients are validated and embraced, was developed in direct response to psychiatric pathologizing of queer identities (Langdrige, 2007, p. 27). Feminist therapy, which arose to address therapeutic concerns specific to women, is cited for its "subversion" and "undermining of internalized and external patriarchal realities" (Brown, 2008, p. 277). Salter and Adams (2013) have argued for a critical race psychology that builds on critical race theory's goals of dismantling "colorblind epistemologies" and increasing "practices of counter-storytelling" (p. 781). I haven't had a single course highlighting any of these modalities. With the exception of feminist therapy, I haven't even had them mentioned in a course. Whiteness might consider them radical. I consider them loving.

When Kahlil Gibran's Prophet was asked about love, he spoke of knowing "the pain of too much tenderness" (1923, p. 13). In my imagination, therapy is just that. The pain of too much tenderness as a correction for the pain of too much torment. Lorde writes of poetry in a similar fashion. She states, "As we learn to bear the intimacy of scrutiny and to flourish within it, as we learn to use the products of that scrutiny for power within our living, those fears which rule our lives and form our silences begin to lose their control over us" (1984, p. 36). Therapeutic love is first the recognition of humanity, and then its restoration, where we

bear that intimacy with our clients, allowing them to flourish within it, eventually reseating power as something from within, instead of something held over.

Language: An Investigation

“What are the words you do not yet have? What do you need to say? What are the tyrannies you swallow day by day and attempt to make your own, until you will sicken and die of them, still in silence?” - Audre Lorde, “The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action,” 1977, p. 41

I need to say that language has power, that language *is* power. I need to say that I know this personally and intimately. I need to say that my knowledge of this has affected my very writing of this dissertation, with my efforts to be *careful* and *unaggressive*. I need to say that the words I speak to power have the potential to be misunderstood and silenced while the words power speaks to me have the potential to determine my future. I need to say, as Fanon (1952) said, “I must take great pains with my speech, because I shall be more or less judged by it” (p. 11). I need to say that I am exploring and utilizing a tool that has been weaponized against me for millennia.

Hall (1992) defines a discourse as “a group of statements which provide a language for talking about - i.e., a way of representing - a particular kind of knowledge about a topic. When statements about a topic are made within a particular discourse, the discourse makes it possible to construct the topic in a certain way. It also limits the other ways in which the topic can be constructed” (p. 201). Psychology, as I have been taught it, is its own discourse. The existence of the brain is a neuroscientific assertion, but the meaning of the mind is a white Western construction. Within this discourse, as with all discourses, there is an underlying power structure that determines what is spoken about and how. “Discourse,” Hall writes, “is about the production of knowledge through language” (1992, p. 201). White Western knowledge has its roots in “the journals, ethnographies, and musings White men produced,” in which “their language reified established ideologies and set the precedent for racialized discourse” (Smith, 1999, p.158). That psychology professors have reiterated and concretized the notion of “founding fathers” of the field - most often listed as some combination of Wilhelm Wundt, William James, and other white men who lived when Indigenous peoples were considered savages - and credited them as the center and origin of all psychological knowledge is a function of discourse. That some defense mechanisms are referred to as “primitive” in psychoanalytic theory is a function of

discourse. States Hall, “Discourses don’t stop abruptly. They go unfolding, changing shape, as they make sense of new circumstances. They often carry many of the same unconscious premises and unexamined assumptions in their blood-stream” (1992, p. 221). To the extent psychological discourse has changed shape over time, one result is that, for some, “primitive” can now be used in academic parlance and not be assumed to be a reference to colonized and brutalized peoples. This, though, is because its unexamined assumptions, as Hall names them, have been unexamined by those in power. The discourse of a psychology course may suggest that “we” all have primitive defenses. While my white classmate may take notes dutifully, my pen will hover over the paper, frozen with the knowledge there was a time all of me, not just my defenses, were considered primitive. It is in these ways different epistemologies are in tension with one another. It is in these ways I continue to navigate power through language.

“What does it mean when the tools of a racist patriarchy are used to examine the fruits of that same patriarchy?” asks Audre Lorde (1984). “It means that only the most narrow perimeters of change are possible and allowable,” she answers (p. 111). And, so, I must use other tools.

Critical Discourse Analysis

From an online New York Times article published 12/14/2020: “There is no video footage of the confrontation that led to Mr. Goodson’s death, unlike other high-profile shooting deaths of Black *men* [emphasis added], like Ahmaud Arbery in Brunswick, Ga., Walter Scott in North Charleston, S.C., and Tamir Rice in Cleveland.”

An online comment submitted by Faithlynn M., of NYC, 12/14/2020: “Tamir Rice was a boy, not a man. The killing of Black people by law enforcement happens indiscriminately of age and when young Black children are written about as if they are adults - even in passing, as was done in this article - it perpetuates narratives that Black people are never quite children, never quite deserving of the gentleness that is offered to others. Casey Goodson and Tamir Rice - one a man, one a boy - were victims of the same system - one that says they were never people to begin with.”

An updated version of the article published 12/15/2020: “There is no video footage of the confrontation that led to Mr. Goodson’s death, unlike other high-profile shooting deaths of Black *people* [emphasis added], like Ahmaud Arbery in Brunswick, Ga., Walter Scott in North Charleston, S.C., and Tamir Race in Cleveland.”

Broadly, the objectives of qualitative research are “to uncover and describe patterns, use the patterns to compare differences between individuals or groups, and then to test assumptions about the patterns” in natural settings (Victor, 2010, p. 1282). Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a methodology that uncovers and analyzes linguistic patterns by investigating “the relations between discourse, power, dominance, social inequality and the position of the discourse analyst in such social relationships” (van Dijk, 1993, p. 250). The

critical in CDA refers specifically to theories and paradigms that focus in equal parts on uncovering and undoing. Through examinations of language, CDA seeks to “produc[e] enlightenment and emancipation” of and from systems of domination (Wodak & Meyer, 2008, p. 7). CDA posits that “discourse is always a socially and historically situated text in a dialectical relationship with its social context” (Rhee & Sagaria, 2004, p. 82). As a methodology, CDA is interested in exploring the role of power within this sociohistorical context and its researchers are interested in exploring both how “discourse (re)produces social domination, that is, the power abuse of one group over another, and how dominated groups may discursively resist such abuse” (Wodak & Meyer, 2008, p. 9). “Without compromising its social scientific objectivity and rigour,” CDA “openly and explicitly positions itself on the side of dominated and oppressed groups and against dominating groups (Fairclough, Mulderrig & Wodak, 1997, p. 358). This positioning is highlighted in the following examples of CDA:

Rhee and Sagaria (2004) used CDA to examine 55 articles and 23 opinion pieces of the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, a news organization chosen for its influence and prominence in the field of higher education (p. 82). In their analysis of the texts, which spanned four years of publishing from the *Chronicle*, Rhee and Sagaria identified themes that elucidated the presence of U.S. imperialism and its impact on international students, who were represented in texts as “subjugated Others” (2004, p. 91). In a 2015 study, N’cho utilized CDA to “examine discrepancies between the labels applied to Black men by society, and the ways they perceived themselves” (N’cho, 2015, p. 58). Through a textual analysis of videotaped group therapy sessions and case study transcripts, N’cho identified moments where “members of the group explicitly communicate[d]” feelings of invisibility and moments where it was “inferred from their dialogue that ‘others see me differently because of my race’” (2015, p. 54). The results of the study “reveal[ed] the presence of an intra-racial, as well as an internalized form of invisibility” that had not been identified in existing literature (N’cho, 2015). Nickerson (2016) conducted an interpretive analysis of 779 pieces of text featured on the Seattle Times website - articles published by the organization as well as accompanying comments posted in response - spanning an eleven-month period beginning in late 2011 and concluding in 2012. The articles focused on the “use of opioid medications in the treatment of chronic pain” and were examined for their “indicators of social status, identity, ideology, and language repertoires” (Nickerson, 2016, p. 62). Nickerson

also examined the Times authors' positionalities, noting in one case that an out-of-state author contributed to a series highlighting local state concerns (2016, p. 59). van Dijk notes the importance of addressing context in CDA and taking into account "the current setting of time, place, and circumstances" in addition to "the participants involved, as well as their many social and communicative roles and...group membership" (2008, p. 149). While group membership can include belonging to certain ethnic or racial communities (van Dijk, 2008, p. 149), it can include other types of organizing, including local membership, as highlighted by Nickerson's observation. Nickerson's findings suggested text published by the featured authors had the potential to "reproduce the inequities advocates seek to redress" (2016, p.1).

As highlighted in the studies above, discourse takes numerous forms and can be analyzed with similarly various approaches. van Dijk notes that the term *discourse* can "denote a type of discourse, a collection of discourses, or a class of discourse genres, for instance, when we speak of 'medical discourse,' 'political discourse'" (2008, p. 146). This dissertation examines the academic discourse of contemporary psychotherapy, as produced by academic journals in the field.

The issue of voice is also pertinent to CDA, specifically "absences and presences in a particular space" (Ohito & Nyachae, 2018, p. 3). Psychological text, like all Western text, has long privileged one set of voices. In so doing, these texts belie their assertions of neutrality. Neutrality has only ever been the purported stance of the privileged, of those with the self-ascribed power to make such determinations (Said, 1978; Villenas, 1996; Smith, 1999). Discourse is itself "always implicated in power," as those who produce it "also have the power to make it true - i.e. to enforce its validity, its scientific status" (Hall, 1992, p. 205). Text, then, can be reinforcing, undoing, complicit, and/or confronting in complex ways. The same can be said for the role of researcher. van Dijk rejects the notion of a "neutral" position and urges critical discourse analysts to "take an explicit sociopolitical stance...spell[ing] out their point of view, perspective, principle and aims, both within their discipline and within society at large" (1993, pp. 252, 253). While it is "not considered possible or desirable" (Nickerson, 2016, p. 65) for the researcher to be distant from the task of research, it is crucial for the researcher to identify and explore the lenses through which they view the research. Stated differently, this is not a positivist methodology in which researchers are encouraged to reduce bias, but rather a critical methodology that acknowledges the pervasiveness of bias and encourages the researcher to engage with their

own points of view in the process of analyzing data (Tracy, 2010; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017; Evans-Winters, 2019). Like many before them, both N'cho (2015) and Nickerson (2016) made use of personal memos and researcher commentary as a way to address their respective positionalities in the data analysis process.

Method

In conducting the research of this dissertation, my point of view and perspective are informed by Black feminist ontoepistemology. My principle and aims, both within my discipline and within society at large, are to challenge and disrupt, to love and empower. In her work, itself a critical discourse analysis, Morrison set out to “identify those moments when American literature was complicit in the fabricated racism, but equally important...where literature exploded and undermined it” (Morrison, 1992, p. 16). I am interested in a similar quest. This dissertation explores where the academic discourse of psychotherapeutic journals is complicit in white Western epistemological understanding and where it explodes and undermines it by being loving, understood through a Black feminist ontoepistemology as recognizing humanity. My subjects for this academic undertaking are not people, but rather the voices that constitute this discourse and the power structures that have produced them.

James Baldwin writes, “I love America more than any other country in the world, and, exactly for this reason, I insist on the right to criticize her perpetually” (1955). I say the same of therapy. I love this craft more than any other in the world, and, exactly, for this reason, I insist on the right to examine her critically. For this pursuit, the *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* (JAPA) and *Cognitive and Behavioral Practice* were selected. These journals were chosen to acknowledge the two major schools of Western psychological thought, as well as the two clinical orientations that have shaped my doctoral training. Texts were collected from a five-year period, spanning 2015 to 2020. This period captures the end of Barack Obama’s presidency - which was, to some, considered a “post-racial achievement” (Richomme, 2012), one that “suggest[ed] the transcendence of race” (Springer, 2014, p. 1) - as well as the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement and the span of Donald Trump’s presidency. CDA implores the analyst to “unveil the context that gives rise to the talk and text” (Yates, 2009, p. 74). The larger context of these texts is a sociohistorical backdrop that has centered Western epistemologies for centuries; I chose the five-year time frame to examine how central these epistemologies continue to be in the current cultural landscape. A Black

feminist ontoepistemology - consisting of my own lens and that of other Black feminists across disciplines - was utilized to interpret the data and answer the following research questions:

- How is the concept of love represented in Western psychotherapeutic journals?
- What does a critical discourse analysis of these texts reveal about sociohistorical and interpersonal level power dynamics, particularly in relation to white supremacy?

Coding

The primary goal of my coding process was to determine which papers I would read and analyze for this project. To start, I created accounts with SAGE Journals and ScienceDirect, two websites through which I accessed archives of JAPA and Cognitive and Behavioral Practice, respectively. On both sites, I set a search parameter of “research article” and “since 2015” within their digital archives and entered the following terms: *love, humanity, primitive, black, dark, and race*. I created spreadsheets for each journal and coded the author and title of each article, along with the date it was published, the corresponding issue of the journal, its abstract, keywords, and DOI. The table below illustrates the frequency of articles for each search term. This table reflects the number of articles that populated from a search ranging from January 1, 2015 to September 19th, 2020 in the respective journals.

Journal	love	humanity	primitive	black	dark	race	total unique
JAPA	139	156	63	47	61	50	188
Cogn Behav Practice	76	0	0	56	22	65	155

Table 1.

Though many articles populated for more than one search term, the search term *love* was prioritized. For example, 51 of the articles in the JAPA search populated for at least 4 of the 6 search terms. If one of those terms was not *love*, however, the article did not meet inclusion criteria for my analysis. After coding each article for the aforementioned identifying data, a two-tiered process was utilized to code for content. In the first phase, I read through each of the article abstracts. If an article did not have an abstract - 53 in JAPA did not - it was coded based on its keywords and title and/or the material available in the SAGE Journals preview, which was usually its first page. This led to content codes such as *perversion* (4 articles), *suicide* (5 articles), and

pathology (10 articles)⁸, among others. In the second phase, I used the web-based analysis instrument Voyant-Tools.org to examine how the concept of love was being employed at the sentence level. Developed in 2003, Voyant Tools is an online application utilized to carry out various analytic tasks of scholarly text, including examinations of word frequency and sentence-level trends. After being inspected with Voyant Tools, articles that spoke of love in terms referenced in this dissertation were selected. A text that mentioned “the analyst’s ethical obligation to love her patient as herself” (Ackerman, 2020) met inclusion criteria. Texts that used the phraseology of “loved ones” to refer to family and close friends did not. A trend emerged in this early stage of data collection. As I sifted through JAPA articles for my *love* search, I came across titles like the following in droves: “When Fathering Fails: Violence, Narcissism, and the Father Function in Ancient Tales and Clinical Analysis” (Diamond, 2018), “The Broken Self: Injured States in The Transference-Countertransference Matrix” (Reichenthal, 2017), “Masochism and its Rhythm” (Civitarese, 2016), “Castration Depression: Affect, Signal Affect, and/or Depressive Illness?” (Fleischer, 2015). Abstracts and keywords highlighted trauma, pathology, and violation instead of warmth, passion, and connection. Where I searched for love, I was met with its absence.

Through this process, 26 articles from JAPA and 0 from Cognitive and Behavioral Science were selected for analysis. As highlighted by these search results, certain language is more embedded in analytic discourse. It is understood, however, that analytic discourse preceded cognitive and behavioral discourse (and all other psychotherapeutic discourses) and continues to influence the underlying logic and assumptions for the discipline at-large.

After I identified the articles I would be reading, I utilized inductive, deductive, and abductive approaches to engage the data. While a deductive approach adopts a positivist stance in which a researcher tests hypotheses based on existing theories, an inductive approach involves the researcher collecting data and then “stepping back” in order to identify themes and theories that have emerged (DeCarlo, 2018). Abductive reasoning occurs when the researcher notes and takes interest in “anomaly or surprising data” (Flick, 2017). Abduction can be further described as “the creative, imaginative, or insightful moment in which understanding

⁸ These subcategories belonged to a larger category I named “sad stuff.”

is grasped” by engaging with a “problematic” occurrence in data (Lipscomb, 2012). Therapists engage with these approaches regularly, working deductively when asking clients questions about their week and understanding their answer in the context of their particular characterology and psychopathology. Inductive work takes place when what happened on Tuesday is especially evocative and the thread is followed, allowing new therapeutic content to emerge. Abductive work happens when incongruent affects are noted and meaning is made of slips of the tongue.

As therapists, we are researchers of communication and experts in listening. Our data *is* language. We are constantly engaged in an iterative process pondering the following: What is being said with words? What is being said with the body? What is not being said at all? What is being said in such a way that suggests more, or otherwise? How do we feel about what is being said? How might this give us insight into our clients’ mental or emotional processes? I began by asking similar questions of the texts: Who is speaking? What is being said with words? What is being said by the body (the writer, the publication) that produced the words? What is being omitted? How do I feel about what is being said? How might this give me insight into the sociohistorical process of the text?

Caligor et al. (2007) implore therapists to ask themselves the following questions when listening to therapeutic material: “How do I fit in? How is the patient currently experiencing me? How is the patient currently trying *not* to experience me?...What are the different relationship patterns that the patient is describing in this session and how do they fit together?” (p.114). For the purpose of this dissertation, these questions were amended to: How do I fit in? How is this text currently engaging me? As an insider or outsider? As an Other? What are the different power dynamics that the writer is describing in this text and how do they fit into the larger sociohistorical context?

Texts

Information coded for the selected articles and authors is listed below.

Author	(Coded) Race	Paper Title	Date Published	Search Terms
Ackerman, Sarah	white	Exploring Freud’s Resistance to The Oceanic Feeling	2/10/2017	love, humanity, primitive

Ackerman, Sarah	white	(How) Can We Write About Our Patients?	3/15/2018	love, humanity, black, dark
Ackerman, Sarah	white	Impossible Ethics	9/14/2020	love, humanity
Blakeman, Rachel & Goldberger, Marianne	white, white	Will This Case Count? The Influence of Training on Treatment	12/21/2016	love, humanity, dark
Cairo, Irene	white	It's About Time: Temporality in Analysis	4/18/2017	love, humanity, primitive
Coen, Stanley J.	white	Between Action and Inaction: The Space for Analytic Intimacy	4/30/2018	love, humanity, black, dark, race
Cooper, Steven H.	white	Playing in the Darkness: Use of the Object and Use of the Subject	9/24/2018	love, humanity, primitive, dark
Elise, Dianne	white	Moving from Within The Maternal: The Choreography of Analytic Eroticism	2/10/2017	love, humanity
Gentile, Jill	white	Time may Change Us: The Strange Temporalities, Novel Paradoxes, and Democratic Imaginaries of a Pandemic	9/14/2020	love, humanity, primitive, black, dark, race
Gilligan, Carol	white	Disrupting the Story: Enter Eve	9/14/2020	love, humanity, black, dark, race
Gobodo- Madikizela, Pumla	nonwhite	Psychological Repair: The Intersubjective Dialogue of Remorse and Forgiveness in the Aftermath of Gross Human Rights Violations	12/15/2015	love, humanity, black, dark, race
Griffin, Fred L.	white	Becoming of Use as an Analyst: Imagining Something that was Never there Before	3/17/2020	love, humanity, primitive, black, dark

Harris, Adrienne	white	“Language is There to Bewilder Itself and Others”: Theoretical and Clinical Contributions of Sabina Spielrein	8/12/2015	love, primitive, dark, race
Holmes, Dorothy Evans	nonwhite	Come Hither, American Psychoanalysis: Our Complex Multicultural America Needs What We Have to Offer	7/7/2016	love, humanity, black, race
Kattlove, Susan	white	Acknowledging the “Analyst as Person”: A Developmental Achievement	12/21/2016	love
Kite, Jane V.	white	The Fundamental Ethical Ambiguity of the Analyst as Person	12/21/2016	love, humanity, primitive
Markman, Henry C.	white	Presence, Mourning, and Beauty: Elements of Analytic Process	1/12/2018	love, humanity, race
Moss, Donald	white	The Insane Look of the Bewildered Half-Broken Animal	4/13/2016	love, humanity, primitive, black, dark, race
Movahedi, Siamak	white	Contextualized Language and Transferential Aspects of Context	8/11/2015	love, humanity, primitive, black, dark, race
Powell, Dionne R.	nonwhite	Race, African Americans, and Psychoanalysis: Collective Silence in the Therapeutic Situation	1/8/2019	love, humanity, primitive, black, race
Rizzolo, Gregory S.	white	The Critique of Regression: The Person, The Field, The Lifespan	12/21/2016	love, humanity, primitive, race
Rizzolo, Gregory S.	white	The Specter of the Primitive	1/12/2018	love, humanity, primitive, race

Schafer, Roy	white	Problems in Freud's Psychology of Women	7/10/2019	love, humanity, primitive
Solms, Mark	white	Psychoanalysis in Pursuit of Truth and Reconciliation on a South African Farm: Commentary on Gobodo-Madikizela	12/15/2015	love, humanity, black
Stephens, Michelle	white	"Playing Out" Our "Playing in the Dark": Racial Enactments and Psychoanalytic Institutions	11/2/2018	love, humanity, black, dark, race
Tutter, Adele	white	The Erotics of Knowing: A Neglected Contribution to Analytic Erotism	7/5/2018	love, humanity, primitive, dark

Table 2.

Reference Power

Across the listed 26 articles, a total of 1,195 references were cited. Four of the references were listed as panels or commissions, one listed "Anonymous" as its author, and I was unable to find any information for an additional fifteen authors, resulting in a total of 581 unique authors included in the following analysis.

Coding examined each author's respective sex, race, and whether or not they were a therapist. This coding undertaking was partly inspired by Stanford psychologist Steven Roberts and his team of researchers who, in their 2020 work, found that race was seldom explored in psychological publications and, when it was, it was done so by white editors and authors (Roberts, Bareket-Shavit, Dollins, Goldie, & Mortenson). Race has long been understood as a social construct (Roberts et al, 2020; Onwuachi-Willig, 2016; Gannon, 2016; Desmond-Harris, 2014) with real-world consequences, particularly access to resources and opportunity (Assari, 2017; American Psychological Association, 2017) and including access to academic publication (Roberts et al, 2020). Within Western racialized societies, white and white-assumed people (Nix & Qian, 2015; Bueno-Hansen & Montes, 2019) benefit from structures and systems rooted in white supremacy (Liu, 2017; Cooper, 2020; Smith, 2020).

Roberts et al. first "searched and categorized photos" of the authors to determine their race(s) and then "emailed the scholars to ask for their self-identified racial identity," all of which matched the team's

categorizations (de Witte, 2020).⁹ Similarly, I categorized all information for the authors based on information available on the Internet, including curricula vitae, Wikipedia pages, personal websites, and online obituaries. Given the relatively smaller scale of this project, authors were not emailed to confirm their race. With the exception of gender¹⁰, coding was conducted in a binary manner, e.g., “white” or “nonwhite” for Race and “yes” or “no” for Therapist¹¹. The findings of this coding process are presented in bullet point below:

- Of the 581 authors, 512 were coded as white and 69 were coded as nonwhite.
- Of the 581 authors, 343 were coded as therapists and 238 were not.
- Of the 343 therapists, 318 were coded as white and 25 were coded as nonwhite.
- Of the 318 white therapists, 204 were male and 114 were female.
- White people comprised 88% of all references.
- White therapists comprised 93% of all therapists.
- White male therapists comprised 59% of all therapists.

Stuart Hall describes a discourse as “a way of talking about or representing something. It produces knowledge that shapes perceptions and practice. It is part of the way in which power operates. Therefore, it has consequences for both those who employ it and those who are ‘subjected’ to it” (1992, p. 225). Within psychotherapeutic discourse, the voices and subjectivities that employ are predominantly white and predominantly male. Below I (re)introduce the voices and subjectivities of my analysis.

An Orientation

“I stood at the border, stood at the edge and claimed it as central. I claimed it as central, and let the rest of the world move over to where I was.” - **Toni Morrison**, 1988

I am making a claim. Throughout this dissertation project, I have highlighted how my ways of being are inextricably tied to my ways of knowing, how the two are in a continuous jig with one another. To do this, I have introduced a particular style of writing, one shaped by Black feminist ontoepistemology, by my worldview and knowledge. The analysis portion of this project called for reading, reading that I undertook in the same manner. I did not engage with this analysis, or any other part of this project, with generalizability in

⁹The Stanford team found that between 1974 and 2018, 83% of psychological journals’ editors-in-chief were white, 5% were people of color and 12% “were unidentifiable because the researchers were unable to code their race (for example, were deceased, retired or had no images online)” (de Witte, 2020).

¹⁰ Two authors identified as non-binary.

¹¹ “Therapist” included practicing psychologists, psychiatrists, and social workers. It did not include social psychologists, cognitive psychologists, or historians of psychoanalysis, among others.

mind. I engaged with specificity in mind - my specific ways of knowing and understanding as a Black woman. The voices who I cite in this analysis will appear in **bold** font, to separate them visually from the texts I have analyzed¹² and to honor the ways in which they have emboldened me to undertake this work.

I have been a student for a long time, which means I have been undergoing the mutual processes of learning and unlearning for decades now. This dissertation was another opportunity for such tension and growth. As stated, white academia and white psychotherapy have taught me my craft, have shaped many of the contexts in which I engage professionally and therapeutically. And for all that they have taught me, white academia and white psychotherapy could not teach me, on their own, how to read these texts. For this analysis, my task was not to engage with the author, but rather the discourse with which the author participates and contributes. This required a degree of unlearning. As a therapist, particularly a therapist with psychodynamic leanings, I have been trained to hear virtually all content as reflecting something - however telling - about the person who shares the content. A psychoanalyst in her own right, **Toni Morrison** writes, “[T]he subject of the dream is the dreamer” (1992, p. 17). For this task, I had to expand and shift my own understanding of the dreamer from the *person* to the *structure*. **Rhee** states the aim of such analysis is to “de-signify the author” and focus instead on text as “a discursive site” (2013, p. 568). I sought to hear what the content, and how the content was communicated, reflected about the discourse in which it is situated. In therapy, my ear is attuned to the subject. For this project, my ear was attuned to the subjectivity.

I did not come to the above understanding, or the process of this analysis, on my own. It was the work of my methodological mothers who toiled with me about technique and interpretation. It was the work of my spiritual mothers who shepherded me along the way. It was the work of my biological, warrior mother who inspired me each writing session with a spoken or written version of “May the muses be with you.”

I read with all of my mothers in mind. I am claiming us all as central.

Sister, Outsider

I want to start by formalizing a conversation between the texts of the two Black American authors whose work I examined, Dorothy Holmes and Dionne Powell. In *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the*

¹² Information related to analyzed texts will be underlined.

Literary Imagination, **Toni Morrison** asks, “What happens to the writerly imagination of a black author who is at some level always conscious of representing one’s own race to, or in spite of, a race of readers that understands itself to be ‘universal’ or race-free?” (1992, p. xiii). I answer, the imagination is always at work.¹³ The Black psychotherapeutic author must occupy multiple subjectivities at once, clearly conveying a sense of belonging to a white therapist audience while also advocating for those who have been excluded. It is a precarious undertaking.

At the beginning of her plenary titled “Come Hither, American Psychoanalysis: Our Complex Multicultural America Needs What We Have to Offer.” Holmes states explicitly, “I hope to convince you that how our society treats and mistreats its nondominant members is deeply and importantly represented in how all of us live” (2016, p. 569). For the Black psychotherapeutic author, specific strategies must be utilized to sweet-talk a white psychotherapeutic audience. The word choice in Holmes’s title suggests she is aiming to entice as much as she is to convince, tempt as much as teach. To do the work that is disruptive and loving - identifying the mistreatment of society’s nondominant members - it is first required that there be a joining with the larger white psychotherapeutic subjectivity. This joining is highlighted in the beginning of Powell’s paper, “Race, African Americans, and Psychoanalysis: Collective Silence in the Therapeutic Situation.” She writes:

Psychoanalysts have extensively explored the dynamics leading to the Holocaust, mass violence, genocide, and the seeds for within-nation conflicts that result in murderous violence, along with its psychological sequelae in a European context...Less explored is the psychic impact of American slavery on the minds of the nation’s inhabitants...This experience and others have led to my attempt here to understand our silence as American psychoanalysts when it comes to race, racism, and racialized trauma within the clinical situation (2019, p. 1023).

As **Christina Sharpe** notes in her text *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*, “[T]he disaster of the Holocaust is available as human tragedy in a way that slavery, revolution, and their afterlives are not” (2016). The psychic impact of American slavery, as Powell describes it, is “less explored” not because the exploration isn’t happening, but rather because the discourse has not permitted it, has not featured it as often or with as much insistence as topics that *become* “extensively explored.” In discussing the relative silence of American psychoanalysts on the human tragedy of slavery, Powell uses the pronoun “our.” Here is Powell’s piece, being

¹³ The imagination, or lack thereof, of the white psychotherapeutic author will also be explored.

decidedly not silent, but before a confrontation of the silence can take place, it must be assumed by its author as well.

Throughout their respective works, Holmes and Powell both regularly utilize the pronouns “we” and “our,” at times to describe themselves and other Black people, at times firmly situated in a white psychotherapeutic subjectivity. Powell calls for “a thorough consideration regarding *our* [emphasis added] own racial biases, white privilege, guilt, and sense of superiority as they interface and interfere with *our* [emphasis added] work” (2019, p. 1025). Holmes asks of her audience, “Do we care? I think we care, but I think we are scared. And so we blink” (2016, p. 577). **Fanon** describes speaking as “be[ing] in a position to use a certain syntax, to grasp the morphology of this or that language...above all to assume a culture” (1952, p. 8). For Holmes and Powell, the discursive strategy of using this syntax and assuming a white psychotherapeutic culture - of joining - offers a sense of safety for the audience.

The use of vignettes in both Powell and Holmes's texts engenders similar safety. Many psychotherapeutic papers - in my research and beyond - feature awe-inspiring, chill-inducing stories of clinical success.¹⁴ For this reason, Powell's vignette about a white patient whose racism was “killing him,” - a patient whose condition worsened each time he was examined by a physician of color - felt familiar. She states that this example highlights “the possibilities of bridging the racial divide,” which she accomplished as a third-year medical school resident and describes with ease. Where the patient's primary physicians were “baffled” after prolonged treatment, Powell cracks the case even before meeting him by “reading [his] chart” and speaking to his team (p. 1038). While the origins of the patient's symptoms were “unbeknownst to his medical team,” Powell had independently identified their “unique pattern” (p. 1038). In their first meeting, in her very first words to him, Powell names the patient's desire “to be treated by white people” and describes him as “relieved” and “visibly relaxed” by the understanding (p. 1038). At the end of Powell's case example, she writes, “Mr. J. looked forward to our talks and in a short time was discharged from the hospital with no further neurological events and an improved prognosis” (2019, p. 1040). This concludes the vignette. The patient

¹⁴ The patient's dream is perfectly interpreted, the therapist says “mumbrella” instead of “umbrella” and the patient uncovers a repressed memory of being left in the rain as a child, etc. You know how it goes.

engaged better, felt better, and would get better. In three paragraphs and 603 words, the patient is cured and Powell's "painful, transformative work" (p. 1040) is unexplored.

Holmes shares an inverted vignette, in which she is the patient and a white man her therapist. She writes, "I remember how my own training analyst helped me get started toward that freedom. In our first consultation, I said to him—a White man born and reared in the South—'I don't know if I can do this [with you]. You're White and you are from the South.' He answered, 'I will not seek to dissuade you from anything you may feel on either of those accounts. If you should decide to work with me, we shall see how it all comes out in the wash.' For me, his answer was just what I needed—the validation of my right to know my own mind, including racially" (p. 574). In these 105 words, there is even less imaginative onus for white therapists than in Powell's vignette. Positioning the white analyst as having provided just what their Black patient needed, without any fumbles or stumbles, allows for a reading that keeps white therapists firmly seated in their comfortable chairs. A white therapist can be both comfortable and, like the analyst described here, a hero. Work is mentioned, but as with Powell's vignette, it is not explored or described. In both Powell's and Holmes's vignettes, the work is incumbent on the Black party - whether she be therapist or patient - and it is omitted from the discourse, quite literally hidden from the view of white readers.

It is within this established safe space - after the joining and shielding - that the loving and disruptive work commences. In describing a formative moment from a Black patient's childhood, Holmes states: "[H]er sense of safety was traumatically disrupted when a group of young White men drove by and said, 'Hey, little nigger girl, want to fuck for a quarter?'" She continues, "My patient and I analyzed her chief complaint in several ways, including the recognition that there was an underlying wish to take an audience by surprise (most of her audiences were White) and insult them as she had been insulted" (2016, pp. 571-572). Holmes's language here disrupts the safety of her mostly white audience. Instead of euphemizing the slurs and crassness of the men in the anecdote, the language is written plainly. Holmes's patient was not shielded from the epithets and neither is the audience engaging. Much like the men in the car, the anecdote is passing and its impact is significant: a Black patient's Black experience is communicated by a Black analyst. As stated previously in this project, Black women "bring our lived realities" into whatever processes with which we engage (**Evans-Winters**, 2019, p. 17). This includes research, therapy, and, as underlined by Holmes's anecdote, discourse.

Evans-Winters continues, “Black women’s cemented status at the bottom of the social hierarchy enkindles a unique vantage point for the critique, analysis, and interpretation of sexist gender socialization and racial oppression” (2019, p. 17). The uniqueness of this vantage point is highlighted in Powell’s work. Powell utilizes footnotes in her text, in its early pages to comment on genocides committed against “Native and African peoples,” to explain her interchangeable use of the descriptors “African American” and “black,” and to implore an awareness of the implications of cross-racial therapy pairings (2019, pp. 1023, 1024). Though her entire piece explores facets of each of these concepts, the use of footnotes mirrors the way these ideas have been footnoted in psychotherapeutic discourse. **bell hooks** describes “the margin” as “part of the whole but outside the main body” (1984). Powell writes from the bottom in a larger effort to bring the marginalized out of the margins.

In her essay “Eye to Eye,” **Audre Lorde** contrasts the relatively unencumbered nature of white people, who, “by and large have more time and space to afford the luxury of scrutinizing their emotions” with the preoccupations of Black people, who “have always had to attend closely to the hard and continuous work of survival” (1984, p. 172). Within a psychotherapeutic context, Black therapists are tasked with scrutinizing the emotions of others *while* attending closely to the work of survival. The same is underlined in the discourse. Bodies - often marginalized and footnoted Black bodies - are featured prominently in Powell’s text, where the urgency of Black survival is made painfully clear. On its sixth page, there is a black and white picture of the 1930 Indiana lynching of Thomas Shipp and Abram Smith (p. 1026). The picture takes up roughly half the page. It took up more space in my mind. It is a picture I have seen before and, still, I looked on, at the bodies of Thomas and Abram and the faces, some smiling, of the white men and women below. In the seconds? minutes? that my gaze remained fixed, I was reminded that I had not been able to bring myself to watch the video of George Floyd’s murder. I was reminded that it did not matter whether I watched those 9 minutes and 29 seconds or not. I was reminded that I had seen and felt in my bones the lynchings of Black people for much of my life. And I thought to myself, “This image is not for me.” This image is an appeal to a community that is not mine, a community that, as **Smith** notes, has not had to insist upon its own humanity (1999). Two pages later, another appeal: an image of Michael Brown’s body sprawled in a Ferguson, Missouri street in 2014 (p. 1028). The image is in color. Michael’s blood is bright red. There is no preparation for either of these images,

no indication they will be just a scroll or turn of a page away. They are jarring and intrusive. These images meet at the nexus of appeal and wail.

Evans-Winters asserts, “research and writing practices by Black women should be witnessed as subtle acts of disobedience and defiance against race and gender (and age) oppression” (2019). I add that they should additionally be witnessed as overt acts of labor. The act of producing these texts, of engaging with a discourse dominated by white people and whiteness, is labor. Navigating complex and contrasting subjectivities, as Powell and Holmes do, is labor. It is all disruptive labor rooted in survival, the kind that allows *me* to engage with and speak to this discourse. “And survival,” notes **Audre Lorde**, “is the greatest gift of love” (1984, p. 150).

The Strange Situation

“That which is rendered separate or strange through fear is made whole through perfect love.” - **bell hooks**, *All About Love: New Visions*, 2000, p. 220

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While Black authors are navigating different voices and competing subjectivities, white authors are steering with Western epistemologies firmly at the helm.

“Blood on the leaves and blood at the root,” sang Billie Holiday in 1939 and Nina Simone in 1965. The strange fruit of psychoanalysis is evoked in Gentile’s 2020 paper, “Time May Change Us: The Strange Temporalities, Novel Paradoxes, and Democratic Imaginaries of a Pandemic.” She writes, “It became harder for those of us raised in relative comfort...to ignore the increasingly well-documented hate crimes directed at racial, sexual, and religious minorities...We especially those among us who shield ourselves in the cloak of white privilege, or for that matter white psychoanalysis, were ripe for time on the couch” (2020, pp. 650-651). Gentile’s use of the pronouns “we” and “us” suggest her paper is directed at those in the racial, sexual, and religious majorities for whom hate crimes can be a matter of ignoring instead of surviving. “Ripe” connotes fruit - or minds, as it were - ready to be picked instead of soured by inactivity. While Gentile’s words suggest a readiness to get on the couch, to put down the “shield” and take off the “cloak” of white privilege, her text belies the difficulty of the task. In discussing the Covid-19 pandemic, she stated focus in the title of her work, Gentile describes the coronavirus as an “invader” that has both disrupted - caused “paradoxical tensions” - and invigorated - prompted “daringly fresh imaginaries” (2020, p. 653). In the same paragraph, one sentence is

utilized to mention the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery. The sentence begins by suggesting the murders unsettled “new balance” and ends by suggesting their deaths have “barely registered in the prevailing (i.e. white) public consciousness” (2020, p. 653). There is a tension in these words, a tension in not mentioning these three people and their deaths until the fifth page of a paper suggesting it is ready to confront discomfort and bridge gaps between “us” and “them” (p. 651). **Smith** asserts, “The racialization of the human subject and the social order enabled comparisons to be made between the ‘u’ of the West and the ‘them’ of the Other” (1999, p. 32). **van Dijk** notes these comparisons “directly entail negative evaluations of THEM, or positive ones of US” (1993, p. 264). “Us” and “them” is further dichotomized and reified in Gentile’s work. The “them” is the slain and Black and the “us” is the “prevailing” and parenthetical white psychotherapeutic consciousness. The theme recurs in her writing. She notes how “cellphone videos and body cameras dispelled our blissful ignorance of racialized police brutality” (p. 650), decidedly not addressing those who cannot feign ignorance and certainly cannot claim bliss. She describes the “ethical obligation” to “turn and face the strange(r) and its, but also his/her/their, uncanny call,” suggesting engaging with “the weird” provides insight “for us” into “the experience that pervades the lives of many marginalized subjects” (p. 652). The descriptors - and distancers - *strange*, *weird*, and *uncanny* are linked to the “marginalized,” who are referred to as *subjects* instead of *people*. In the paragraphs that follow, Gentile switches gears to address free market globalization, capitalism, and “post-feudal imaginations” (p. 660). When Gentile returns to the subject of race, she writes, “If there is any point that Black Lives Matter insists upon, it is this: We cannot return to a harmony that never was, to the fantasy of a cohesive, unified society. We must enable a radically inclusive and egalitarian public sphere, which means further reckonings with privilege and loss...And with our *anti-blackness*. We can foster the emergence of immanent third spaces and thereby of desire, in all its errancy, queerness, and incoherent contradiction” (p. 661). Gentile’s use of the word “if” when referring to the tenets of the Black Lives Matter movement suggests there may not be many, perhaps not even the “point” made explicit in the name of the movement itself. The fantasy she names feels akin to the aforementioned “blissful ignorance” the “us” of her paper have engaged with. At an earlier point in this piece (p. 657), quotation marks were used around “*anti-blackness*,” which is now presented in italics, suggesting an uncertainty of how to engage with the concept even on a textual level. Gentile relegates all of these issues to a “third space,” one in

which Blackness and the Black Lives Matter movement are associated with errancy, queerness, and incoherent contradiction.

These shifts and struggles fall into a category **Bonilla-Silva** refers to as “rhetorical incoherence,” within which subject matter uncomfortable for the writer is written about in a confused, disjointed manner (2013, p. 116). For some psychotherapeutic writers, this rhetorical incoherence manifested as attempts to address various social issues at once - another author references Aleppo, Syria and illegal immigration in a paper about American racism (Moss, p. 348, p. 353) - and for others, it manifested as attempts to distance themselves from the uncomfortable subject matter altogether. In his paper, “Contextualized Language and Transferential Aspects of Context,” Siamak Movahedi writes about a patient who has been fired on several occasions for racial harassment. Movahedi says the patient presents differently in session, and “while on the couch, he is polite and speaks the language of a highly educated person” (2015, pp. 6-7). In describing his experience of this attorney patient, the words of Movahedi - himself a sociologist and psychoanalyst - convey an assumed distance between education and racism. Movahedi uses quotations when using the term “racist” (p. 10), questions why the patient is “playing [this] role” (p. 10), describes the fireable offenses as “reported racist speeches” (p. 12), and suggests the patient’s language is only “racist-sounding” (p. 13). Movahedi’s linguistic choices suggest the patient’s relationship to racism is tenuous at best, a relationship reflected in the larger psychotherapeutic discourse. Racism is classified as something separate from, and outside of, the “highly educated person.” In this construction, the discourse with which Movahedi is himself engaged and contributing positions racist utterances and racism as phenomena to be observed from afar (and disbelieved) instead of identified from within.

In describing the nature of this patient’s relationships with women, Movahedi states, “[His] past encounters with ‘big fat women’ have been problematic...He feels intimidated and becomes defensive if he meets an angry ‘big fat woman,’ and becomes excited, giggly, and childlike when he meets one who comes across as motherly and kind. Here I should add that he has no problem with Black women; he was close to being in love with a tall, young, overweight Black woman” (p. 14). Though he has stated repeatedly by this point in the paper that the patient has been fired for racist acts and attitudes, Movahedi asserts the patient “has no problem with Black women,” the evidence for which is the patient having been *close* to being in love with a

Black woman, the other descriptors for whom - tall, young - are puzzling. It is striking that the mention of Black women is written not only as an afterthought, but a thought that specifically comes after the words, “angry,” “motherly,” and “kind,” either exposing the author’s own associations to Black women or suggesting a link for his readers.

Ultimately, Movahedi concludes the patient’s racism is not racism at all, but instead a metaphor. He likens it to Viagra: “It maintains erection or pumps enough air into his phallus to stay afloat in an imaginary castrating context that, ironically, leads to his virtual symbolic castration: getting fired” (p. 21). Within the discourse, bigotry is repeatedly used as symbolism, engaged with as metaphor. As stated, Gentile’s 2020 piece utilizes the COVID-19 pandemic as a representative for the “invader.” After describing a dream wherein a patient “yell[ed] contemptuously at an immigrant dressmaker with an accent,” Coen (2018) understands the content as an unconscious message that he, a Jewish man, “had pushed her away too much...rather than helping her grasp” aspects of the treatment (p. 317). Moss (2016) spends several pages engaging with Kafka’s 1917 “A Report to an Academy,” a line from which inspires the title of his paper, “The Insane Look of the Bewildered Half-Broken Animal.” Kafka’s short story - about an African ape who addresses a room of academics after freeing himself from captivity - is understood by many as an allegory for the Jewish diasporic experience (Frohlich, 2016). In Moss’s piece, it becomes an extended metaphor for difference - between ape and human, between aggressor and aggressed against - a metaphor that feels especially bewildering during a time where Black people are still characterized as and likened to apes, and within a piece that attempts to discuss anti-Black hate crimes. Psychotherapeutic discourse encourages reading in one way only - in which oppression functions as a conduit to discuss ideas that are, in fact, *not* oppression.

As a Black woman for whom oppression functions as oppression, I offer a different reading of these texts. It is a privilege to utilize symbolism and metaphor to discuss bigotry, to have the cognitive freedom to search for concepts and images that approximate powerlessness. **Toni Morrison** describes why it is impossible for Black writers to rely on such “metaphorical shortcuts”: “I am a black writer struggling with and through a language that can powerfully evoke and enforce the hidden signs of racial superiority, cultural hegemony, and dismissive ‘othering’ of people and language which are by no means marginal or already and completely known and knowable in my work” (1992, p. xi). It is a privilege to engage with a text in which its author

describes feeling “sleepy and impatient for the session to end” and then describes this sensation as “oppression seep[ing] in” (Markman, 2018, p. 995). It is a privilege I do not have and a(nother) reminder the discourse is not produced with Black feminist sensibilities and knowledge in mind.

Even when authors are attempting to discuss bigotry and racism directly, as Donald Moss does in the aforementioned “The Insane Look of the Bewildered Half-Broken Animal,” white Western sensibilities are still in place. In the beginning of his paper, Moss references “the killer of nine people at Charleston’s Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church” saying “I have to do it. You rape our women and you’re taking over our country. And you have to go” (2016, p. 346). A choice was made to omit Dylann Roof’s name. Many have advocated for the names of mass murderers to be excluded in news stories and headlines, largely to curb glorification of killers and instead shift focus to victims and survivors (Selter, 2015; Lankford & Madfis, 2017; Raymond, 2019). In not writing Roof’s race, however, the stated intentionality of his crime - as captured by the included quote - are no longer grounded in their racial reality. Roof, a white man, wanted to kill Black people for being Black. And so he did. Erasing his name does not amplify those of the slain “nine people” - Clementa Pinckney, Cynthia Hurd, Susie Jackson, Ethel Lance, Depayne Middleton-Doctor, Tywanza Sanders, Daniel Simmons, Sharonda Coleman-Singleton, Myra Thompson. Erasing his, and their race, does not erase the atrocity. Instead, it compounds it.

Moss later writes of Roof, “It is this necessity to turn outward that leaves us, like him, forever vulnerable to both melancholy and rage...when we are caught, against our will, between an irrecoverable past and a depriving future. And it is here...that we, all of us, I think, will stare out, insane now: bewildered, half-broken, animal. The insane look, then, is a voracious look, one marking an embittered appetite aiming to restore a half-remembered, half-imagined, moment of sovereignty. ‘You rape our women and have taken over our country’” (2015, p. 353). Moss’s text has now placed Roof’s words into the reader’s mouth and attempted to place Roof’s fantasied consciousness into the reader’s mind. Roof is framed sympathetically - “vulnerable” - and compassionately - “melancholy” leading the way before “rage.”¹⁵ Moss need not name Roof as his words have done enough speaking and empathizing on his behalf. Laden in these words is the suggestion of a

¹⁵ This framing is consistent with media at large; white mass shooters are more likely to be written about with understanding and empathy than Black shooters (Frizzell, Lindsay, & Dubury, 2018).

universal experience that could lead “we, all of us” to commit a murderous hate crime. If this is a sleight of hand intended to uncover the shared humanity in “us” all, it is too slight; it is not that Roof and other homicidal white people are looking out *as* bewildered, half-broken animals, it is that they are looking *to* whom they perceive as half-broken animals. People like Clementa Pinckney, Cynthia Hurd, Susie Jackson, Ethel Lance, Depayne Middleton-Doctor, Tywanza Sanders, Daniel Simmons, Sharonda Coleman-Singleton, and Myra Thompson. People like me.

Moss continues, “I appeal to you to identify with me, to recall your own aberrant moments, your own encounters with that ‘insane look’ in some other, your violent impulses to eliminate it, to get it away and keep it away...If I can find comrades, I can move my experience from first person singular to first person plural...Turn ‘me’ on the platform into a beleaguered cop, turn the young man into a black kid in a hoodie...and we might have a dead boy instead of an untouched one” (2015, p. 357). Moss asks his reader to identify with him, to identify moments they - we - have also been dehumanizing. He states explicitly this is to find comrades for *him*, understanding for *him*, to move *his* experience to a place where he does not have to engage with this aberrance alone. This is a plea for an audience of people who are capable and willing to move with Moss in this manner, who are willing to identify with a sympathetically framed “beleaguered cop” and who are willing to humanize a process that continues to dehumanize others, even in Moss’s own text. Black people are not referenced directly again in Moss’s text until a later section where they/we are described thusly: “I used to go to a gym that had many ex-felons as members. These tough guys, mostly black, were always nice to me—calling me ‘Doc,’ going out of their way to compliment me when, for instance, I could bench press about half what they could” (p. 357). Here, Moss utilizes testimony, which **Bonilla-Silva** (2013) defines as “accounts in which the narrator is a central participant in the story or is close to the characters in the story.” He adds:

Testimonies provide the aura of authenticity and emotionality that only ‘firsthand’ narratives can furnish (‘I know this for a fact since I have worked all my life with blacks’). Therefore, these stories help narrators in gaining sympathy from listeners or in persuading them about points they want to convey. Though seemingly involving more detail and personal investment than story lines...many of the testimonies whites tell still serve rhetorical functions with regard to racial issues, such as saving face, signifying nonracialism, or bolstering their arguments on controversial racial matters (p. 125).

Moss’s testimony is intended to show connectedness to and warmth for these Black men, perhaps to all Black people. Instead, it reinforces racialized narratives; the men are described first as “ex-felons” and then

as “tough,” reifying centuries-old tropes about Blackness, criminality, and physical strength (see: **Fanon**, 1952). Their “niceness” is focused on Moss’s difference from them and contingent on, among other things, referring to him by his profession. Moss’s words intend to make these Black men palatable, but belies the larger modes with which he engages Blackness: Black people in his text are slain (the Charleston Nine), imaginary and slain (“a black kid in a hoodie”), or criminal. **Morrison** states, “The ability of writers to imagine what is not the self, to familiarize the strange and mystify the familiar, is a test of their power. The languages they use in the social and historical context in which these languages signify are indirect and direct revelations of that power and its limitations” (1992, p. 15). In psychotherapeutic discourse, Blackness and Indigenusness continue to be strange and whiteness and Westernness continue to be familiar.

In her 2015 paper “‘Language is There to Bewilder Itself and Others’: Theoretical and Clinical Contributions of Sabina Spielrein,” Adrienne Harris alludes to the limitations of psychotherapeutic discourse. She hypothesizes, “Perhaps our field has built a canonical story, as many empires do, upon the disappearance of indigenous people, many but not all of them women. Why does this matter? Klein and Anna Freud are great creative forces in psychoanalysis. As Isaac Newton famously remarked, ‘If I have seen a little further it is by standing on the shoulders of giants.’ This notion dates back to the twelfth century and has found expression ever since” (p. 738). In the preceding paragraph, Harris notes an instance in which the aforementioned Klein makes reference to Sabina Spielrein, the analyst about whom Harris is writing, only as a footnote. And here, in what functions as a footnote on the twelfth page of her own paper, Harris makes a passing mention of “the disappearance of indigenous people.” “Why does this matter?” she asks before not answering the question, suggesting that neither the disappearance nor the people matter. In mentioning Indigenous peoples, Harris, a white person writing about another white person, names three white people. This is exemplary of a specific kind of storytelling. Framing the field of psychotherapy as an “empire” is part of the story of psychotherapy. Suggesting, as a passing thought, that *perhaps* the empire is maintained on the disappearance of Indigenous peoples is part of the story of psychotherapy. Centering white people while disappearing nonwhite people is part of the story of psychotherapy. **Bonilla-Silva** says of stories:

[T]he stories we tell are not random, as they evince the social position of the narrators...Storytelling often represents the most ideological moments; when we tell stories we tell them as if there were only one way of telling them, as the ‘of course’ way of understanding what is happening in the world.

These are moments when we are ‘least aware that [we] are using a particular framework, and that if [we] used another framework the things we are talking about would have different meaning.’ This is also the power of storytelling—that the stories seem to lie in the realm of the given, in the matter-of-fact world. Hence stories help us make sense of the world but in ways that reinforce the status quo, serving particular interests without appearing to do so” (2013, p. 124).

Here, I urge my reader to engage with all of the text in this analysis as stories, to recognize they are peer-reviewed stories being told by psychotherapists to psychotherapists about psychotherapy and they are not random. Once these stories were published in their respective journals, they contributed to what is being understood as happening in the psychotherapeutic world and they reinforced the status quo of stories told and conversations had. The story that educatedness and racism are mutually exclusive, the story that whiteness is the center of experience, the story that psychotherapy is both separate from *and* uniquely equipped to understand social ills - these are the tales embedded in these texts. **Lorde** asks, “What does it mean when the tools of a racist patriarchy are used to examine the fruits of that same patriarchy?” She answers, “It means that only the most narrow perimeters of change are possible and allowable” (1984, p. 111). For psychotherapeutic discourse, it also means the most narrow perimeters of *understanding* are possible and allowable.

Color Coded

“She is not so afraid at night because she is the color of it.” - **Toni Morrison**, *Beloved*, 1984, p. 78

The grammar of psychotherapeutic discourse implores color be engaged with as it has been by white people for centuries. The grammar necessitates a foreclosing, a limitation, on language. What may have once been a linguistic shortcut has become a linguistic standard. *Dark*, *black*, and their derivatives are placeholders for all things negative and representative of all things undesirable. **Fanon** writes:

The torturer is the black man, Satan is black, one talks of shadows, when one is dirty one is black—whether one is thinking of physical dirtiness or of moral dirtiness. It would be astonishing, if the trouble were taken to bring them all together, to see the vast number of expressions that make the black man the equivalent of sin...Blackness, darkness, shadow, shades, night, the labyrinths of the earth, abysmal depths, blacken someone’s reputation; and, on the other side, the bright look of innocence, the white dove of peace, magical, heavenly light. A magnificent blond child—how much peace there is in that phrase, how much joy, and above all how much hope! There is no comparison with a magnificent black child: literally, such a thing is unwonted...In the collective unconscious of homo occidentalis, the Negro—or, if one prefers, the color black—symbolizes evil, sin, wretchedness, death, war, famine” (1952, p. 146, 147).

The number of expressions in the texts I examined was vast, though not so astonishing. Within these papers, patients “suffered an eclipse” (Harris, 2015, p. 737), therapists focused on “dark problems” (Harris, 2015, p. 742), “dark feelings,” “dark voices,” and “dark voids” (Griffin, 2020, p. 33, p. 37, p. 40). The “darker sides” of an analyst’s experience were associated with “hostility” and “unresolved aggression” (Ackerman, 2018, p. 73), analysts were encouraged “not to live out our dark side” (Coen, 2018, p. 324). One type of “darkness” was “unacknowledged appreciation and muted love” and a second “kind of darkness” was a “difficult period” (Cooper, 2018, p. 748, p. 750). A “very dark time” was denoted as “a time of desperate people, desperate cities, and a ravaged planet, of madmen and of dragons” (Moss, 2016, p. 345). A reference to the biblical creation story described the “dark heart of the Garden of Eden—the dirty secret, the primal scene, the sinful specter” (Tutter, 2018, 432).

While drawing parallels between a psychoanalytic concept and *Moby Dick*, an author hones in on the color of Melville’s whale: “More uncanny...is the pairing of whiteness, invoking ‘the fleece of the celestial innocence and love,’ with the terrifying, murderous nature of the whale” (Ackerman, 2017, p. 15). The author does not say why this pairing is “uncanny,” simply that it is. Her words, and the text she quotes to support them, suggest it is expected the color white be associated with “innocence and love,” but odd it be linked with terror and murderousness. There is no further explication on this perceived abnormality. The omission suggests both writer and audience share a knowledge which dictates there is another color better suited for such a nature. This is one reading of *Moby Dick*. **Toni Morrison** provides another: “The language of this chapter ranged between benevolent, beautiful images of whiteness and whiteness as sinister and shocking...Melville is not exploring white *people*, but whiteness idealized” (1988, p. 143-144). Similarly, psychotherapeutic discourse is not exploring Black people, but Blackness dehumanized. **Lorde** writes of her childhood ruminations: “Did bad mean Black? The endless scrubbing with lemon juice in the cracks and crevices of my ripening, darkening, body. And oh, the sins of my dark elbows and knees, my gums and nipples, the folds of my neck and the cave of my armpits!” (1984, p. 149). Engaging with psychotherapeutic text, I am confronted with a similar quandary. How am I to discern whether you mean your un/consciousness and conflict or my body?

In *Playing in the Dark, Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*, **Morrison** notes the

dependence on racialized language “offers historical, political, and literary discourse safe routes into meditations on morality and ethics; a way of examining the mind-body dichotomy; a way of thinking about justice; a way of contemplating the modern world” (1992, p. 64). Psychotherapeutic discourse is playing in the dark, offering psychotherapy itself as the safe route, the light, the cure to the bad bad internal darkness. Describing her patient’s progress in treatment, Elise (2017) observes, “Her personality seems to be brightening” (2017, pp. 45-46). Cooper (2018) writes of a therapist’s work, “The light we try to shed is often unseen” (p. 746). He continues, “The patient is afraid to bare his vulnerability to the light of day, much as archaeologists who have discovered an ancient site fear its excavation lest exposure to air and sunlight destroy what has been preserved through centuries of darkness” (p. 747). Centuries of whiteness have encouraged and maintained the belief that the light is where progress is made, that the light is progress itself, a force against the backwards, primitive darkness. Psychotherapy has preserved these positionalities, folded them into the practice. The site of psychotherapy must continue to be excavated. The practice must continue to be disrupted.

Lorde writes, “It is difficult to construct a wholesomeness model when we are surrounded with synonyms for filth” (1984, p. 161). It is difficult. And, like many difficulties touched by a Black feminist imagination, it can be overcome. Building on **Dillard**’s call for an endarkened feminist epistemology in academia (2000), **McClish-Boyda** and **Bhattacharya** employ an endarkened methodological framework. They write of the word choice, “The use of endarkened seeks to disrupt oppressive language and transform the language used to understand the mental, spiritual, and intellectual epistemologies of marginalized peoples through various culturally constructed contexts” (2021, p. 3). Within a therapeutic model, *dark* could instead connote the kind of knowledge **Lorde** speaks of, “that dark and true depth...within each of us that nurtures vision” (1984, p. 68). Therapists could instead encourage patients to embrace “what is dark and ancient and divine within [themselves] that aids [their] speaking” (**Lorde**, 1984, p. 69). In a disrupted and disruptive discourse, darkness can be what is most honest instead of most shameful. Darkness can be what is guiding and instructive and instrumental instead of what is to be overcome and repelled. Instead of playing in the dark - limiting its language and imagination - psychotherapy can practice in the dark.

“Definitions,” writes **Morrison**, “belonged to the definers - not the defined” (1987, p. 190). It is time for more definers.

Like Beyoncé, Like Me

“I’m a savage

Classy, bougie, ratchet

Sassy, moody, nasty”

- *Savage*, **Megan Thee Stallion**, 2020

I wrote earlier in this dissertation project that psychotherapeutic discourse has developed in such a way that allows academics and therapists to use the term *primitive* without explicitly referring to colonized peoples. I must amend this to say instead, without *needing to* explicitly refer to colonized peoples. Whether *primitive* is being used to describe “agonies” (Cairo, 2017, p. 320; Gentile, 2020, p. 656) or “psychic structures” (Rizzolo, 2016, p. 1110), it is always invoking a shared association to peoples considered less sophisticated, less complex, and less human. A common trend is the use of *primitive* as analogous to *childlike*. In some writing it is contrasted with “mature” (Harris, 2015, p. 745), in others it is used interchangeably with “infantile” (Rizzolo, 2016). In most contexts, *primitive* is associated with what is personally unwanted and socially unacceptable. One writer labels his “furious” desire to “beat” and “punish” a fellow subway passenger a “primitive wish” (Moss, 2016, pp. 355-356), another answers the question, “What makes primitive defenses primitive?” with “aggression, or sadism...violent character” (Rizzolo, 2018, p. 953). Sometimes *primitive* is used as a noun instead of an adjective - (Cooper, 2018, p. 752; Rizzolo, 2018, p. 955) - more directly addressing a particular kind of being. Discussing the history of these categorizations, **Smith** describes a “systematic fragmentation” highlighted in the “disciplinary carve-up of the indigenous world: bones, mummies and skulls to the museums, art work to private collectors, languages to linguists, ‘customs’ to anthropologists, beliefs and behaviours to psychologists” (Smith, 1999, p. 28). She continues, “[T]he ‘savage’ was internalized as a psychological and moral space within the individual that required ‘repression, denial and disciplinary restraint’” (p. 45). As with *dark*, the *primitive* space is filled with conflict and unruliness, both to be restrained and quashed. As asserted by **Smith**, and highlighted in the above examples, the purported beliefs and behaviors of Indigenous peoples have been shrunken down into colonially-defined defenses and psychic experiences. The rest of the being has been discarded, the humanity sufficiently stripped.

In his revealingly titled “The Specter of the Primitive,” **Rizzolo** (2018) states he is arguing for “discarding the term primitive” in favor of “a more accurate understanding of lifespan unconscious

development” (2018, p. 972). It is striking that the basis of discarding this term is intellectual in nature (speaking to the civilized) instead of interpersonal (decidedly not speaking to those who may be dehumanized). More striking is that Rizzolo’s text makes no effort at all to discard the term *primitive*. He makes mention of the “aboriginal subject” (p. 946) and expounds on the practices of “primitive man” by listing “rituals” associated with Egypt, Japan, Java, and “Dyak villages” (p. 949). He writes later of the “prejudice of Western superiority,” which works “unconsciously, by force of tradition” and “suggest[s] that the analyst is more rational -- indeed more evolved -- than his primitive patient” (p. 958). Rizzolo does not buck this tradition or do more than name the prejudice. Instead, the traditional prejudice is underlined throughout his paper, most notably in his following paragraph, where he discusses a case example of a Black patient. It is the only case example in the paper and it directly follows the mention of the “primitive patient.” Making further reference to the patient’s “primitive constitution,” he alludes to “several cases in which African American patients of low socioeconomic status showed difficulty tolerating anxiety in the analytic situation, a focus on concrete help, and a tendency to communicate intense affect through nonverbal action (e.g., missed sessions and nonpayment)” (p. 958).

Here, Black patients are not just *associated* with primitivity, they/we are used as an outright illustration of such. *Primitive* is linked to Blackness and low SES, which is, in turn, linked to “difficulty” and “intensity” in the treatment space, including “nonverbal” acting out, namely not showing up and not paying up. In this case example, the primitive is the specter of the treatment, haunting the analyst and the analytic situation. The patient’s *primitive constitution* is an impediment on the therapeutic work, which is prevented from progressing as intended. Of note, Rizzolo uses the word “concreate” to describe the nature of help sought by such patients. It is possible this is a typo, that “concrete” was intended. In outdated British English, “concreate” meant “to create at the same time” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Read with this definition in mind, Rizzolo could have been suggesting that some patients are more focused on feeling connected to and joined with their therapist, more invested in help grounded in mutually generated trust and understanding. Given the context of Rizzolo’s words, however, such a reading feels like a stretch of the imagination. Instead of being discarded as a marker for peoples of time past, *primitive* is expanded - concreated, as it were - to include the modern patient, specifically the modern poor, Black patient.

In psychotherapeutic text, what could otherwise be understood as *different* ways of engaging are codified as *lesser* ways of engaging. That these allegedly lesser, *primitive* ways can still so directly reference the Indigenous, the Black, and the melanated - across regions, across time periods - is not accidental. **Hall** writes of the “dominant way in which...the West represented itself and its relation to ‘the Other’” being grounded in “language of racial inferiority and ethnic superiority” (1992, p. 225). **Toni Morrison** (1984) explains the phenomenon thusly: “Whitepeople believed that whatever the manners, under every dark skin was a jungle” (p. 198). It is true there is a jungle under my dark skin. It is the same rhythmic, bustling jungle **Zora Neale Hurston** recounts:

This [jazz] orchestra grows rambunctious, rears on its hind legs and attacks the tonal veil with primitive fury, rending it, clawing it until it breaks through to the jungle beyond. I follow those heathen--follow them exultingly. I dance wildly inside myself; I yell within, I whoop; I shake my assegai above my head, I hurl it true to the mark yeeeeooww! I am in the jungle and living in the jungle way. My face is painted red and yellow and my body is painted blue. My pulse is throbbing like a war drum. I want to slaughter something--give pain, give death to what, I do not know. But the piece ends. The men of the orchestra wipe their lips and rest their fingers. I creep back slowly to the veneer we call civilization with the last tone and find the white friend sitting motionless in his seat, smoking calmly (Hurston, 1928).

And it is the same jungle **Houston A. Baker, Jr.** describes: “I am prompted to move with the pure spirit of being. I begin dancing around the furnace with light abandon...I am possessed by some primitive god of fire; I feel joyful and secure. I am supremely happy, highvoiced, fluid” (Baker, 1999, as cited in hooks, 2004). In a white psychotherapeutic imagination, *primitive* communicates *absence* - of personhood - and *regressing*. In a Black ontoepistemological imagination, *primitive* is about *presence* and *being*. Being connected, being alive, being free, being authentic.

The discourse is instead preoccupied with being civilized, with ensuring that there are no assegais, no gods of fire. The “empire” of psychotherapy, as named by **Harris** (2015, p. 738), is grounded on this foundation, which includes moral stances like keeping the treatment space “protected from desecration” (**Coen**, 2018, p. 326) and underlining the “socially acceptable routes” that comprise civilization (**Ackerman**, 2020, p. 562). **Aron** (2009) describes an early divide imposed between psychoanalysis and psychotherapy wherein “psychoanalysis was for those who were more psychologically developed...psychotherapy was for those less developed.” He adds, “Psychoanalysis was civilized, psychotherapy primitive...psychoanalysis was White and

wealthy in contrast to psychotherapy, which was for those without such values or finances—Blacks, minorities, and the poor” (p. 663).¹⁶

The history and discourse of psychotherapy underscore that the constructs *primitive* and *civilized* have been crucial in its understanding of itself. **Hall** (1992) expands, “[M]eaning always depends on the relations that exist between the different terms or words within a meaning system...the words ‘night’ and ‘day’ on their own can’t mean anything; it is the difference between ‘night’ and ‘day’ which enables these words to carry meaning (to signify)” (p. 188). In psychotherapeutic discourse, cultures, constitutions, and defenses are deemed *primitive in relation to* a predetermined civilized standard. **Sardar** (2008) writes, “All these disciplines and discourses are the products of a culture which sees itself hierarchically at the top of the ladder of civilization” (p. xvi). **Smith** says of this hierarchy: “When confronted by the alternative conceptions of other societies, Western reality becomes reified as representing something ‘better,’ reflecting ‘higher orders’ of thinking and being less prone to the dogma, witchcraft and immediacy of people and societies which were so ‘primitive’” (1999, p. 48). In asserting itself as a civilized discipline - a disciplined discipline - psychotherapy has maintained and sustained *primitive*, which is reified each time it is invoked in the discourse, in speech spoken and written.

Whose Ethics Are They Anyway?

The language of civilized and uncivilized, human and nonhuman, has also permeated the discourse’s understanding of ethics. In her 2020 paper “Impossible Ethics,” Sarah Ackerman makes note of the “ideals that humanity and civilization have set up for us,” writing, “Being human makes an ethical demand of us that our animal natures are inclined to reject” (p. 564). Ackerman uses the pronoun “us,” establishing her audience is other people who are more human than animal in nature, who are the in-group of humanity and civilization. Ethics, it is demonstrated here, is a map for how the civilized engage. At a later point in her text, Ackerman explores how a patient may understand their therapist: “[H]ow should she regard her analyst? Is he a person? An object? A fantasy? An employee?...In this way, analysis can be seen as a foundational enactment of what is

¹⁶ The remnants of this bifurcation are highlighted as much within the discourse as they are within practice; the majority of practicing psychologists and psychiatrists are white (Lin, Stamm, & Christidis, 2018; Wyse, Hwang, Ahmed, Richards, & Deville, 2020) and ethnic minorities remain less likely to have access to treatment or seek it when they/we do (St. John, 2016).

essential in every ethical encounter between two human beings” (2020, p. 579). It is striking that Ackerman does not ask what *kind* of person the analyst is, but rather *if* the analyst is a person at all. This conundrum presented itself repeatedly in the texts. In her paper titled “The Fundamental Ethical Ambiguity of the Analyst as Person,” Jane Kite explores the “historical reluctance to think about the practicing analyst as a person” (Kite, 2016, p. 1154) and suggests “we may become analysts in the first place in order to clarify who we are ethically to ourselves” (p. 1160). Kite’s musing runs parallel to the discourse’s difficulties in clarifying who is a person. To pose the question, or suggest the matter is fundamentally ambiguous, presupposes and perpetuates the notion that there are people who are, in fact, not people. Contemplation about personhood is itself a remnant of colonial ways of understanding. **Smith** describes how the presumed inability to do so “disqualified” Indigenous peoples “not just from civilization but from humanity itself” (1999, p. 25). She adds, “Ideas about what counted as human in association with the power to define people as human or not human were already encoded in imperial and colonial discourses” (p. 25).

In the beginning of her paper “Acknowledging the Analyst as Person’: A Developmental Achievement,” Susan Kattlove (2016) states, “The question I would like to investigate is the ethical implications of acknowledging the analyst’s personhood” (p. 1207). Reflecting on her own experience, she writes, “[A]cknowledging that my personhood would affect the patient felt like more than I could bear in going about my daily work. It was much more comfortable to imagine that I was uninvolved, and to maintain what my superego would consider the ethical position” (p. 1211). She speaks later of the way “our personhood may infect the treatment” (p. 1212). This framing, of the ethical position as a distanced position and personhood as a potential contaminant within therapeutic work, is reflective of Western ways of engaging. **Smith** details:

One of the concepts through which Western ideas about the individual and community, about time and space, knowledge and research, imperialism and colonialism can be drawn together is a concept of distance. The individual can be distanced, or separated, from the physical environment, the community...Distance again separated the individuals and power from the subjects they governed. It was also impersonal, rational and extremely effective. In research the concept of distance is most important as it applies the neutrality and objectivity on behalf of the researcher (1999, p. 56).

The Western researcher subjectivity that Smith describes has molded the Western psychotherapeutic subjectivity centered in these texts. This particular ethical conversation within the discourse¹⁷ prioritizes the negotiation of personhood in the treatment space - saying nothing of the “ethics” of negotiating personhood in the world at large - and highlights an ethics grounded in distance, in white Western ways of knowing. **bell hooks’s** imagining of a love ethic instead engages a Black feminist epistemology:

Awakening to love can happen only as we let go of our obsession with power and domination . Culturally, all spheres of American life -- politics, religion, the workplace, domestic households, intimate relations should and could have as their foundation a love ethic. The underlying values of a culture and its ethics shape and inform the way we speak and act. A love ethic presupposes that everyone has the right to be free, to live fully and well. To bring a love ethic to every dimension of our lives, our society would need to embrace change (2000, p. 87).

A love ethic does not ponder personhood, but instead presupposes it. Within the discourse, and the practice it informs, a love ethic would be between people, between humans recognized as such. Embracing a love ethic would be a fundamental epistemological shift for psychotherapeutic discourse and practice alike. **hooks** asserts, “[L]oving practice is not aimed at simply giving an individual greater life satisfaction; it is extolled as the primary way we end domination and oppression” (2000, p. 76). In a love ethic, the work of a therapist would involve a commitment not only to the clients and patients who sit across from us, but also to the social world that shapes and informs us. In a love ethic, patient and therapist, person and society, jig together, defy together.

Love: A Confusion

“As I think about anyone or anything – whether history or literature or my father or political organizations or a poem or a film – as I seek to evaluate the potentiality, the life-supportive commitment and possibilities of anyone or any thing, the decisive question is always where is the love?” – **June Jordan**, 1981

In establishing the clarifying role of a love ethic within a culture, **hooks** observes, “[M]any of us are not sure what we mean when we talk of love or how to express love” (2000, p. xxvii). This confusion was highlighted in a number of the texts analyzed for this project. Sometimes *love* was addressed as such directly.

¹⁷ During my data collection, the search term *love* yielded articles on boundary violations, specifically explorations of ethical conflicts when sexualized love, or sex itself, enters the treatment space. These articles did not meet inclusion criteria for my analysis, but underline a common context in which both ethics and love are understood in the discourse.

Reflecting on his family's history, Coen asserts in his paper: "My patients deserved to be treated with respect, dignity, and love, certainly not to be misused, as they may have been, or as I may have been" (2018, p. 321). Discussing the aims of a treatment, Cairo references Harold Searles, stating, "If you can love your patient you're probably doing the most you can, leaving him or her with the most you can when it ends" (2017, p. 319). Sometimes the concept was named, but framed restrictively, with the therapist having to curb a patient's wishes and desires. Ackerman (2020) writes of patients "expecting a curative kind of love, receiving what their parents and caretakers failed to deliver. It falls on the analyst to awaken patients from this dream...but to do so in a way that offers them something far more valuable" (p. 570). Here, the patient's hope to receive love is characterized as a "dream" from which they must be stirred. Though Ackerman states there is something "far more valuable" that can be gleaned in the place of love, she does not name the something for her reader. She restates later, "The patient is drawn into analysis by a desire to receive the love that was unavailable in childhood," this time after discussing the "seductive elements" a patient brings to the treatment space (p. 574). With this pairing, a patient's desire for corrective love is made illicit and taboo. Further, the focus on what was absent in a patient's familial past eliminates the possibility that a patient could be seeking love unavailable in their current social world.

In other discursive contexts, *love* went by different names. Markman (2018) describes "presence" as "mutual receptivity that is beyond words...It means the way one gives oneself to another, is hospitable to another, and how this is received and reciprocated" (p. 982). He later describes "beauty" as "a new state of mind, an experience of expanding meaning and value that alters one's sense of self in the world...It transforms states ruled by habit and the familiar into one that is alive, fresh, and full of new possibilities. Beauty breaks us out of habitual ways of being and relating" (p. 987). Harris (2015) mentions her wish to "restore [her patient's] individuality and brilliance and engage her as a member of several extraordinary groups" (p. 757). Stephens (2018) notes a desire for "a shared humanity" (p. 948). In a Black feminist ontoepistemology, all of the above would be named and understood as *love*. **Smith** describes the intentional nature of language, particularly naming: "It is about retaining as much control over meanings as possible. By 'naming the world' people name their realities" (1999, p. 158). **Paolo Freire** adds, "The naming of the world is an act of creation and re-creation, [it] is not possible if it is not infused with love" (1968). By and large, love as a tool of interpersonal

liberation and intracommunity expansion is not a current reality for psychotherapeutic discourse. And yet, there was one particular paper that “exploded and undermined” this trend (**Morrison**, 1992, p. 16) and captured love in all of its disruptive potential.

Love: A Spotlight

“So what can we really do for each other except – just love each other and be each other’s witness? And haven’t we got the right to hope – for more? So that we can really stretch into whoever we really are?” – **James Baldwin**, 1962

The most loving paper I read for this dissertation project was Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela’s “Psychological Repair: The Intersubjective Dialogue of Remorse and Forgiveness in the Aftermath of Gross Human Rights Violations.” Published in 2015, Gobodo-Madikizela’s piece is a psychoanalytic exploration of the political and personal dynamics of South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). In the second paragraph of her paper, she writes, “With few exceptions...analysis of the responses of forgiveness, remorse, and apology to mass atrocity from a psychoanalytic perspective has received less attention than analysis of forgiveness in the context of patient-therapist relationships” (p. 1086). Here, early into her piece, Gobodo-Madikizela highlights a pattern that revealed itself in my research: psychotherapeutic discourse is more focused on the relationship to the patient in the room than it is on the patient in the world.

Humanity and humanness are central to Gobodo-Madikizela’s investigation of the political proceedings of the TRC and central to her text. As she describes throughout, shared humanity is the default and dehumanization is a rupture (p. 1095). **Wilkerson** (2020) writes of dehumanization: “To dehumanize another human being is not merely to declare that someone is not human, and it does not happen by accident. It is a process, a programming...Dehumanize the group and you have completed the work of dehumanizing any single person within it. Dehumanization distances not only the out-group from the in-group, but those in the in-group from their own humanity” (pp. 142-143). Gobodo-Madikizela emphasizes the importance of corrective reciprocity for both the dehumanized out-group and the dehumanizing in-group. Repeatedly she highlights a “shared moral humanity” between perpetrator and perpetrated against, asserting that remorse (from the perpetrator) and forgiveness (from the perpetrated against) afford the opportunity for the humanity of both to be restored (p. 1111).

Gobodo-Madikizela notes works by Shakespeare “feature prominently in psychoanalytic journals as subjects of psychoanalytic investigation” (p. 1098)¹⁸. Her own investigation is centered on the TRC; it is through attending and witnessing the proceedings that Gobodo-Madikizela establishes her clinical and psychoanalytic arguments. These are decidedly different reference points. The names she privileges throughout the body of her text are similarly disruptive. Throughout the paper, the names of the Black South African citizens who gave public testimony at the TRC - Nomonde Calata, Owen McGregor, Anne-Marie McGregor - are featured in the same space as the names of prominent white psychoanalysts. Gobodo-Madikizela recognizes their humanity in this context, gives them esteem in this psychotherapeutic body.¹⁹

While other papers used “we” to signify a psychotherapeutic subjectivity, Gobodo-Madikizela’s use of the pronoun - which occurred only five times in 35 pages of text - referenced not just psychotherapists, but also a specific South African subjectivity. Two of her uses of “we” appear in her explanation of the South African term, *ubuntu*. She writes:

Ubuntu is often associated with the concept of self ‘I am because we are,’ which stands in contrast to the Cartesian ‘I think, therefore I am.’ While recognizing the role of the individual, ubuntu values a sense of solidarity with others—the individual always in relation—rather than individual autonomy...Literally translated, this means, ‘A person is a person through being witnessed by, and engaging in reciprocal witnessing of other persons,’ or ‘A person becomes a human being through the multiplicity of relationships with others.’ (p. 1089).

Audre Lorde draws a similar parallel in her essay, “Poetry Is Not a Luxury,” stating: “The white fathers told us: I think I, therefore I am. The Black mother within each of us - the poet - whispers in our dreams: I feel, therefore I can be free” (1984, p. 38). If I were to bridge the sentiments of these two Black women, and duly discard the sentiment of the white man, it might be something like, I am seen, therefore I can see. The sentiment, and the crux of loving, is captured again in the closing pages of Gobodo-Madikizela’s text: “Reciprocal recognition of the other’s humanity, acknowledging the reality of each other’s pain and suffering, whatever its source, is the kind of empathy that creates pathways to caring for the other as a fellow human being” (2015, p. 1112).

¹⁸So do the works of a lot of other white men.

¹⁹ In one of the footnotes of her text, Gobodo-Madikizela mentions the experience of a white South African artist who was moved to incorporate aspects of the testimony into her work. This white woman, and her emotional reaction, are parenthetical, not taking up space in the body of the writing, not being centered.

Gobodo-Madikizela's text highlights the restorative, revolutionary potential of love. Her message, and her choice of discursive strategy, are situated firmly in a love ethic. "Choosing love we also choose to live in community," **hooks** (1994) writes. The use of the term *community* here is key. As **Smith** notes, "'Community' conveys a much more intimate, human and self-defined space, whereas 'field' assumes a space 'out there' where people may or may not be present" (1999, p. 127). Gobodo-Madikizela's South African subjectivity emphasizes the importance of community and mutuality and stands in stark contrast to the majority of other texts analyzed in this project. Unlike Gobodo-Madikizela's paper, the *field* of psychotherapy represented and reflected in the discourse at large is still not engaged with all humans in their full humanity, all persons in their full personhood. And so there is a limit on love.

Love: An Expansion

Here are the restated findings of my critical analysis of psychotherapeutic discourse:

- Black psychotherapeutic authors occupy multiple subjectivities at once within the discourse and engage in complex acts of labor. This labor is loving.
- When attempting to engage structural or systemic oppression within the discourse, white authors stumble through patterns of rhetorical incoherence.
- The discourse encourages engagement with linguistic shortcuts, wherein concepts like oppression and bigotry are conduits to discuss intrapsychic experiences.
- The discourse frames whiteness as the center of experience and others Blackness, Indigenoussness, and other nonwhite perspectives.
- The discourse engages color - particularly the terms *dark* and *black* - as another metaphorical shortcut, wherein the two terms connote badness.
- The discourse relies on the term *primitive* as a marker and signifier for itself as a civilized discipline.
- The discourse frames personhood as an ethical quandary.
- The discourse is vague about what constitutes love and inconsistent about its appropriateness in the work.

Academic discourse, notes **Smith**, "is a form of selecting, arranging and presenting knowledge. It privileges sets of texts, views about the history of an idea, what issues count as significant." She adds the potential exists to "reinforce and maintain a style of discourse which is never innocent" (1999, p. 36). **Sharpe** elaborates, "[T]he same set of questions and issues are presenting themselves to us across these historical periods. It [is] the same story that is telling itself, but through the different technologies and processes of that particular period" (2006). Psychotherapy is still telling itself the same story, asking itself the same questions, and maintaining a discourse rooted in the history of the field instead of a potential future of the community. To

be more loving, to move towards a more loving framework, the practice and praxis of psychotherapy must make room for endarkened ways of knowing, uncivilized ways of being, and epistemologically diverse ethics. It must reconfigure the dimensions of the therapeutic room and the community in which it is situated. Psychotherapy has the potential to be a place where domination is excised instead of perpetuated, where power structures are uprooted instead of reified. With intention and love in tow, I believe we can get there. We can expand.

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