Designing for Equity:
Social Impact in Performing Arts-Based Cultural Exchange

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
Requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in Culture and Performance

by

Sara Murdock

2018
ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Designing for Equity:
Social Impact in Performing Arts-Based Cultural Exchange

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Doctor of Philosophy in Culture and Performance
University of California, Los Angeles, 2018

Professor David H. Gere, Chair

This dissertation focuses on the concept of social equity in the context of performing arts-based cultural exchange. The work draws upon with Performance Studies and Cultural Studies, reviews several examples through Critical Race Studies and Memory Studies lenses, and then makes advances in Whiteness Studies. All cases revolve around the performing arts as a vehicle for bridging difference. From a practical vantage, the dissertation reviews how organizations do or do not succeed in activating their intentions in an equitable fashion. The document culminates in a Checklist for Social Good, offering a tangible way to link programmatic intentions with implementation. Fieldwork cited includes interviews, ethnographies, and participant observations to determine how programmatic design within cultural exchange has affected social narratives, such as whose cultures have value and on whose terms the programs progress. The dissertation is
particularly concerned with the ways in which different worldviews and cultures can communicate effectively so as to decrease violence and xenophobia. While no one means of communication across difference is superior, the project focuses on art, and specifically performance, as a means of dialogue and sense-based learning that augments other, sometimes superficial, forms of encounter.

Chapter one sets the scene by positioning the author’s entry into the cultural exchange field, and goes on to explore the notion of exchange in general. It argues that learning and exchange are largely synonymous, and that both are sense-based processes that occur via the body. Chapters two and three review multiple organizations that utilize performing arts as a method for bringing together people from various parts of the world. Chapter two is dedicated to the Asia Pacific Performance Exchange (APPEX), which opened questions regarding inter-ethnic communications and experimented with ways to talk about politics and barriers through performance aesthetics. Chapter three compares MovementExchange—an Edu-touristic model—with *Puentes de Poder*, which is dedicated to exploring African diasporic aesthetics. Both organizations work primarily in Panama City and in California. In each case, the intentions of the program’s founders were often lost or misaligned with the program design or implementation. One of the programs, *Puentes de Poder*, did have more success in aligning the founder’s objectives with her enactment because she was happy to wait for more equitable opportunities to implement. While her ability to wait harmed the organization on a financial basis, staying true to the vision meant that there was almost no discrepancy between goals and results, particularly in regards to the efficacy of intercultural communications.

The first chapter introduces the notion of a Self/Other dialectic, which is then discussed in great detail in chapter four. Exploring the formation of Selfhood frames how humans develop
fear of and/or exoticization of Others. This inquiry is crucial to understanding patterns of valuation and devaluation of entire cultures and of individual humans, and is thus related to both institutional treatment of groups and how humans behave on a daily basis.

Chapter five focuses on assessing programmatic impact through the lens of Impact for Social Good. Although young and applied in varying ways across sectors, the framework is useful because it asks leaders to marry intention with output. The chapter reviews the attempts of several institutions to codify the concept of “social good” and what metrics might be used to assess its implementation. Based on my case study and theoretical work, I offer a Checklist for Social Good that organizational leaders can use to assess whether a project is socially equitable. While designed with international and intercultural collaboration in mind, the Checklist reflects power flows and the ways in which dominance or subjugations are insidiously ignored or perpetuated. The Checklist is highly accessible because it refrains from academic language, but is rigorous in that it requires serious reflection on how intentions are manifested in practice.

While this dissertation incorporates a wide range of data, theories, and discussions, its overarching imperative is to highlight an assessment of “what is” within any given project in order to better support what “could be.” In the culminating pages, I note how the reaction to this project thus far has been one of agreement but also of a desire to ignore the topic. This project underscores prior work done on Self/Other, Critical Race Studies, Cultural Studies, and organizational assessments, thus adding valuable insight into how these topics fit together. Additionally, the project opens new discussions on Aesthetic Capital, Selfhood Capital, and Social Equity assessment that not only push academic discourse, but also address a humanistic inquiry into systems of power.
The dissertation of Sara Murdock is approved.

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University of California, Los Angeles

2018
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Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exchange: What we Mean and What we Want to Mean</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Making of an Art Tank: Intercultural Encounters through Aesthetics and Institutions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faces of Exchange: Cultural Legacy through Edu-tourism and Social Ethics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Imaginaries and other Simplifiers: Recognizing Whiteness and Power Flows</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessing Equity: A Checklist for Social Good</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works Cited</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Figures

Figure 1: Movement Exchange “Dance Diplomacy” Model  101

Figure 2: *Time Magazine* cover from November 1993  137

Figure 3: *Time Magazine* cover from November 2014  137

Figure 4: Social Equity Checklist, binary version  199
Academic Curriculum Vitae

EDUCATION & TRAINING

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, Los Angeles (US) 2012-18

PhD expected, Culture & Performance, Department of World Arts & Cultures/Dance

- Projects: Archival research on Asia Pacific Performance Exchange
  Research on pedagogy in HK, Manila (PH), SG, Seoul (KR), Osaka (JP)
  Grant and project design for Puentes de Poder Exchange Program (PTY)

- Service: Art Director for World Music & Movement Festival 2014-15
  Communications Intern for World at Aratani Festival 2014-15
  Student Affairs Office Assistant 2012-13

- Awards: Chair's Discretionary Award 2013-15, 17-18
  Summer Research Fellowship 2013
  Regents Scholarship 2012, 15-18

CREATIVE DANCE CENTER, Seattle (US) 2010

Certificate in BrainDance
Eighty-hour Institute on movement pedagogy

SEATTLE UNIVERSITY, Seattle (US) 2008-10

MA, Organizational Design; Focus: Art and Community

- Thesis: Community formation through Creative Practice

- Projects: Process Consultation of Student Affairs Office 2010
  Designing and leading "Collaboration and Teaming" Seminar 2009

- Service: Design team for departmental conference 2010
  Intern for Pomegranate Center’s Public Spaces art projects 2009-10

KENYON COLLEGE, Gambier (US) 2001-05

BA, Dance; American Studies (With Distinction)

- Thesis: Byte (United States of Amnesia) performance, presentation, and paper

- Projects: Research on Dance and Culture in Birmingham & Pittsburgh
  Original choreography of 5 dance works and performer in 15 dance works
  American College Dance Fest., Buffalo, NY 03 & Slippery Rock, PA 04
  Four-month dance workshop for local teen girls at risk of expulsion
  Nine Ballroom Dance competitions through Great Lakes and NE 01-04

- Service: Hiring Committee for Visiting American Studies Professorship
  Representative for Dance, Drama, & Film Dept. Student Org. 03-05
  Secretary for Ballroom Dance Team 01-04

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

UNIVERSITY of CALIFORNIA, Los Angeles (US) 2012-18

- Fellow: Community Engagement Practicum
  Drama and Diversity
  History of Labor Movements in Los Angeles
  Community Engagement through the Arts
  Education Practicum (taught twice)
Art in the Inclusive Classroom

• **Associate:**
  - Intro to Field Research Methods
  - Art as Moral Action
  - Indigenous Worldviews
  - Intro to Folklore Studies

• **Assistant:**
  - Upper Division Writing (taught twice)
  - Art as Social Action
  - Transforming Teens through Pedagogy
  - Introduction to Pedagogy

**AMERICAN MUSICAL & DRAMATIC ACADEMY, Los Angeles (US)**
2016-18

**Critical Studies Faculty** for “Dance Theater History” and “Pop Iconography”

**PATH WITH ART, Seattle (US)**
2011-12

**Co-Facilitator for Movement** for adults transitioning from homelessness

**BOSTON COLLEGE, Newton (US)**
2006

**Co-Teacher** for “Elements of Dance”

**DANCE COLLECTIVE OF BOSTON INTENSIVE, Boston (US)**
2005

**Mentor and Performer**

**OTHER PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE**

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Location</th>
<th>Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>SAVE the ARTS AMERICA</td>
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<td>WORLD DANCE ALLIANCE</td>
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<td>2015-17</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PRESENTATIONS (selected)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Location</th>
<th>Year</th>
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</thead>
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<td>Oral presentation: “Deconstructing ‘Dance as a Universal Language’”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Association of Freirean Educators Conference, Los Angeles (US)</td>
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<td>2015</td>
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<tr>
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<td>National Dance Education Organization Conference, Chicago (US)</td>
<td></td>
<td>2014</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oral presentation: “Contact Improv: Pedagogy for Cultural Competency”</td>
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<td>International Conference on Dance Education, Kuala Lumpur (MY)</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1
Exchange:
What we Mean and What we Want to Mean

Preamble

“So what’s it really like there?” Alain asked me, in Spanish.

I understood perfectly: at 17 years old I was more or less fluent.

“What do you mean?”

This time he answered first in Spanish and then in his lightly accented and entirely fluent English: “En los Estados Unidos... Dijiste que es común para la gente no sienten contentos, que hay mucho disatisfacción. Y pienso que entiendo porque no es razonable todo el tiempo…. But since you don’t really all have big houses and nice cars… what do you have?”

Alain and I sat in one of the local rum bars in Havana. It was July 2000. He and I and a few others—two of us Americans and three Cubans—had been chatting since we met a couple days prior. We talked intermittently about what the United States is like in comparison to what Alain and his friends had heard about the US through pop media. Their general understanding was that, of course, Americans couldn’t all be rich, but that surely we all, thanks to owning a ton of luxurious stuff, must live gloriously glamorous lives. I repeatedly insisted that no, I didn’t have a car and that even though many people did own cars, they weren’t necessarily fancy. Certainly, most people don’t live in huge fancy houses. Or own expensive watches. Or wear designer clothes. Or, or, or… My information was received with curiosity and patience, and Alain believed me entirely. So what, he wanted to know, did life in the United States consist of.
“Truly, it’s different for everyone. Region by region, really. And then, depending on the
neighborhood where you live… red lining and socio-economically driven politics shape
individual households, and whole lives. Plus, there are subcultural differences.” The
conversation continued for a bit, with each back-and-forth revealing layers of mis- and pre-
conception. Hollywood was a huge culprit, of course, but so was the desire to understand
something located elsewhere, something built up around a different worldview—something
foreign—as somehow understandable.

Alain shared how, as a Cuban, it was easier for him to swallow the aggrandizement of the
United States if he felt like it offers a better life. He was disappointed that Americans don’t enjoy
material wealth as broadly as he had thought. But after pausing for a beat, he added, “I suppose
I’d rather take free healthcare and education than have a giant television.” Perhaps most
surprising to my new Cuban friends was that even the owners of luxury vehicles weren’t
necessarily satisfied by their lives… or even by their cars. Owning things, generally, did not
seem to have dependable correlation with contentment or happiness.

The conversation wound toward other topics within a few minutes, with more on
different forms of Cuban music, who plays music and who dances and who does neither, and
how to order a rum that isn’t watered down (a common practice at less swanky bars so that locals
could afford to drink and sit with friends). We also turned to music, which seemed to my foreign
ears to be everywhere. Since only the two Americans of our little group could afford to drink at
the rum bars that featured live music, we walked the streets, meandering the malecón for hours,
listening to live music seemingly wafting across the city, and tuning our ears to passing
impromptu concerts. Saying the streets were alive with music does not convey the tenor of the
air, the veritably palpable melodic vibrancy of the countless pedestrians engaged in some form of
music creation during any given stroll. Alain and my other local friends felt it too, they told me, so I felt assured that my enthusiasm was not a hapless touristic fancy. The streets were alive, yes, and so were Havana’s interiors. Music was not something that the Cuban people “did,” it was a lived reality of Cuban culture, and not something that even the glorious Buena Vista Social Club album that so many North Americans were enamored with could convey.

Music is not tantamount to Cuban culture, though its culture is not definable without the viscerality of music throughout its neighborhoods. Even if Alain had the opportunity to travel to Boston to meet me, and our entire conversation about culture occurred in one of the few old school bars that still offer seriously great live shows, there would not have been a feeling of music in the air. Despite being home to several world class schools of music and an award-winning philharmonic, in Boston a selected elite train in music and even fewer perform. Beyond demographics, no Bostonian will tell visiting Cubans about the electrification of Copley Square with live music because, aside from an occasional city-sanctioned event, it does not exist.

I was in Cuba as a Global Exchange participant. A San Francisco-based not-for-profit, this organization facilitates touristic encounters that incorporate significant educational programming. As a program participant, I walked the streets of Havana with my new friends late into each night, got a few hours of sleep, and woke early to travel with the other tourists to Salsa and Afro-Cuban dance and drumming classes. Everything was conducted in Spanish and, even as the youngest participant, I was one of the few who had movement and language training. Partly thanks to relative conversational expertise, and partly thanks to an incurable curiosity, I ventured into many neighborhoods that, suffice to say, were not in any guide books. One afternoon I took a ferry to what would be considered in North America a sequestered slum, a ghetto essentially, where a local woman fed me from her government rations: white rice and some form of chuck.
beef. Frankly, it was delicious. She confided in me about some of her struggles to take care of her body despite her access to healthcare. She also showed me her family’s *Orisha* shrine, a gorgeous layout that occupied nearly half of the small living room. We talked about *Oshun* and *Elegua* and some of the other deities whose dances I’d learned in class.

I would love to say that I felt elated, a sense of completion in understanding class materials within lived practice. Yet the scene would be utterly incomplete without her brother, who was rather enamored with American pop music, including a hit at that time, “The Thong Song.” As I learned, in an entirely organic fashion, about the cultural backgrounds underlying the Afro-Cuban dances I had come to Cuba to study, Sisqo’s beats flooded the room. “Lemme see that thong thong thong thong!” is as relevant to my experience of Havana as the sonorous dreamscape that caresses the *malecón* every evening. To my senses, the pervasiveness of US popular culture was a plump vein within the corpus of the Cuban experience. Looking back, I cannot help but wonder to what degree the fantasy of an unfettered dreamscape would have overwhelmed my utopic conceptualization of Cuban culture had I not met Alain or grooved to Sisqo in someone’s living room.

My lived experience is as crucial to understanding Cuba as any analysis I’ve come across. Since former United States President Barack Obama recently opened inter-governmental and trade relations, coupled with Fidel Castro’s death soon after, much discussion has arisen about who and what constitutes contemporary Cuba. I have yet to hear one that considers her culture as defined by how it feels to dance with the locals, or, for that matter, develop a comprehensive notion of what Cubans long for while they dance, feel while they play music, or
ponder while talking to tourists. The Cuban experience, just as my experience as an American, is as much about relationships as socio-politics.

Over the course of several more days, Alain and I revisited conversations on cultural perceptions from afar. All five people in our impromptu friend group noted the awkwardness inherent to a discussion where only two of us—the Americans—had firsthand access to both locations. Alain did, however, enjoy some insights into his perspective on the United States because of his unchosen distance from it; he wanted the United States to be a land full of material wealth, an idea linked to predictability, where things don’t break down and can be relied upon. He had envisioned that a land with material security would come with increased access to quality of life. For Cubans, who are socio-economically and politically prevented from accessing American soil, let alone immerse within her culture, the great edifice of the United States’ economic and conceptual wealth takes on a Wizard of Oz quality. The opportunity to surpass remote exposure and engage substantive experience is, in some ways, the fading of a specter.

In parallel, I repeatedly caught myself being enamored with an aspect of Cuban culture. A welcome respite from the United States, where some basic services have been so commodified that we see them as acquirable consumables rather than as human rights, I was impressed the tiny island offers healthcare and education to its citizenry without asking a penny in return. Alain and I were so enamored of the ideas we had of what the other places offered that, despite being intelligent and self-reflective people, we both had to be confronted with one another’s perspectives multiple times before our minds could begin to accept reality. The only reason any of the information penetrated past our expectations was because we had the opportunity to ask

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1 The 2016 finale of the Showtime television series *House of Lies* featured the protagonists on a business trip to Havana where the allure of the city seduce them into breaking from their obligations to enjoy the local music and welcoming culture, the effect of which was so strong they are inspired to elope.
questions and probe for details that addressed the misconceptions we held. More than bi-directional, the interaction spoke to our inner ideas about our respective cultures layered atop aspiration, the perpetual desire for a better life, and even a better world; the allure is for versions of peace, versions of universal benefit, and deeply satisfying inquiry across corners of the globe that might heal political contentions or otherwise be a unifying force. We knew what we appreciated about our home cultures, but felt dissatisfied. We craved access to something new, hoping that a deeper truth might reveal itself. Our exchange was less linguistic or aesthetic; it reflected a distinct difference in culture and a distinct similarity in desire.

**Introduction**

Prior to the meat of the document, the preamble attempts to betray my own development as a white, North American young woman engaging artistic cultural exchange programming, partly because I chased one down during my two week trip, and partly because a non-profit organization lay logistical flooring necessary to physically access Havana. The latter, in all of its touristic glory, enabled the logistics of the exchange, yet the groundwork for actual exchange was seventeen years in a family that made room for me to question everything, coupled with an insatiable addiction to asking why the world is as it appears to me, and then asking myself why it appears as it does to me in the first place. Exactly seventeen years later, working on this document, I am still defining “exchange” for myself. I know that I cannot define exchange for everyone, or that my perspective speaks to all cultural contexts. Sharing my learning experience in Cuba is one way for me to position myself. I invite each reader to contemplate what learning experiences they carry and how that colors interaction with this document.
Cuba, unintentionally, has become a through-line of sorts throughout this project, as both case studies relate—albeit somewhat peripherally—to the tiny island geographically and programmatically. None of my work is about Cuba, nor the particulars of the preamble, yet I am inseparable from my experiences, and strive to call upon that positionality. My work is about whiteness, an offering to the interruptive and dismantling power of social imaginary to impact human behavior and lived experience. By offering personal context, and asking that readers examine their own, I am making a call: we need all perspectives to dismantle whiteness, including—and perhaps especially—white people who have been programmed and raised in institutions founded upon whiteness, ultimately becoming representatives of white ideology.

Scope

The word “exchange” is used in many contexts and sectors. My task is to begin outlining the term itself, broadening to encompass many of its invocations. By discussing how cultural exchange inter-subjects with the body, I consider how sensorial immersion is required for any exchange, let alone a profound one. Specifically, I explore how exchange and learning are synonymous, and how both require embodiment to synthesize mind/body development.

Although far from exhaustive, I discuss some of the parameters off of which exchange may be built, noting pre-existing formulations for communications across cultures as within established North American governmental and educational settings, including Inter Group Dialogue, which has roots in diplomacy, conflict resolution, campus climate, and violence prevention. This chapter’s culmination is the introduction of art as not only a potential mechanism for meaningful communications across difference, but an imperative that permits the transgression of logic in favor of sense, and in favor of an imagino-rational hybrid. How else might we hope to connect
substantively with cultures rooted within a different episteme, whether the culture next door or the culture across the globe?

Embarking on this bricolage project, I draw from various theoretical approaches, including Critical Race Studies (CRS) and Memory Studies as lenses through which to examine Performance Studies, all in service of Critical Pedagogy. While all disciplinary elements are utterly crucial to the project, whiteness studies as a form of cultural imaginary existing under the umbrella of CRS is the primary theoretical through-line because I feel its potential to impact Critical Pedagogy profoundly. For me, as informed by the late Joe Kincheloe, bricolage—positioned here as my chief methodological approach—requires researchers to activate their scholarship by cultivating presence to an array of academic disciplines, as well as practical applications (2001, 2005). One of bricolage’s goals is to move away from a project-based approach to research, and toward a lived engagement with socially just work (ibid.). As a bricoleur, then, I aim not to complete my topic, but to live my research.

Specifically, I draw from discourses on whiteness as a social imaginary begotten from and contributive to human interactivity, including familial and institutional transmissions that reflect physiological and emotional lineage. I locate multiple political implications within the CRS concepts of creative capital, social capital, and expressive capital, as well as the Memory Studies notion that our senses—not merely our psyches—are primary elements of engaging agency. Memory Studies dovetails beautifully with CRS in that both disciplines honor lived experience and the intangibles of aesthetic connections throughout time and space. In contrast, Performance Studies is largely rehearsing the same semantic questions it has grappled with since its inception; my goal is to push the academic discourse into a reflexive relationship with praxis that addresses whiteness. The imperative is to move past contemplation and into activation.
I apply Critical Race Studies and Memory Studies lenses to Performance Studies as a means of challenging outmoded notions of “intercultural” work that sustain Western oversight within cross cultural programming. All three lenses arose around the same time—originating in the 1960s and expanding significantly in the 1970s—but of the three, Performance studies seems most mired in an outmoded, multiculturalist mindset. Critical Race Studies has updated itself because real-time socio-politics demands that the field continually evolve. The people of color who founded and continue to enrich CRS continue to engage as a means of confronting and challenging consistent pain. Memory Studies pushes forward thanks to innovations in neuroscience and because, through the passage of time, a field that inherently relates to time has more data and richness from which to draw. Performance Studies, on the other hand, relates to culture, and like many culturally-bound topics within the academy, stays put in the multiculturalist era.

Performance Studies does like to draw from science, but the usage often remains stagnant, and by the time the a scientific concept has been thoroughly explored in the humanities, the “hard” sciences have surpassed the findings upon which the work was based (Foster 1995 and 2011). I do challenge CRS and Memory Studies to adopt a more global perspective, as they are still relatively discursively situated in a North American or Western setting. Still, I challenge Performance Studies most strongly to become not only culturally responsive, but ontologically and epistemologically responsive. I strive to shift the conversation to address racial and ethnic equity, less as a numbers-driven subset of identity politics, and more as a facet of socio-cultural narratives that create internalized perspectives and externalized behaviors.

I explore how critical educational processes are uniquely positioned to interrupt trans-colonial narratives through self-reflexivity and deep engagement with others. I craft this
approach in stark distinction to superficial encounters. My imperative as a socially cognizant educator is to challenge claims of neutrality and seek to activate for critical and equitable programming. Beginning with the equation, critical pedagogy + cultural exchange = critical exchange, I ask in what ways this seemingly linear procedure is necessarily complicated by art. This query is not merely philosophically intriguing, but addresses the utter messiness of human behavior and its relationship with inner physio-emotive states.

This first chapter defines terms, lays out initial discussion of exchange/education methods, outlines the scholars and theories throughout Critical Race Studies from whom I draw most intensively, and introduces art as a singular means of both engaging difference and impacting worldview. At its core, this project seeks to comprehend whiteness as a social imaginary that pertains to the ways in which individuals, communities, and institutions see value and worth on the one hand, and disposability and expendability on the other hand. Although I am not a legal scholar, my core conceptualization of whiteness is most influenced by Cheryl Harris’ 1995 paper, *Whiteness as Property*. Her paper encompasses the ways in which whiteness as a concept of access and expectation of access informs how humans behave and institutions govern (Harris 1995). Harris’ brilliance lies in her striking use of court decisions as legal indicators of how inextricable race and ethnicity are from overarching socio-cultural mores and activities. I contextualize Harris’ arguments with a deeper reading of Kimberlé Crenshaw’s concept of intersectionality, challenging CRS to consider not only demographic markers such as race, class, and gender, but to consider the infinite circumstantial and internal factors that impact assimilation of and capacity for generatively creative communications.

I layer Harris’ discussion on whiteness and Crenshaw’s discussion of intersection with Linda Alcoff’s book, *The Future of Whiteness*, to hypothesize the ways in which social
imaginaries behave generally (Alcoff 2015). To this conversation I add Caroline S. Picart’s
*Critical Race Theory and American Concert Dance*, and Anthea Kraut’s *Racing Copyright* to
explore how whiteness relates to art (Rankine 2015; Picart, 2013; Kraut 2009). In chapter four,
Critical Race Studies becomes a home for Memory Studies via Charles Lawrence III’s
commentary on whiteness as a facet of familial transmissions (Lawrence 2013). In creating this
link I speak to conscious and non-conscious senses and how forming emotional patterns of
meaning supersedes rationality. I intersperse more detailed discussion of whiteness with Critical
Race Studies’ ideas on Social Capital, Cultural Capital, and Community Cultural Wealth, a
departure from Pierre Bourdieu’s famed discussion of the topic (Bourdieu 1993; Portes 1998;
Yosso 2005). I build off of Daniel Solórzano and Tara Yosso’s interpretation of Capital to
illuminate how race and ethnicity relate to formations of perceived worth (Yosso 2005). My
perspective on whiteness as a symptom of a propertied mindset is laid out in this chapter as a
means of introducing why art is important to interrupting subjugative worldviews. The
discussion does on in chapters four and five to address philosophical and practical contexts,
respectively.

Chapters two and three discuss case studies so as to foundationally ground the concepts
introduced in chapter one. I look far beyond organizational structure to question the social
contexts that created and maintained each exchange project. The greater question is, do program
participants experience meaningful communications or merely touristic encounters? Chapter two
celebrates the successes of a prolific program, the Asia Pacific Performance Exchange, while
asking how agency within cultural representation impacts ethnic equity. Chapter three is a
comparative analysis of two exchange programs that traverse between California and Panama
City, a tale of two entirely different outlooks and their relationship with racial equity.
Chapter five offers an approach to measuring social equitability. I do not seek to aggrandize any particular model, in part because cultural responsivity recognizes that no particular model is appropriate universally. Instead, I seek to show how the process of designing for equity inter-relates with outcome; I couple the initial intentions undergirding a project with how we perceive results. Simultaneously, I seek to acknowledge the incredible messiness of what I am proposing, and to advocate for systemic sight that challenges professionals to develop new modes of classification, measurement, and evaluation that meets the needs of assessing complex human behavior.

One of the main queries is what a cultural exchange program—a process of learning supported by recognition of differences and commonalities—might entail when constructed through a Critical Pedagogical lens. I draw inspiration from Paolo Freire, Antonia Darder, bell hooks, and Daniel Solórzano as culturally-minded pedagogues and Critical Race Theorists. This work is also informed by a sprinkling of critical pedagogues who work primarily with arts-based practices, such as Beverly Naidus. My guiding approach to seeking data is gleaned from Joe Kinchloe’s version of *bricolage* which provides an elegant path through engaging many perspectives concurrently by offering insight into the research/education/communication dialectic (Kincheloe 2001 and 2001). As mentioned, Critical Race Studies will inform this chapter via an imperative for pedagogical models to actively de-center whiteness and other trans-colonial paradigms.

Chapter four examines the psycho-emotional processes that undergird the nexus between xenophilia and xenophobia in relation to Self and other. Building off of the premise that art offers an enhanced means of communication, I examine how intentionally combining art with exchange might alleviate stagnating feelings, such as anxiety, in relation to understanding
unfamiliar epistemologies and ontologies. I call upon the aforementioned discussions of Cultural, Social, and Aesthetic Capital to posit that interrupting whiteness is only possible through conceptualizing how it functions in relation to internal emotional states. The chapter discusses that no amount of program design can compensate for socially inequitable thoughts and behaviors. This project positions the potential for interrupting whiteness from a Western approach, a self-reflexive endeavor that unpacks the mechanisms by which social imaginaries are created and perpetuated via acculturative institutions, such as educational models. By doing so, I claim that professionals from the cultural exchange, performance, and education fields have the responsibility to develop their shared overlaps as social justice imperatives.

What we mean when we say “exchange”

Exchange, traceable back to the Latin *excambiare*, translates roughly to “out” and “barter.” It showed up in 1580s French (*eschangier*) to describe barter, or the act of swapping bills and goods for the purposes of building mercantile trade (Mirriam-Webster 2018). The connotation is decidedly bi-directional, and entirely linear. The purpose was at once longitudinal (create an ongoing market) and contained (complete a transaction). An economy of cooperation, or at least mutuality, exchange relies on separate entities to somehow agree on the act of giving and getting, though dynamics of power and agency are not contained within the purview of the definition. The exchange could have taken place between individuals or between representatives of financially intertwined groups. Both parties gave, both parties received, and presumably bought into a larger economy, an economy of trade built on a capital of desire for a system.

Actual cultural exchange—not the touristic programming marketing itself as an entree into a foreign world, a foreign life, an orientalist escape from the familiar, an antidote to the mundane—is also a desire to transcend the immediately familiar. Exchange concedes that what
we contain in our own hearts, minds, and souls needs an element of externality in order to grow. Sometimes invoked to argue for inclusion of marginalized people within popular culture, the phrase “if you can see it, you can be it” describes the phenomenon wherein viewers replicate and even live into the stories and characters they can see. Such is exchange with another—the external presents a narrative other than the one inside, something to give context while simultaneously offering juxtaposition; a frame and another character to accompany our Self-portraits.

Exchange is an activity. We agree to transact. Exchange is also an idea. We agree to express some element of mutuality. The initial connotation suggested that exchange did not require benevolence, nor an ethical imperative. Perhaps, then, my analysis is now misguided; if power differentials are insignificant, equitable allocation of resources is irrelevant, and agency is a byproduct or a pre-requisite, and not an intentional outcome of exchange. Just as pedagogy connotes the fact that education is never neutral, exchange is but a term used to indicate that more than one party is giving and getting... something. Just as pedagogy only becomes critical once reflection on Self and on socio-politics is engaged, exchange only becomes nutritive if designed and enacted with awareness of who and what is being served. The imperative of the socially cognizant educator is to challenge claims of neutrality and seek to establish a framework for critical exchange.

I thought that my own experience with exchange revolved primarily around getting on planes and flying to locations that spoke different languages, ate different foods, used different currency, and had different traditions than those I grew up with on the East Coast of the United States. Because I am a dancer, I paid attention to the differences in performance, how people dance together or on proscenium stages, and what happens to music and storytelling as it
intertwines with varying forms of movement art. I presumed that practitioners from other fields would be especially interested in how their respective crafts manifested, such as different ways of constructing clothing, or how architects create structures. I also thought a lot about money, in part because the trips that my middle-class parents could afford to send me on were almost exclusively to Latin America. I considered how (relatively) easy it was for me to fly to, say, Belize, as I did in the 10th grade, to learn about ancient Mayan pyramids and pottery, birds, sustainable housing, and marine biology. From my first trip, I did not need books or the exchange rate to tell me that most of the people I met could not afford to fly to Massachusetts to learn about flora and fauna. Even though I never had the coolest jeans, the nicest shoes, or any car to speak of at a high school pathetically obsessed with materiality, I knew that, on the world stage, I was privileged and enjoyed access, even if “only” to the regions my incredibly hard working parents could afford to send me to. As my awareness of global power dynamics developed, I saw the stage anew; narratives about cultural meaning and who gets access to what are played out within a framework of social patterns begotten from the stories of nation-state, politics, and social structures. These forms of historical context create cultural mythology that help regimes construct fabled pasts and presumably glorious futures.

Exchange is about so much more than accumulation of new material or cultural dissemination. Each salesperson can show up to strike a deal and pat one another on the back for their diplomacy. We help one another construct our stories, offering juxtapositions off of which the we place ourselves to further our own existential exploration. Everyone is someone else’s stranger, every story is another world’s revolution. Exchange itself is but an agreed interfacing to discover whatever the participants need within their own developmental process. Extricating discussion of the Self from discussion of exchange, it turns out, is virtually impossible. Exchange
is a concept built on healing the duality between order and chaos, between familiar and unfamiliar, between the bridged and the perhaps un-bridge-able, between positivism and arbitrariness, between “infinity and totality,” between Self and Other (Levinas 1969). A more useful differentiation lies within appreciating how the Western Self is taught to ignore its own senses, and to rely instead on hyper-rationality. The Cartesian wound—the bifurcation between mind and body upon which Western rationality, and arguably epistemology, is founded—offers a reliable means of separating how the Self has been asked to be perpetually sensorially incomplete. The split, then, is not between the exploration of the Self and the exploration of how we can explore Otherness, but between the worldviews that ask us to approach these tasks through either rationality or sensation.

The camps, as defined by a Western episteme, are the knowers and the non-knowers. Often this divide is assigned to scientists as distinguished from theologians, but I would claim that the latter is as determined to know, albeit through an a-rational lens, as scientific methodologists. The truer divide is between positivists and inquirers. Contemporary conceptualizations around technology get confused within this divide: systems and mechanisms of recordable measurement are associated with the ability to know, the path toward knowledge, whereas systems of excavation are assigned worth in relation to their capacity to gather data in support of scientific outcome. The technology, in my estimation, is within the system itself, within the process by which we formulate a question, then mull and gather and reflect and juxtapose and morph so that we may then ask a better question for that cultural moment. No one question is better or worse in a universalist sense because all questions gain relevancy through their reflection of the greater cultural constellation to which they are meaningful. The methodological approach with which we ask is the precursor for the resulting social narrative,
and the corresponding method through which the asking is performed is the social technology. Otherwise stated, art is an approach to social consciousness, and critical pedagogy is the technology through which we interface with the social realm.

My claim is crucial to this educational moment. STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) and STEAM (the same concept wherein an “A” is added to indicate an infusion of “art”) are heralded as the means through which to prepare future workforces to serve future economies. These imperatives are an attempt to reproduce the laborer-output economic models to which the Western economy is paradigmatically accustomed. The material outcomes appear different, but the model of justification for labor, and the economic market to which it is aligned, are predicated on the same logics. Rather than produce car parts or corn or textiles, the production is writing code, solving a proof, or concocting a formulation, all of which are given relevance, just as with other forms of manufacturing, through the applications to which they are assigned. How wonderful! Highly skilled, these laborers have honed impressive abilities to perform a plethora of tasks and tricks, not unlike a ballerina’s thirty-two fouettés. And to any given viewer, this feat might be art because it could prompt questions, insights, and an alternate worldview to which that person had never previously opened themselves. The label of art, just as the label of science, is not owned by anyone, and cannot be claimed by any school of thought or institution. They are both subjective and both governed by the socio-cultural loci that create them. The container in which art and science develop is the technology that under-writes the innovation; pedagogy is the tech, art/science is the method. Arts-based exchange, then, is comprised of a specific method and methodology with particular outcomes laden with socio-political implications, and therefore requires the critically dreamt and rigorously imagined design and implementation central to all potentially transformative human endeavors.
Where does exchange happen?

I posit that all cultural exchange happens via the body. The Self is constructed via exposure to, absorption of, and integration of stimuli via the body. Otherwise stated, the Self is constructed through the process of learning. The Self is “a social concept, one that entails the whole world” (Aronowitz 1992, 12). In order to learn, then, the body requires access to new social environs, and ongoing learning requires access to new social configurations once a person has acculturated to their current social scenario. Learning, by this logic, is a tenuous process, because our internal narratives of Self provide an invisible curation of how we read, interpret, and apply information. When applied as a lens through which to examine how culture is transmitted and reified, whiteness unveils how the Self acquiesces to psychosocially unstable dialectics with Other. The construction of whiteness will apply in chapters two and three to the uni-directionality of most exchange programming as a practical manifestation and perpetuation of power flows. Yet whiteness does not exist in a vacuum; its power and implications are informed by webs of socio-cultural factors, including the infinite intersectionality inherent to identity formation. To unpack how the Self is formed via the body, I turn to how the body learns as a result of place, and later explore how dissecting the compositional elements of location enhances cultural exchange.

Renowned legal scholar Cheryl Harris 1995 article, Whiteness as Property, is as relevant today as ever. By opening the piece with a story about how her grandmother passed as white in order to gain employment, Harris gives shape to the daily lived experience of innumerable people throughout history. Still, her piece does more than name the phenomenon; in discussing whiteness as a propertied mindset, Harris shows how whiteness subsists so insidiously as a governing outlook, force, and method of engagement has. Although understanding the history of
whiteness’ formation is crucial, I propose that the contemporary status and future of whiteness are paramount. In the act of looking ahead we can envision and subsequently enact ways of interrupting the broken logic that keeps whiteness alive. By intermingling Harris’ seminal piece with contemplations from Linda Alcoff’s book *The Future of Whiteness*, we can address how whiteness lays the groundwork for white aesthetics. Through the association of some aesthetics with value and others with lack, the valuations and exclusions of cultural practices, such as art, become clear.

CRS is commonly attributed to Derek Bell, a legal scholar who began to note the discrepancies between the official letter of the law and how laws were upheld (or not) within the United States judicial system. While Bell’s assessments specifically pinpointed legal outcomes for people of color, he also noted larger North American trends towards utilizing the law in ways that coincided with mainstream socio-politics in distinction to egalitarianism (Bell 2008; Delgado and Stefancic 2012). A second wave of CRS scholars arose through the education field, and expanded to specific offshoots, including LatCrit (Latinx Critical Studies). Whiteness is commonly thought of as another specific offshoot, though it does not specifically refer to phenotypically white people so much as the recognition of whiteness as a social imaginary (Rankine 2015). Whiteness is born from white supremacy, the latter of which is concerned with race explicitly, while whiteness is foremost concerned with hierarchy and power. Whiteness names the overarching mindset that recreate power structures; it speaks to overt reproductions of subjugation, such as macroaggressions as well as insidious versions, such as familial transmissions (Lawrence 2013; Solórzano 2001; Perez Huber and Solórzano 2015; Taylor 2003). Whiteness is a status/affiliation, shielding agent, and lens all in one.
Although my examination of whiteness does not delve into history, whiteness is a product of historical phenomena including but not limited to Western European expansionism and manifest destiny, the trans-Atlantic slave trade, native genocide in the Americas, chattel slavery, Jim Crow, the prison-industrial complex, and the relationships between narratives of cultural normativity and the perpetual reinventions of western logics and sciences. In short, whiteness is both tactic and strategy, a construction of and a contributor to the safeguarding of power. Whiteness is a colonizing force, as much of mentality as geography. As such, it has many allies, patriarchy and heteronormativity being an obvious two, which is why the practical application of dismantling whiteness requires an attendance to the ways in which various identifiers and their cultural contexts overlap; however, those intersections are not the main focus here.

As Linda Alcoff suggests in her book, *The Future of Whiteness*, social categories such as whiteness cannot be dismissed by labeling them a product of an ideology, such as “post-racial” (Alcoff 2015). Her criteria for identity signifiers include the use of identity as a descriptor, as well as the historical context related to that identity. Alcoff also notes that whiteness is “a feature of collective or group subjectivity” thus providing a connection that overarches time and appearance while recognizing its relationship to culturally based lenses (Alcoff 2015, 893). Further, Alcoff complicates the notion of whiteness as a descriptor by recognizing that “white” as a semantic identifier connects historical context and current lived experience because it recognizes the hierarchization in which that identifying descriptor is situated. She also discusses whiteness as a composite of three experientially grounded forces—empiricism, subjectivism, and the imaginary—thus recognizing that whiteness encompasses tangible and otherwise visible historical legacies alongside emotional and mental constructions (Alcoff 2015, 1354). Rather than situate all constructions of whiteness within historical legacy, Alcoff expounds upon the
imbued implications of being, having, accessing, and contemplating whiteness as a concept (Alcoff 2015). Whiteness, then, provides a “shared orientation” or rallying point around which individuals and cultures alike can attach importance and allegiance (Alcoff 2015, 1417). Alcoff goes on to note how, although preferences for particular identifiers are not inherently “good” or “bad,” the failure to examine the factors that have produced those preferences is an incomplete inquiry. This failure to engage in excellence of inquiry is not only an absence of academic excellence, it impedes “our ability to imagine a different future,” thus prohibiting the growth of equity, or put another way, reproduces whiteness “as is” (Alcoff 2015, 1475-6).

Exchange as a Process that Perpetuates or Dismantles Hegemony

Although exchange can occur absolutely anywhere, and often takes subtle or invisible forms, here I address the more obvious form: getting on a plane and going to a new place. For the geographically-situated version of exchange, the body is the transgressor of political and social boundaries, carrying as *habitus* the psycho-social impressions of an originating culture (Bourdieu 1990). The body is not impervious, affected (sometimes drastically) by time zone changes, microbial shifts, and inability to comprehend the unfamiliar sound and fury of new languages. Access to transportation is an entire socio-political conversation I will only briefly allude to here, so I am referring to the fact that travel “in a vacuum” takes little more than patience; if one can wait in enough lines and on enough vessels, getting to a new place is a passage of time and space. Receptivity to otherness, then, is a crucial element of being present to newness and to transcending the quotidian, not as an exercise in exoticism, but as an exploration via deliberate curiosity. Although traveling to a “new” culture is the genre of exchange to which I predominately refer in this project, exchange as a process of integrating conceptualizations of Self and Other is the deeper subject. Culture is only as sharable as our readiness to convey and to
receive it, ongoing processes more dependent on one’s ability to share as one’s intention to do so.

Cultural exchange and learning are inherently synonymous; I posit that all learning exists within a spectrum of cultural exchange. As an industry, the term is commonly cited in reference to groups of students getting on planes and traveling to a new location with the express purpose of achieving exposure to a prescribed set of factors. Typically, cuisine and foodways, music and visual culture, topography and ecological environment, language and historicization, and other readily consumable attributes are common attractants. Standard exemplars of cultural exchange do not include exchange at all, as the term has come to signify curated encounters that satiate a desire for access to exoticism, and little pertaining to individual or collective deep experiences of life. I suggest that touristic forms of exposure are not inherently beneficial or harmful to cultural narrative outcome, but become distinctly problematic for two reasons: 1) most programming reifies whiteness by promoting surface consumption wherein socio-economically privileged populations travel from the global North and other financially developed regions to consume hyper-palatable versions of “local” culture and 2) relatively small portions of funding or financial compensation reach the artisan or other “folk” who comprise the consumed culture. As an isolated phenomenon, exposure to culture does not necessitate socio-political imbalance, though it signifies little substance and only the most cursory communication. Education, then, begins with Self-reflection on the internal lenses through which we consume and digest the stimuli to which we are exposed. Cultural exchange, broadly stated, begins at the transition from surface exposure to reflective exposure because this lynchpin moment is the point at which education begins.
What power lies within the process of traveling to a new location? Some scholars speak of the power of our sense of smell in the creation of meaning (Marks 2000). So perhaps we learn a new area by the smell. Since we know that smell and taste are intertwined, perhaps our taste buds ought to be considered as well. Certainly, cuisine and foodways could be a valuable entry to a new culture. The food we eat literally becomes our very tissues, and even impacts our DNA, making our consumption of it as integral to future generations as to present moments. So perhaps we can engage cultural exchange via the tastes and smells of regional dishes. Yet culture is not confined to flavor and can be accessed by persons without sense of smell or taste. Anyone who has ever shared a delicious meal with friends knows that food spans more than human gustatory and olfactory senses.

Perhaps we can turn to the complexity of metaphor and constructions of concepts through language. Many anthropologists have argued that the near impossibility of translation from one language to another is evidence that a visitor can only approximate an understanding of the ontologies upon which a culture is founded (Benjamin 1996). Language, from the mental neural processes to the psychological representations, to the habitus of the mouth required to activate words within an interactional reality, are distinctive markers of acculturation. Yet again, comprehending a culture does not begin or end with a literal or figurative tongue. Cultural translation is only partially intertwined with verbiage, and storytelling is only effective in so far as language may connote a larger concept.

We can also look to costuming, textiles, and crafts as visual and physical forms of culture. At the very least, a combination of sight, tactility, and proprioception are required to engage objects and access to the scenarios that create their significance; performances, for example, also require a sense of time and space. Commemorative entities (example: memorials)
public spaces (ex: parks), celebrations (ex: festivals), archival entities (ex: museums), systems of justice (ex: community circles), and healing procedures (ex: acupuncture) all speak to culture. Again, we see that isolating senses provides only fractionated cultural comprehension. Relying on senses as an exclusive entry point to culture inadvertently precludes populations who do not have access to a certain sense of engagement (ex: people who are blind), instead of asking in what ways a given individual can access culture that differs from pre-existing expectation (example: the ability to hear the details of a piece of music with more nuance as compared to most people with sight).

The interplay between cultures of origin and present context impact the ways in which an individual receives and interprets sense, creating a human-cultural sensorial hybrid (Marks 2000). From this conceptualization, intersectionality spans much more than social identity, and speaks to an infinite configuration of the perpetual corporeal-cultural dialectic, revealing the vastness of the task of educational inclusion, where each exchange participant has the opportunity to discover what they are able to engage deeply. Bodily status and human sensoria, then, are as related to intersectionality as are cultural affiliation and social demographics. Once again, we see how cultural exchange is synonymous with education, as Critical Pedagogy is reliant on an inclusivity that accounts for the body’s ever-shifting processes.

The relationship between individual and collective learning occurs on many levels, but I want to focus here on physical positioning so that we may keep track the body as the location of exchange. If we propose that learning in concert with others is a facet of collective education and that learning behind a screen is a facet of individuated education, we see how the two could result in extremely different experiences. Rather than vilify one or glorify the other, I posit that they may enhance one another, and that an ideal educational design would involve both
positions. Posing the two stances in opposition to one another also presumes that education is an a-contextualized encounter rather than an ongoing process. Healing what appears to be an ideological divide is metaphorically comparable to healing the Cartesian split, with a behind-the-screen body position in favor of intellect and an in-the-streets body position in favor of activity. Only a results-oriented educational model is fixated on results, whereas a processual model has the flexibility to depart from meeting all students’ learning needs all the time—an impossible and irrelevant feat—that diverts attention toward responsiveness to infinite variants of neuro and cultural diversity.

I propose that the Self/collective dialectic is a crucial element of determining how the body inter-subjects with learning environments. In chapter five I explore the emotional, sensorial, and experiential interplay that stems from and contributes to cultural narratives and how they frame communications across difference. Two layers of sensorial integration form coherent learning: 1) immersion of all available (for that individual) senses provides visceral comprehension and 2) reflexive perception of the immersed Self provides humanistic comprehension. The body, then, becomes both the vessel and the receptor for immersion, which implicates the body as an agent within its own immersion. I propose agency is a crucial component of immersion because it reinforces that cultural comprehension is not a spectator sport, and because the active stance counters the notion that immersion is uni-directionally passive. Immersion, then, can only occur as an activation of agency.

Where does exchange happen?, Part 2

The current (at the time of writing) call for papers from *Performance Research Journal* suggests that contemplation of the immersive has been adequately covered (*Performance Research Journal 2017*). The editors proclaim that an adjacent topic—proximity—is now more
politically compelling because the immersed body is a passive, docile body whose exclusive function is to conform, to accept domination. I suggest that this reading of immersion is dangerous, as it robs the body of its capacity for resistance and innovation. I concede that the editors may be addressing one layer of immersion, though I contend that focus on an isolated component of immersion’s multiple strata is dangerous. Thus, although I agree that immersion has indeed been explored already (though I have yet to see scholarship addressing immersion in its more spectacularized forms, such as gaming and conventions) its aesthetic relevancy and learning potential cannot possibly have been exhausted on an individual experiential level, thereby excluding at least half of the potential discourse. More than a pie chart, a deep consideration of individual lived experience is crucial to inquiry, as the default for cultural collective in the West precludes marginal vantages. The very claim that the immersive is understood assumes comprehension by and about Western episteme. By this logic, the current aesthetic of the immersive is constructed and given meaning as a white aesthetic, with shifts in what is considered aesthetically compelling coinciding with shifts in that which is legitimized by a normative gaze.

I want to problematize the Journal’s call one step further. While the editors invoke “proximity” as an analytical frame for “positionings” and “interrelationships,” they also force “proximity” and “participation” in opposition to one another (ibid.). To me, this dichotomization is politically dangerous. I will revisit unproductive dichotomies presently, but here I want to emphasize that relationality is presented by the editors as a static form. The presumption, it seems to me, is that immersion is a cheap thrill, a hyper-mediated fancy for immature gamers or tech-whipped teens. In addition to aligning immersion with heightened visual stimuli, it asks the viewer to not trust what they see because it must be low-brow, thereby demeaning personal
experience, relegating non-visual senses to irrelevancy. The senses are effectively hierarchized, as well as appropriated toward reifying the Cartesian split in lieu of recognizing the myriad ways that the senses derive from and reinforce body/brain cooperation. Immersion, I argue, is not a tactic of the attention economy, and is a correlate to a Freirean form of Critical Pedagogy wherein the most pressing analyses derive from and are trained on our functional cultural surroundings.

To be fully “functional,” cultural exchange requires that participants learn through ongoing application of concepts. If a body undergoing cultural exchange is a body engaged in learning, that body is necessarily undergoing a psychosomatic immersion. Immersion is a technology, just as pedagogy is a technology—they are multi-sensorial procedurals undertaken conscientiously. Here I use “immersion” in reference to an orientation of surrender to and engulfment in a socio-cultural environment as well as the (albeit limited) sensorial experiences gained through use of via technological paraphernalia. I suggest that by invoking the term “immersion” manufacturers, such as Samsung’s Oculus, have effectively normalized the notion that visual immersion is comprehensive immersion, thus reifying the hyper-masculine notion that consumption can occur via the eyes alone. I reject the over-simplicity of this false dichotomy which pits the masculine consumptive against the feminized passive; instead, I posit that immersive technology creates a double-gaze by layering the perspective of the immersed and the perspective of that which the immersed consumes (the “subject”). Stated otherwise, the media offers a new perspective through which the observer navigates levels of immersion, capacities, and tendencies for which will depend on the infinite intersectionality of the body undergoing immersion.
The phenomenon and structure that permit the experience of technological immersion will necessarily differ from culture to culture, which occurs at individual and collective levels. I want to stress the immediacy of the lived experience of headset-based immersion. In alignment with Critical Race Theory, individual perspective offers an imperative counterpoint to archival supremacy. The person undergoing immersion can choose in what direction(s) to look, to remain partially rooted in their tangible surroundings, or otherwise configure themselves in sight and space. While the technology is in development, currently only visual immersion is entirely possible, with experimentations in tactile immersion underway, and with partial kinesthetic immersion already possible as an intentional side effect of the core visual component. Cultural Studies scholar SanSan Kwan discusses the impact that kinesthetic awareness has on how individuals respond to space, which echoes Lena Hammergen’s idea of the flaneuse, who (as a feminized version of Walter Benjamin’s male flaneur who assesses visually) learns physical surroundings through kinesthetic interpretation (Kwan 2013; Hammergen 1996). An immersed individual is not strictly a male-gazing consumer, nor a feminized somatic feeler. The infinitely intersectional individual undergoing immersion ultimately is the owner of their visual and kinesthetic experience of the media in which they are represented.

Corporeal sensoria are active, though intertwined inextricably with culturally-bound meaning-making. The body *must* be the site of cultural exchange because it serves as an interpreter and contributor within, for, and between the Self/collective dialectic. If the body is the primary catalyst for exchange, how might its abilities to access “new” cultures range beyond getting on a plane? And in what ways does the body’s abilities of inquiry enhance instances when exchange is engaged via access to new geographies? As a project dedicated to understanding how whiteness is an interruptible entity and not a static reality, the hybrid
human/cultural sensorium offers a foundation of off which to shape Critical Pedagogy as a processual mechanism undergirding educational narrative outcomes.

My claims are manifold: 1) cultural exchange is inherently situated within the body and bodily experience is required for cultural exchange; 2) neither the body nor the mind are sufficient for cultural exchange in isolation and the two must work in concert; 3) critical education is inherently a process of cultural exchange and cultural exchange is required for transformative learning, an interfacing with the Other, a Self-reflexive process; educators are politically responsible for crafting a critical pedagogy that moves far beyond surface exposure to Otherness and that stimulates meaningful communication across difference; 4) effective cross cultural communication transcends the linear and the logical, necessitating that some element of artistic—non-literal, interpretive, and experimental process—is required for socially sustainable communication across difference. As the literary phrase goes, “sometimes fiction is more accurate than the Truth.” Extra-logical elements juxtapose with logical frameworks to make a multi-dimensional sense, a shift that re-focuses an entire narrative ever-so-slightly.

Whether approached as an educator, administrator, artist, citizen, and/or scholar, a sense of what the baseline narrative is comprised of is a crucial entry point. As Nina Simone advocates for artists offering a reflection of their times, so must exchange leaders formulate a deep sense of the environs in which they strive to support equitable cross cultural transmissions.

The Promise of Exchange: Activating Communications that Honor Difference

In Winter 2014 I attended a graduate seminar, “Theory and Practice of Intergroup Dialogue: Building Facilitation Skills” in UCLA’s School of Education (Hurtado 2014). The Professor, Sylvia Hurtado, utilized the University of Michigan model of Intergroup Dialogue, which was devised by UMich’s Program on Intergroup Relations, and focuses on promoting a
safe, inclusive, and diverse campus climate. Although the IGD field is classified as “emerging,” its popularity is on the rise within North American campuses eager to complement imperatives for “diversity and inclusion.” Showcasing the efforts to quantify and trace impacts on campus climate, the UMich website features 101 (at time of writing) published resources specifically on IGD (https://igr.umich.edu/respub/publications). Our seminar referenced bigotry throughout UCLA’s recent history, though Prof. Hurtado placed emphasis on the behavior of individual perpetrators, fraternities and sororities, and co-curricular activities such as sports; to my recollection, we did not discuss UCLA’s history as a white, patriarchal institution, nor its founding on Indigenous sacred land. My notes here are not intended as a critique, but to illustrate the emphasis of the seminar.

According to the training I received at UCLA, as an extension from The Michigan Model, IGD participants must speak boldly about personal perspective and be willing to align themselves with differing, perhaps unpopular ideas. The materials for this seminar were intended to promote:

1) Awareness of self and others’ social identities and histories
2) Knowledge of structures of privilege and oppression, which impact intergroup relations and mental health outcomes
3) Skills involved in cross-cultural communication and management of group processes that promote multicultural learning and conflict resolution
4) Passion and deep personal commitment to social justice, as well as the ability to communicate and willingness to lead the development of intergroup dialogue at UCLA and beyond (Hurtado 2014).

In the iteration of the seminar I attended, facilitators were actively encouraged to interrupt essentialism and other instances where participants are assumed to stand for a larger demographic group. For example, only one Black student, a male graduate student, was in the group of twenty, so when we discussed issues of race, Prof. Hurtado requested that we hold ourselves accountable to not inadvertently asking him to “speak for” the Black community.
Everyone seemed to understand that his perspective was formed in part by his positionality as a Black man, alongside other elements of identity. The pedagogical decision to preempt essentialism served to keep our (conscious) thoughts and (explicit) behaviors in check. Prof. Hurtado employed other direct tactics to guide the group throughout the quarter, showcasing that social equity work often benefits from direction and clarity, and that Critical Pedagogy may incorporate substantial structuring.

This seminar offered an opportunity to explore differing vantage points without assigning value to any one person or concept. The training felt heartening because its processual nature demands space and time to develop as a learner, a facilitator, and a human product of my culture. Despite the desire to incorporate critical thinking into curricula, the format of many educational programs does not support actual implementation of critical pedagogy; no matter how conscientiously designed, without the room to allow human development, actual practice and integration are not possible.

The Michigan Model is one of many IGD models, each with its own specificities of theory and intentions. I turn to IGD generally as one method for human exposure to new ideas, and view each model as a methodology with which to approach exposure, and potentially to frame exchange. As curricular tools, IGD practices offer activities and other implementable specifics that stimulate conversation on contentious topics representative of demographically-rooted cultural identifiers and individualized sub-cultural differences. The various models are rooted on subtle yet distinct concepts, ranging from relationship building through personal excavation, all of which are intended to curb violent behavior, whether through increased psychosocial comprehension or emotional transformation. Disproving or corroborating the efficacy of any one model in distinction to the others is outside the purview of this project. By
exploring various perspectives on exchange I seek to discover how varying curricular parameters can be leveraged into critical pedagogy that pushes current cross cultural interactivity into more robust Self/Other reflective capacities. The Michigan IGD model purports to create a virtually idealized container and procedure for communications, yet does not examine the epistemologies upon which it was founded. As purveyors of cross cultural communications, IGD models should be engaged in light of their Western constructs and worldviews.

Borrowing from the premise behind Joann Kealhiinohomoku’s article, “An Anthropologist Looks at Ballet as a Form of Ethnic Dance,” looking at IGD as an ethnic form of peace-building can teach us how it represents a distinctively Western approach to communication (Kealhiinohomoku 1980). Commonly discussed in Cultural Studies, in contrast to Western ontology, some Indigenous, Eastern, and others cultures approach the Self/Other dialectic with entirely different senses; some ontologies simply decline the premise of a Self/Other dichotomization. As such, IGD constitutes a platform for acculturating participants to Neo-Liberal thought and behavior where identity-based equity and its discourses are positioned as end-goals. I propose that if the objective of communicating across difference is to build a more socially sustainable world, dissecting discursive legacies from a politically correct approach serves to replicate a Neo-Liberal version of what constitutes diversity and inclusion. Rather than declaring IGD or any other conversational tool is neutral, and therefore employable across all communities, we can appreciatively assess what it *can* do and then apply that capacity to enhance effective communication across difference. Critical pedagogues must ask, then, does the utilization of an Intergroup Relations model founded on Neo-Liberal thought change socio-political narratives, or does it reify pre-established Western expectations?
To explore the gaps between IGD theory and practice, as well as IGD capacity and actual communicative need, I turn to an episode of “Fresh Ed,” a podcast sponsored in part by CIES (Comparative and International Education Society) and hosted by a postdoctoral scholar, Will Brehm (Brehm 2016). In the episode “Interfaith Dialogues on Campus” educator Sachi Edwards notes several issues she observed in IGD classes in North American Universities. This segment is intended as an explanation of some elements of the field within a formal educational institution, rather than an exhaustive analysis of IGD’s entirety:

1) The facilitators in one course did not adequately prompt discussion of religion, which was, in this case, the objective. Instead, the class was prompted to discuss “privilege” more generally, and the discussion revolved primarily around race, and gender instead (Brehm 2016, 20:13). When the facilitators tried to insert religion as a primary topic into the conversations that had already begun, participants briefly touched upon the topic, and then veered back towards race and gender (Brehm 2016, 20:35).

2) The second course revolved around providing information on non-normative religious practice (Brehm 2016, 21:02). Not only is this format uncritical, it also essentializes the few students in the course who identify as members of the non-normative religious group by asking them to speak for their entire communities (Brehm 2016, 21:08). Further, it put an additional academic burden on the non-normative students who have lived experience with religious practice, but who are not religious studies scholars, yet were put in a position by the group to educate their peers (Brehm 2016, 21:40).

3) The third course turned into a philosophical discussion on student beliefs, such as life after death, evil, aliens, and other generalized intellectual conversations (Brehm 2016, 21:55). In Edwards’ opinion, although the conversations are valuable within generalized scholarly development, they did not address religious identity (Brehm 2016, 22:50).

Overall, Edwards sees a methodological disconnect less with the facilitators or participants, and sees the breakdown in efficacy as a symptom of cultural avoidance around discussing religion (Brehm 2016, 22:44). Previous conversations on gender and racial privilege existed on the college campus where Edwards was conducting research. Coupled with the relative prevalence of discussions on race and gender identity throughout North American culture, dialogue participants were primed toward an entirely different set of topics. Edwards also saw a link between the syllabi and discussion content, several of which contained readings pertaining to
race and gender because those topics are more prevalent within the available literature (Brehm 2016, 26:28). The lack of literature on religion-focused dialogues is further indicative of general cultural trends within forms of addressing privilege and demonstrates how the facilitators missed the opportunity to direct the conversation. Edwards concludes with, to my ears, a belief in the promise of IGD with the presumption that its potential is connected to the adequate preparation of facilitators, including pedagogical and curricular preparedness. Edwards does not offer suggestions beyond the need for appropriate materials and attitudes. I understand her reticence to name particulars given the challenge of determining how a pre-existing model can contribute to a seriously meaningful form of dialogue; I humbly suggest that the bigger problem is that she is seeking a deeper exchange process within an outcome-based paradigm.

By turning to IGD as an example, I see how a pedagogical failure can occur when the desire to impact attitudes is implemented through a social technology that wants to be equitable yet is designed through a North American lens. In parallel, the IGD model is sometimes not well implemented due to a desire to encompass an unrealistic amount of information and development within the time allotted in a single seminar. Instead of taking a deep dive into any one topic, the impulse is to address everything simultaneously, an overzealous yet understandable move stemming from the fact that all privilege and oppression are inter-related metaphorically, institutionally, and socially. In the instance of The Michigan Model, Edwards’ commentary corroborates my assertion: the course scenarios she describes indicate preoccupation with results, where ameliorating conflict and supporting “campus climate” is the priority, assuming that personal emotional development and group cohesion will automatically increase.

As an outcropping of Sustained Dialogue, which attempts to foster longitudinal benefit by focusing on building stakeholder relationships, the Michigan Model translated government-
based Peacebuilding Dialogues (PD) into a campus climate model intended to treat university safety with the same gravity as international diplomacy. As compared to the United States Institute of Peace’s (USIP) model, which focuses on violence prevention, Peacebuilding Dialogues aims for a more consultative model wherein communities are served by the dialogue process, yet all focus on exteriority and neglect internal transformation. A bevy of other programs related to IGD exist, though most focus on organizational climate, business acumen, and community management.

Distinguished from the other models I have encountered, Transformational Dialogue (TD) designed by Social Theorist Charles Rojzman focuses on unearthing the beliefs that motivate violence (Charles Rojzman Institute 2017). TD is also intended to be preventative and/or ameliorate dysfunctional social behavior. As a pedagogy and as a technology, then, TD’s emphasis encompasses but is not exclusive to outcome as defined by decrease in violence and increase in productivity or ability to be productive. Whereas the other models emphasize the perceived value of community as based upon its ability to generate human capital via intellectual pursuit (as in the case of a university) or lifestyle consumption (in the case of a territory), TD asks that the internal motivation and accompanying emotional states be excavated in service of shifting the feelings and desires that undergird behavior. TD attempts to address human quality of life by excavating internal landscapes to benefit emotions—and subsequently external interactions—to breach the watershed from survival to enduring quality of thriving. The models I have encountered offer a social technology (pedagogy) of linguistic communication but no integration of sensorial or other bodily experiences that link the ongoing complexities of human interaction and emotional wherewithal. This is where art is of service.
Although I can understand Edwards’ impulse to claim that IGD is a pedagogy, I suggest that dialogue is a curricular toolbox. Pedagogy, as I discuss in other portions, is a technology created via the designer’s epistemological and ontological lens, rather than the stuff of which a curriculum is comprised. Edwards does point out how worldview impacts approaches to dialogue, such as the attempts to dialogue about religion she recounted on the podcast: the paradigm of social justice work prevalent in the West is rooted in Christianity, which reifies in a dialogue setting the invisible hierarchies that religion experiences in broader social contexts (Brehm 2016, 28:41). My greater point is to draw a distinction between a curricular toolbox and a social technology; to reiterate, the former consists of tactics for exposure usable within a group context, whereas the latter consists of strategies for group interactivity. My equally crucial, tandem point is that social technologies only become critical when cultivated as an entire inquiry built upon immersive experience that yields Self-development via the reflexivity/engagement dialectic.

Facilitators must position lived experience as the primary source of valuable information in distinction to, for example, philosophical discussion. This recommendation dovetails beautifully with Critical Race Studies, though it does not address culturally-bound hesitancy to offer critiques, problematize established paradigms, or to practice modesty by not speaking about one’s own life. Social justice is reified as a Western invention that may be exported for the benefit of recipients. IGD, then, is one template through which to operationalize some anti-oppression theories, but is not necessarily a Critical Pedagogy. Further, conceptualizations of inclusion and responsiveness that IGD aims to engage reify the Cartesian split by emphasizing a linear process built upon the notion of liberation from oppressive thinking that begets oppressive behavior.
The various schools of Intergroup Relations stem from a procedural, rather than processual outlook. They are concerned with violence in a binary (people are killing each other or people are not) or with “development” as a euphemism for imperialism via economic expansion. Counterparts, such as emphasis on expressivity, and the sensations of intersubjectivity are either absent, under-developed, or misguided. Rather than vilify any one approach or aggrandize another, I propose that asking questions about what methods might be more effective is a worthier allocation of resources. To explore a curiosity-driven approach toward communications, emphasis would need foremost to shift towards prizing uncertainty, messiness, and ambiguity. Somewhat like artistic improvisation, the work does not require escaping the confines of predictability: traversing into the unknown is the beginning of the work. According to Performance Studies scholar Danielle Goldman, and I would agree, “freedom” is not a location that can be worked toward and gotten to, whereas “freedom from” is a mindset that permits the recognition of hegemonic boundaries (Goldman 2008).

I take this argument a step further to suggest that freedom might be as limiting of a social construct as whiteness. As with the other dichotomous confines I discuss, freedom reinforces prisons and boundaries by giving agency to the need to escape. Instead of fixation on freedom as an ideal state, what might we learn by positioning freedom as a process of building an entirely new worldview? Pedagogy and other social technologies have the potential to address worldview and social imaginaries, but do not inherently do so, which is where the artistic method becomes crucial precisely because art is a process of asking questions about and running experiments relevant to worldview.

The X Factor: Why Art?
To advocate for art requires an understanding of what comprises art. “Art” is often synonymized with “entertainment,” “craft,” “expression,” or “creativity.” To me, art is a process of asking questions, an inquiric method not unlike “the scientific method” without a beginning, middle, or end. While 

entertainment functions to direct attention, 

craft serves a replicative function, expression is a personal experience related to representing individual personhood or community, and 

creativity is the engagement of novel approaches to established methods as pertaining to a particular locality. Art is an aptitude for shifting worldviews through relentless pursuit of questions and rejection of completion. Because art is a method of asking and not of answering, it is combinable, adaptable, and case dependent. As an instigator of emergence, art shifts vantages of the world; it is a change agent grounded in method, not production. Art requires consistent failure in order to discover what functions.

Humans fail constantly. Aside from anticipated outcomes or intended results, humans fail in our attempts to live in peace, to activate our love for one another, to not make our intensive insecurities into other people’s problems. If art is an inquiric process—a process of productive failure—it is uniquely suited to address, harness, and utilize consistent failure as a generative force for developmental and dialogic human necessity, including meaningful communication. Whether looking at governmental models on paper, organizational charters, or systemic interventions, humans fail consistently, yet our track record indicates that we do not handle failure well: disproportionate to the amount that we fail, we do not necessarily expand our perspectives, adjust from reaction to response, or engage effective reflexivity based on our failings. We practice organismic recovery rather than emotional integration and social iteration.

As art is a procedural in experimentation, an innate part of which is failure, it inherently holds the value of failure as an absolute element of learning processes. By paradigmatically de-
emphasizing outcome in favor of the utter messiness of learning to share process, we value multi-directional receptivity and de-emphasize unidirectional transmission, a marriage of dissemination and reception until the two blend past distinguishable directionality. As the phrase goes, “everyone is someone else’s weirdo;” everything ranges from the strange to the familiar, depending on the perspective through which we receive and assess. Everything, then, falls under the jurisdiction of cultural narrative, the gorgeousness and complexity of which becomes invisible due to our proximity to and our hand in creating it. Conceptualizations of human experience need not make sense; art does not suffer the foolishness of compartmentalized coherence.

Art is founded on a particular approach to human/human (and, for that matter, human/environmental) inter-subjectivity. Art does not make sense, it builds upon and honors sens-ation. It does not need to make sense because art is not concerned with proving or disproving, and does not accept the premise of positivism. Art is inconclusive and unsolvable.

I look to art as a possible method for transformative communications across cultures, not because art offers an inherently Critical Pedagogy, nor because art can be universally applied within all forms of education. I look to art because abstraction, metaphor, humor, expressivity, perspective, storytelling, and dedication to an aesthetic while representing a broader cultural context offer an X factor that can transcend hegemonic logics and categorized thinking. Art is sometimes truer than logic, facts, quantifiers, taste profiles, definitives, histories, testimonies… not only does it perform psychosocial excavation, it catalyzes the emergence of that which we did not previously see as possible. I look to art less because I believe in an answer to how to communicate across difference, and more because I see no better alternative. Art, including its fictions, may be the deepest and most enduring form of communication available to humans.
is a transgressor of sense, in distinction to articulating an “already,” a reified culturally condoned version of place and time; art instigates shifts in individual and group awareness from a set stage of universalized expectations of Self and Other as presumed boundaries. Art comports permitted explanations of identity formation within a given pre-filled historiography into the realm of imaginaries.

Art, therefore, cannot be effectively engaged via transmission, nor through surface encounter. Art requires pedagogical scaffolding through which to administer and attempt communications. Art’s scientific method requires a social technological framework from which to try its application in new contexts. Art requires the technology of pedagogy as much as cross-cultural communications requires the technology of pedagogy. Arts-based exchange programming, while far from the only relevant means of exchange, is an irreplaceable element of learning to communicate substantively across difference.

Art is not neutral, not universal, and not inherently benevolent. While fear and other potential instigators of violence deserve artistic probing, undue dissemination can be lethal. Imaginaries, as tributaries between art and socio-cultural context, both fuel and manage the psychoses we have not managed to digest. These crucial percolations fortify our abilities to not fling identity and intersubjectivity conflicts haphazardly into the world. Art can be Shiva, intolerant, terrible, and cleansing. Or Rasputin, conniving puppet master. Or Puck, trickster of intellect and outlook. Or a de-carnated Aphrodite, gorgeous and alluring. Or Galadriel, a mighty bridge to a little understood realm. Or Aslan, awaiting our venture into holiness. Or the Jabberwocky—nonsensical yet irresistible! Art has agency. The artistic method, a process of meaningful and productive failure, is the scaffolding upon which the social technology of Critical Pedagogy unfurls.
Whose art?

Critical Race Studies teaches us that how we see—our worldviews—are intertwined with culturally-bound perceptions of race and ethnicity, as well as a constellation of other factors. The worth that we perceive and assign to individual humans and community composites, as well as their aesthetic experiences and expressive media, is tied to overarching socio-political narratives. Thus, simply advocating for “diversity” or building a buffet of various forms and/or authors of art, does not comprise poly-perspectival discourse. From CRS we can see how essentialized forms of expressivity must be framed as valuable, not within their marginalized status, but in co-formation of a larger social system. The notion of Cultural Capital, according to Solórzano and Yosso, holds that people and communities—particularly those of marginalized status—do not merely possess desirable aesthetics, cuisines, or other intriguing attributes “worthy” of selection by cultural outsiders (Solórzano and Yosso 2005). Instead, Cultural Capital creates a model of seeing communities through appreciative lenses, not as an arbitrary aggrandizement, but as a larger vantage of epistemic value.

Many scholars consider Cultural Capital to be the invention of sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (Portes 1998). Indeed, Bourdieu’s discussion on how cultural outputs (such as art “works”) are perceived occurs through a combination of elite market valuations and the deliberate production of media content (Bourdieu 1993). Sociologist W. E. B. DuBois, however, wrote about Cultural Capital prior to Bourdieu; while I cannot speak to nefarious intent to subsume credit from one scholar to another, the term’s attribution to Bourdieu rather than DuBois strikes me as a less than amusing meta-illustration of how Capital is culturally constructed and assigned (Morris 2015). Another theme arises from this anachronistic quandary: because the term “capital” can be easily affixed to any other word for a semantic construction
that highlights how value is connected to power, Intellectual, Academic, Scientific, Symbolic, and other forms of Capital generated inside the academy affect whose voice is heard and to whom knowledge creation is attributed. Capital illuminates how, regardless of whether an individual scholar or school of thought reaches the pinnacle of fame, “invisibility and recognition are opposites” (Morris 2015, 184). The issue, then, is less about the degree to which something/one “has” Capital, and more about the cultural mechanisms by which value and worth are assigned.

More recently, a discussion of aesthetic capital has joined the overall discourse, a nuanced addition that emphasizes how the lived experiences of individuals and overarching sensations of being in and expressing community inform cultural narratives. Whereas the institutional trend of “Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion” upholds a numeric approach, Aesthetic Capital crafts a felt and expressive attitude around creating meaningful connections across difference (UCLA 2018). According to these theories, which—as I discuss in chapters two and three—are corroborated by my fieldwork, whose art is incorporated into exchange programming is only as powerful as the narrative frame through which the art is shared. An equitable framing of aesthetics—the narrative—is as crucial to equity as who is included.

Much of this discussion comes down to the age-old dichotomy of vernacular versus codified, which is cultural code for street dance versus concert, and aesthetic code for ballet versus street dance. Where social capital is one way to dismantle the valuation of humans, aesthetic capital is one way to question the valuation of human creations; as the former is about humans connections, the latter is about the right to take up space through amplification of voice.

Amanda Michalopoulou’s speech at the second International Literature Festival of Odessa addressed how art stimulates complex conceptions of Otherness (Michalopoulou 2016).
Michalopoulou begins, “Fiction teaches us to think creatively about difference. Anthropological studies, psychoanalysis, sociology – all offer theoretical descriptions for what a novel teaches by example and by identification,” and goes on to claim that creative pedagogies offer an antidote to the failing of standardized educational methods:

So the more education falls into decline because of a lack of imagination (not to mention funds), the more literature is called on to serve as another form of education. When we read the emblematic works of the European tradition we begin to trace the outlines of a coded, radical understanding of the other. Unconsciously we begin to accept that the other is always a mystery and that easy characterisations lead nowhere (Michalopoulou 2016).

Michalopoulou’s descriptions of literature can easily be translated to storytelling and creative transmissions of all sorts. Although she is speaking about finished products—published books—on a deeper level she is addressing not the tangible entity, but the conceptual and emotional human processes that result from deep engagement with creative conceptualizations of the world. We call art a humanistic endeavor and lump the “arts” and “humanities” together, in collegium, yet art does not simply “have” humanistic qualities because we label it thus. Art is a technology, a method. Like all communications, art does not inherently serve any one function, and becomes a social technology depending on the methodologies or approaches of engagement.

As I discuss in considerable detail in chapter four, in the context of a political moment—the era of President Trump in the US and other regimes of intensive xenophobia worldwide—grappling with the detriments of identity politics and political correctness while also (for anyone paying attention to institutional systems) flailing wildly in valiant effort to rectify egregious histories (and presents) of gross inequity, the impulse is often to swing mightily toward an “inclusive” version of arts programming that prizes clearly marginalized aesthetics and voices. Inclusivity, however, is not effective as a demographic consideration, and only becomes functional as ideological and ontological shifts that de-stabilize standardized, perpetuative
premises. The question ought not to be “how do we include more [or fewer] x people” but “how do we design environments that exponentiate participants’ abilities to engage their psycho-social needs?” As educator Jane Vella (founder of the Global Learning Partners Dialogue Program) would ask, who gets to decide what everyone’s psycho-social needs are (Vella 2002)?

Recognizing the interconnections of arts within communications is also a love letter to art and an attempt at reclamation from appropriation by STEAM, Creative Economy, and other subsumations within an economically validated world. As a psycho-socially relevant process, art’s validity has been re-assigned from that of exploratory to that of productivity, with development signifying economic security rather than healthful development as human creatures that comprise human systems. In this capitalism-based world, varying forms of development are not mutually exclusive, and pitting financial livelihood against human livelihood is not constructive. Indeed, much like the body-versus-mind dichotomy presented by Descartes, we know that psycho-social wellbeing is tied not only to being heard and seen for the wildly complex creatures we are, but is also contributive within community wellbeing (Cohen-Cruz 2005). The labor of art—art being a process of asking questions about and running experiments relevant to socio-political climate, not the production of self-contained deliverables—is a form of social “work.” To formulate a more equitable perspective on whose creative voices are valuable, we must see the labor of art as distinct within, but integral to, the expected labor of civil society. Developing the interplay between art and cross cultural communications speaks to the nuances of cultural representation as a socio-political choice.

A brief foray into the beginnings of ballet concert dance offers an illustration of how aesthetics are related to capital more specifically (Picart 2013). The creation of white aesthetics was not a mistake, nor was it a passive evolution of western culture. An extension of cultural
attitudes around the human body’s relationship to social, cultural, and even divine capital, ballet was designed to impress and intimidate the political class (*ibid.*). I would be irresponsible not to note that the inherent interrelationship between various oppressive forces undergirds each corresponding delusional frame: patriarchy and whiteness are bedfellows whose union has begotten a monster far more dangerous than either could muster alone. As Crenshaw and others have discussed, the intersections of oppressions may be the locus of leverage through which colonial narratives, and thus real time behaviors, can be interrupted. As we consider what a white aesthetic is, then, we must turn to *female* bodies.

Caroline Picart eloquently summarizes the ways in which the famed Russian-born, New York City-based choreographer George Balanchine expounded upon French and Russian Ballet aesthetics because he was dissatisfied with their versions of femininity. The preexisting construction of Romantic era ballerinas as ethereal creatures was insufficient to Balanchine, who demanded that his dancers’ aesthetic quality of earthly transcendence through weightlessness capture *purity* itself. He demanded that his dancers cultivate extreme versions of thinness, *en pointe*, actual or perceived youthfulness, paleness, and even defiance of gravity (Picart 2013, 29). Balanchine honed a “hyperwhite aesthetic” through “hyperdisciplining of his dancers’ bodies, whom he carefully chose, to become the vessels of his artistic ideal… virtually evanescent…devoid of aging and infirmary” (Picart 2013, 84). These requirements led to acclaim for Balanchine whose “vision of what is ‘pure’ in ballet has become the dominant paradigm of whiteness/’art’/the copyrightable” (Picart 2013, 32). Balanchine’s marriage to several of his muses betrays the consumptive nature of his approach to exerting power over bodies in service of crafting perfection.
Picart insists that Balanchine’s marriages with (and divorces from) four different women began and ended gratefully as the women were thankful “to have been made artistically immortal, for a few years, by the master choreographer,” thus permitting themselves to be Balanchine’s “artistic property” so that they would be canonized within history’s grand “archives” (Picart 2013, 70). Balanchine sought to control his female dancers through his womanizing behaviors in the studio and in his personal life, as well as by his insistence on a departure from human-ness through jurisdiction over emotion itself. His choreography, in his view, spoke to the audience, while his dancers were a-sentimental creatures tasked with conveying his brilliance. According to Picart, Balanchine’s control over his dancers was total: “It was as if he were the puppet master, and they, the wooden objects, into whom he breathed life, rendering them immortal vessels of eternal emotions and passions” (Picart 2013, 69). The corporeal identicality of ballet and the control that it represents are white aesthetics with implications of cultural superiority because they are imbued with narratives of connection to purity (and thus godliness and the divine) and dissociated from the burdens of “real” bodies and their earthly encumberments. The connection between the power exerted over bodies and the narratives regarding “purity” is important because it connects to the illusion of power exerted over rational thought; the imagined ability to transcend corporeality is seen to associate with the ability to access “higher” thought. Thus, executed spatially and transmitted visually, ballet is a demonstration of elite power.

Picart also explores the concept of a “non-white” aesthetic, for which she has chosen Ghanaian dance for its corporeally oppositional attributes as compared to ballet, including physical prowess associated with directing weight into the ground, performance in a circle, use of hips, and other explicitly non-balletic attributes. Her discussion is compelling, but I forego
elaboration here because the definition of a non-white aesthetic is less useful to exploring potential interruptions of colonial narratives—those narratives are related to my Harris-based discussion on property-driven sovereignty of white aesthetics. Otherwise stated, offering a non-white aesthetic acknowledges the supremacy of white aesthetics, but neglects to actually interrupt its supremacy. I propose that to resist the supremacy of white aesthetics, performing artists and cultural exchange facilitators must actively engage a de-centering of the narrative that Euro-American forms are universally applicable, while also actively bolstering the subversive potential of counter-colonial arts.

Beyond semantics, demographics, methods, and theories, what makes art “white”? If the brochures of presenting venues used comparable terminology for all performing arts shows, the content of the shows would still not be the same. The equality with which marketers could treat various aesthetic genres would not be representationally accurate, nor would it balance out the cultural preconceptions attached to “white aesthetics” or “ethnic aesthetics.” To understand the relationship between whiteness and aesthetics we can refer once again to the propertied affiliations of whiteness; the expectations imbued through property are related to the same expectations imbued through universalism.

While the discussion on copyright within Picart’s text and Anthea Kraut’s *Racing Copyright* refer to American Concert dance, we can transfer the rationale behind copyright to cultural exchange processes—whether or not an exchange is regional or international—because its basis lies in the same Self versus Other dichotomy throughout this project (Kraut 2009). Since the basis and construction of whiteness requires a Self/Other mental model, encountering Other aesthetics during exchange processes invariably creates opportunities to frame the “exotic” Other’s aesthetics in relation to the ubiquitous aesthetics of whiteness. Rather than make claims
about how the lived experiences of participating artists might lead to pedagogical leverage points from which to dismantle the Euro-American versus folk dance dichotomy, here I will remain focused on how the potency of white aesthetics has not been sufficiently challenged given its continued relationship to property.

Again, what is exchange?

The trip that I took to Cuba years ago, despite being called an exchange program, was a touristic excursion. As compared to many of the organizations I have looked at throughout the course of research, the Global Exchange organization makes a valiant attempt to educate its participants through access to local voices and on-the-ground interaction. Yet even from the most generous readings, Global Exchange is not “exchange” at all, if for no other reason, due to a lack of geographic bi-directionality. The program’s premise is to teach visitors about culture through facts and information. Even the movement classes, which revolved around physical technique, relied on a codified perspective on local dance. This begs the question: what does exchange entail? What does it look like on paper? What does it feel like in experience? How do we design it, sustain it, champion it? How do we ensure it serves chronically disenfranchised people, and as crucially, how do we ensure it serves global equity, including anti-colonial narratives?

In the next chapters I delve into two main case studies, as well as a few programmatic correlates that offer comparative perspectives. The case studies were chosen in part due to access to people and institutions necessary to do rigorous research, but they were also chosen because they are emblematic of serious struggles within design, implementation, and narrative outcome alike. Additionally, they span an array of locations, funding formats, and organizational frameworks, thus covering a wide swath of the incredibly broad contemporary “exchange” field.
The project’s deepest concern, however, is dismantling ideologies that permit consumptive approaches to exchange, as well as implementable suggestions for future programming. Far beyond practicalities, I suggest that an entire shift in premise around the conceptualization of exchange is necessary. As I mentioned previously, the exchange I gained access to in Cuba only occurred because my Cuban friends and I had an acute desire to be shoved out of our preconceptions and to learn that which we could not envision without one another’s help. This project, then, is as much about imagination and dreaming as about programmatic operationalization.

In order to explore scaffolding for meaningful communications across difference, I turn to pedagogy as the social technology through which the artistic method may be deployed in cross-cultural scenarios. Art and other communication methods rely on pedagogical scaffolding for basic efficacy, and offer an exponential capacity to interrupt trans-colonialism and oppressive reifications. Because cross-cultural encounters exist both across the globe and across town—perhaps even in our own homes—I explore infinite intersectionality to reconcile how ranges in humanity exist on multiple layers, from physiology and neurology to worldview and outlook, to ontology and relationality. These differentiations can be stimuli for rich learning experiences or they can be limiting instigations of dangerous conceptualizations between Self and Other, as well as dangerous behavior. I grapple with myriad questions of how social imaginaries and cultural narratives are reified internally, coupled with interrogation into how methods and technologies contribute to externalized behavior.
Chapter 2
The Making of an Art Tank:
Intercultural Encounters through Aesthetics and Institutions

“Excuse me, I can’t seem to locate the driver I arranged for. Would you be willing to make an announcement that I’m at the information desk?”

Solo, sick with a cold, and haggard-looking young white woman that I am, I’m an easy mark for the approximately four dozen local cabbies seeking a fare. The Denpasar Airport is bursting with tourists, of whom I am likely the only single female traveler. Waves of Mandarin, Aussie and Kiwi English, German, French, Japanese, Tagalog, and several other languages I’m unfamiliar with buzz about my vicinity. I’m not a paranoid traveler, even (or maybe especially) when traveling alone, but on occasion my visceral responses give me a sensation of lack of safety. Being swarmed by at least forty male drivers the moment I wheel my bag into the receiving area—and then tailed by eight of them despite repeatedly stating “No, thank you, I’m looking for someone”—was enough to put my body into a mini fight-or-flight state.

But it wasn’t until I had crossed the airport threshold and gotten tucked into the back seat of a sedan that I began to feel the full impact of solo travel. If overcoming the profound exhaustion from traveling while sick may not have been the single most impactful corporeal phenomenon of my arrival to Denpasar, dealing with a profound number of exceptionally itchy bug bites toward the middle of the trip was a close second. My own feeling of basic organismic security stems from the ways in which my infinitely intersecting cultures construct a body in disrepair, as well as reflecting what creates my human ability to find commonalities through difference. My sense of (in)security felt more immediate than the sense of dealing with my body.
Where might security have come from? As a white Westerner traveling in a location I have been taught to exoticize (Bali is where we can go on yoga retreats to become enlightened) and to fear (Bali is where we contract diseases that will kill us if we are not extracted and given modern medical treatment), the desire for immediate bodily ease can quickly become the deciding factor between what feels expansive and what feels draining. Even as a seasoned traveler, and as a person accustomed to foregoing standard Western accommodations, lack of access to something I had grown accustomed to as a fundamental necessity felt far more than inconvenient; it felt like a threat to my way of life. How could I traverse the local arena or be active enough to explore? Suddenly the sort of access that my skin color, passport, accent, and currency afforded me were irrelevant because my bodily status would prevent me from reaching what I had come to Bali to access. Even if I could physically get to the artist interviews, I felt I could not reasonably be comfortable enough to focus on the work at hand.

Everyone, this (real) anecdote tells me, has a limit of sensation that prevents them from engaging with that which is in front of them. I began my conceptual analysis of cultural exchange by asking what might constitute it. Looking at actual experiences shows that merely getting on a plane and traveling to a location does not suffice; simply positioning oneself visually or geographically proximal to something is insufficient to meaningful exchange or substantive cultural comprehension. Getting to Bali was a prerequisite to performing valuable field work for this project, yet getting off the plane was only a logistical requirement, not a positional stance toward openness to learning. While logistics are always required for encounter, cultivating inner curiosity and receptivity to perspectives other than our own is, I argue, equally integral to learning.
Performance Studies scholar Rustom Bharucha speaks of the absolute nature of bodily awareness he develops when in hospital, not so much as an existential awareness but as transforming his perception of belonging to or being within culture. As a bout with malaria brought him close to death’s door, he realized how “the body itself is the deepest repository of secrets” because it had “facilitated the essentially illegal entry of malaria” across national borders (Bharucha 2000, 154). Though Bharucha’s circumstance is somewhat extenuating, his concept that the body can be the site of transgression on both the policy and human levels invites the question of how the body can supersede the grand parameters of nation-state and the human expectation of daily life. By refusing a Cartesian stance, such that the pervasive strength of cultural imaginaries—in this case that the body exists extra-culturally—allows the notion that one can traverse geographies with the sole impact being whether one is a “carrier.” Disease is marked not only biologically, but by non-compliance with regulatory expectations and other subversions. As the Sri Lankan-born British song writer M. I. A.’s lyrics in “Bird Flu” say, “They check my papers to see what I carry around,” here signifying equal preoccupation with physiological and policy security (M. I. A. 2007).

My through-line is intended thusly: The body—a term I use to connote the infinite interplay between physical being, emotional status, mental process, and other phenomena bound by flesh but with emanating repercussions and implications—is the site of cultural exchange. Bodies come from and sometimes traverse geographies, and in doing so, hold the overarching contexts of those geographies. Yet these locales of origin or of relocation are only meaningful in the ways they are interpreted and re-mixed into cultural pidgin. What a given body represents, then, is the set of processes by which constellations of overarching culture and individual “units” of culture inter-subject (Chang 2014). I will risk becoming a broken record and a champion for
all corporeal tie-ins to education because I have yet to encounter a thorough examination of this connection in my targeted academic research or, indeed, my experience in the world. For instance, any brilliant Dance Studies and choreographic/performing arts professionals, such as Kent DeSpain and Cynthia Novack, explore this notion philosophically and experimentally, yet the emphasis tends to remain on artistic output or comprehension (DeSpain 2014; Novack 1990). I propose that the educational realm proper has much to learn from integrating bodies as a primary source of knowledge and critical awareness; the world of performance needs some of the impetus for holding ourselves accountable to a range of awareness and learning that a set of carefully curated interactions, such as that within Critical Pedagogy demands.

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When I arrived in Ubud I was nervous about having the opportunity to collect enough data during my short time in the area to create a robust academic chapter for my doctoral dissertation project. I did not receive any funding from my home institution, and although I had saved enough for travel basics through frugal living to cover my costs out-of-pocket, I felt unbelievable pressure to procure earth-shattering information in just ten days’ time. While I was determined to immerse myself as profoundly as possible given such a brief stay, ten days is hardly a sufficient range of time to engage actual cultural exchange. While a rather brief (and often surface) encounter is standard for most (so-called) exchange projects, I was aware that a brief visit was inherently limiting for both my academic research and the internalization of that with which I came into contact. I learned to quell my own anxieties by noticing how the sensation of being in Ubud impacted my visceral senses of life. My largest pool of data arose—unexpectedly and to my great delight—out of the experience of learning to listen to my own sense of simply being there. Despite decades of dance, cooking, hiking, and other sensorial
awareness practices of various sorts, I awoke to the sense of experiencing Bali in a way that I am not typically aware of simply noticing my corporeal existence.

And indeed, literally, I awoke: despite serious physical exhaustion I stirred early the first morning to the sound of wild birds in the trees and domesticated chickens on the ground. Somehow the rain was melodious as well. By the time I sat at breakfast early on the first day, nestled on a raised platform between ancient stone sculptures and lush foliage, I had almost forgotten why my brief time in Ubud was important to my research; my nervous system had not been so calm in weeks. Over an omelet (thanks, chickens) and local fruit prepared by the mother of the hostel owner, I took out my spiral-bound notebook and began writing out intentions for the day. Ever so slowly my research imperative came into focus, first with names of the artists I had traveled all this way to engage in conversation. And then the core motivation inched back in: I was here to investigate equity within performing arts exchange. The physical feeling of being in Bali may have been nearly ideal, a concept that prompted me to consider what ideal presence—and thus ideal exchange—might entail. Yet ideal is dependent on so many factors. Rather than chasing utopic education or communications, I propose that the social sciences and humanities seek an anti-Cartesian stance wherein the body and its sensorium are imperative for human learning. While I assert that mental/bodily integration is crucial for rigorous learning, I also assert that integrating learning via sensoria is an imperative for humanistic equity.

The chief research explicating learning as a sensory based process is chiefly from the field of neurology, which can be transferred from a strictly ‘hard’ scientific discourse into a way of interpreting interpersonal and other humanistic experiences. I would be the first to agree this project does not have the room to include formalized neurology (though an extremely worthy realm of inquiry that I would be excited to integrate into future education research). Yet I would
be remiss to not note the ways that humanism strives to understand the *notion* of neurology as a way to hold us accountable to marry the subjective to the numerically measurable. For example, as Laura Marks explains, “Intercultural artists cannot simply recreate the sensory experience of their individual or cultural past. Instead, intercultural [art and aesthetic communication] bears witness to the reorganization of the senses that takes place, and the new kinds of sense knowledge that become possible, when people move between cultures” (Marks 2000, 195). By qualifying measurable knowledge with sense knowledge, Marks turns the concept of information and intellect into experiences of attuning information to the body, thereby humanizing the mind; sensing requires integration of brain and body.

Marianne Hirsch discusses how approaching intellectual discussions of cultural history and memory, particularly in the cases of extreme sensations such as trauma, are easier to notice in later generations. In these cases, “postmemory,” or the views of the grand/children of a demographic, indicate that the conscious and felt experiences of their grand/parents amalgamate into an “approxima[tion] of memory as an affective force” with the potential to heal (Hirsch 2008, 109). In other words, addressing pain as a *feeling* rather than a residual linear progression of an isolated violent occurrence, puts the neurological experience into a psychosocial context (*ibid.*). While it would be fascinating to measure the portions of the brain triggered when an individual recalls a memory, the larger question becomes, how is an experience translated over time, not merely in the portions of the brain that light up, but as a feeling or experience? Rather than calling strictly upon neurology proper, a field which, by definition, is constantly shifting, asking what can be learned from the overarching lessons of neurology, means that humanists examine the contexts through which human perspectives form meaning.
In contrast to omission, some Performance Studies texts over-rely on science and thereby inadvertently de-legitimize claims via over-reach. One instance is the use of mirror neurons, which have become a popular topic for performing arts advocates due to the implications of enhancing humanistic approaches and responses to understanding the ways in which humans can show and receive information via witnessing bodily expression and comportment. Perhaps the most famous examples are from Susan Leigh Foster’s texts *Choreographing Empathy* and edited volume *Choreographing History* (Foster 2011 and 1995). In the former, she states that, “mirror neural processing does not entail seeing something and then responding to it…. The viewer thus responds… not because of the logic of the scene or because of the feelings of fright [in reference to a tightrope walker] that she must feel, but instead, based on the rehearsed simulation of the event of the fall” (Foster 1995, 166). Foster also states that “the notion of empathy then theorizes the potential of one body’s kinesthetic organization to infer the experience of another” (Foster 1995, 175). These examples show that the notion of mirroring, or of constructing meaning based upon perceived recognition of another’s “performance,” works as a poetic interpretation of communications, but is not directly in alignment with the ever-changing field of neurology.

Instead of seeking to validate humanistic arguments with science, celebrating the fact that performance and other cultural artifacts require humanistic translation (through pedagogy, dialogue, etc.) constitutes an opportunity to unpack that which the performer offers. Marginalized fields such as performance and art—often equated with feelings and senses—need not seek justification. Science can learn much from the humanities, not only through empathy (the prevailing concern at time of writing thanks to the impending rise of robots and the decrease in empathy noted in GenZ, Gen Alpha, and other digital natives); science can also learn that meaning making is a result of sensorial and mental integration, not separation.
Other portions of my work explore how the human sensorium serves as a gateway into deep learning and exchange. Elsewhere I describe how my own body needed to open in order to become sufficiently receptive to execute rigorous research, and I indicate that intellectual training is insufficient to a more sustained dive into human transformation. Essentially, I am arguing that learning—the furthering of our own humanity in relation to the interplay between ourselves and the greater world—relies on receptivity to sensation absorbed and channeled productively. Of note, and explicated elsewhere in my work, self-reflexivity and practices related to the Self/Other dialectic are crucial to understanding meanings generated by the self in relationship with meanings generated in a seemingly collective way.

With this larger goal in mind, I begin to explore Critical Pedagogy through programmatic case studies, beginning with the Asia Pacific Performance Exchange (APPEX), which is why I flew to Bali to interview some of its former Fellows, as well as to experience its offshoot site, the Cudamani Institute, in Ubud. APPEX offers a glimpse into the beauty and challenges of cultural exchange in general, alongside my institutional proximity to the initiative while also being separate from my racial and ethnic identity. In other words, while APPEX is an ideal case study for this project on paper, my status as a white Westerner complicates the methods through which I approach the research, making it—paradoxically—all the more appropriate for a study on the relationship between art, education, and whiteness. Immediately, we will see how APPEX’s home in a historically and ideologically white institution made this project logistically possible through carefully curated design, implementation, documentation, and preservation. My efforts to reconstruct APPEX begin on the UCLA campus, in the basement of Young Research Library, in Special Collections, where the light is dim, the rules are meticulous, and my senses are quieted in favor of a dulled environment. My sensorium does not have much to work with, the tactility of
the cardboard boxes, manila envelopes, and reams of documents providing little more than the
standard sensation of shuffling through paper. After weeks spent riffling through a range of
documents, my visual sense begins to permeate through the surface level of data to begin to feel
the project itself. The lived experience of its planners, administrators, participants, and audiences
slowly shifts into focus as I integrate my full humanity with the written words. The documents
only say so much, but as I immerse myself, I begin to understand the greater story they offer me.

The Asia Pacific Performance Exchange—APPEX for short—was founded by Prof. Judy
Mitoma, then Chair of the Department of World Arts and Cultures, in 1995, and ran through
2010 with iterations situated in Los Angeles and Bali, and with annual or biannual variations
involving the inclusion of ethnographic writers, an evening length show, a conference, and video
documentation. Although APPEX is coined for the Asia Pacific region, its over 230 Fellows
represented the entire greater Asian region, all of North America, and the Caribbean. Mitoma
procured funding for this exchange from an array of sources, including the Ford and Rockefeller
foundations, alongside funds from the University of California. APPEX was unique not only for
its high level of funding for an arts-based project, its implications for inter-ethnic and inter-racial
diplomacy, and its success in achieving geographic bi-directionality, but also in its process-
focused approach to performance. Ultimately, APPEX was about cross-cultural communication,
but the stuff of which it was comprised ranged from the messiness of rehearsals to the hybridity
of its aesthetic genres. Much of APPEX’s singularity now lives in the memories of its alumni
and in the Center for Intercultural Performance archives. From interviews and archival
scholarship, I seek to reconstruct here the nature and scope of APPEX, to ascertain the precise
nature of the exchange.
I have carved this biography of the APPEX initiative into four inter-related portions: 1) the planning and inception phase, 2) pilot phases which encompassed the initial 1996-1998 consecutive seasons, 3) the 1999 iteration that included feedback from artists, and 4) the 2000 switch of location to Bali. Peppered throughout the organizational breakdown of how APPEX developed over its tenure, I include voices of the artist Fellows, Critical Race and Critical Pedagogical reflections, and various commentary on how APPEX relates to the trajectory of cultural exchange initiatives across the globe. The passions and motivations of the project are subtle on paper so, where possible, I turn to participant testimony. Ultimately, the question at hand is what the Cultural Exchange and Critical Pedagogy fields can learn from APPEX, a core piece of which is comprehending not only what APPEX was, but why and how it was.

The School of the Arts & Architecture (SOAA) at the University of California – Los Angeles (UCLA) was APPEX’s overall institutional home. World Arts & Cultures (WAC) was its home department, Los Angeles was its home city, and the Center for Intercultural Performance (CIP) was APPEX’s home organization. In the official university communication generated by the Center for Intercultural Performance for the wider UCLA campus, APPEX administrators say: “Here and abroad certain artists are choosing to communicate in specific cultural styles that draw upon a history of “local practice,” often by joining with and operating under the auspices of relatively small community institutions” (Mitoma 1996). Professor Judy Mitoma, the founding WAC Departmental Chairwoman, studied ethnomusicology and dance ethnology during her time as an undergraduate and M.A. student at UCLA. At the time, Mantle Hood, one of Mitoma’s academic advisors and arguably the most famous Ethnomusicologists of the 1950s and 1960s, led the UCLA Ethnomusicology Department. Thus, institutional structure and city-wide culture may have influenced APPEX—an initiative begun by dancers,
choreographers, and Dance/Performance Studies scholars, as being so heavily influenced by music. The document later states,

Whereas the Department of World Arts and Cultures attends to the educational needs of UCLA students, the Center [for Intercultural Performance] will serve as the Department’s link to the outside world…. [APPEX] is designed to enhance our larger mission of providing a select group of artists with opportunities for an intensive collaboration, including a mutual self-reflective critique; the exploration of new strategies and techniques; and the establishment of lasting relationships of cooperation and mutual support” (ibid.).

Before APPEX, Mitoma’s experience as a producer of intercultural projects, such as the 1990 “Los Angeles Festival,” a massive project showcasing dance and musical performances with an emphasis on the city’s unprecedented ethnic and racial heritage, exemplified her determination to highlight the contributions of aesthetics originating from underrepresented regions of the globe. APPEX was born of Mitoma’s desire to de-center western aesthetics while advocating for cross pollination between disparate aesthetic lineages. Her focus was partly demographic and identity based, with a deeper desire to excavate the increasing interconnections of the globalized world in which we live. Mitoma’s dedication to interculturalism arose during the 1960s, the same era when Performance Studies scholar Richard Schechner was fascinated by interculturalist theater performance. Interculturalism was academically and artistically sought after by Western literati and the performance elite during the postmodern 1960s and 70s, in part because it coalesced with multi-culturalist trends in education and communications that regarded (non-Western) ethnicity as part of a buffet from which tastes might be sampled. Schechner did not invent the term interculturalism, but coined its usage in reference to his own incorporations of (mostly) East and South Asian performance aesthetics into Western-based practice. While Schechner was exploring how differing cultures intersect throughout scholarship and performance, Mitoma channeled the vast majority of her focus into production of performances and events with a few publications along the way.
Although her track record of funding procurement is impressive from the vantage of any field, and more so within the performing arts, Mitoma initially waited to apply for APPEX funding in favor of seeking feedback from artists to whose work she had been previously exposed. Given Mitoma’s propensity to seek input far and wide, the official archived documents only represent a fraction of the input she sought; the voices contributing to APPEX’s initial planning meetings include: artists, administrators, and WAC/D faculty. According to the funding narrative, two of the faculty, Victoria Marks and Angelia Leung—the former a white Western artist and the latter an Asian American artist—highlighted because of their leadership within the Department of World Arts and Cultures—"stimulated a new understanding of the terms of intercultural and international performance practice” and in subsequent iterations grew “course content and pedagogy in ways that responded to the cultural and aesthetic diversity of students” (Mitoma 1995).

Drawing from communications between the Center for Intercultural Performance and funding bodies, the idea of APPEX was that it would combine arts programming with academic programming “in order to further enhance the integration with instructional and research programs on [the] UCLA campus,” to “allow core collaborative artists to realize final projects over a ten-week period during the following winter or spring quarter[s] with the production support of the department” (Mitoma 1998). As a World Arts and Cultures Department insider, I imagine this strategy was in part linked to Mitoma’s status as Departmental Chair, and also because she sincerely wanted to initiate cross pollination between the performance and academic portions of the School of Arts and Architecture. While I cannot confirm that the proposed project

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2 Artists: Shi-Zheng Chen, Dan Chumley, Carol Bowen; administrators Rachel Cooper, Lillian Wu, Ricardo Trimillos, Pat Harter, Carol Goldstein, and Etsu Garfias; World Arts and Cultures/Dance faculty: David Gere, Peter Sellars, Victoria Marks, and Angelia Leung
ever occurred precisely as described, the funding narrative describes a model for collaboration between departments:

[The international] artists will also give classes for UCLA students during this residency. We plan to coordinate other curricular offerings related to this project with the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures, the Department of Ethnomusicology and the Department of Theatre Arts. In doing so, the outcome of APPEX artist collaboration could be studied and observed by the broader academic community at the university and could potentially stimulate further inquiry by scholars in related fields of cultural studies (ibid.).

From its beginning ideation, then, APPEX, was not interested in generating content, creating a single outcome, or even self-perpetuation; Mitoma and APPEX were satisfied only by increasing program quality and content in meaningful and impactful ways. The core of the APPEX model that was unequivocally funded was the intensive residency at UCLA.

Each of APPEX’s inception, launch, maintenance, and expansion components is intertwined, so although I attempt to unpack the project from a linear standpoint for ease of traceability, I ultimately adhere more to the themes and abandon chronology. In reviewing the core planning documents, including several minutes from meetings led by Mitoma in 1996, many voices express concerns ranging from tactical suggestions to social issues; as I read between the lines, several themes arise. Perhaps the most obvious, and the most imperative theme is the opportunity for meaningful artistic development and aesthetic exploration. As all the meeting documents note in some fashion, the artists are generally enthusiastic about working with such a large and international cohort. The value of participating in a multi-perspectival working group seems unequivocal. All the concerns that arise in the remainder of the documents, in many ways, are ameliorated by the potential inherent to bringing such a diverse group together. Of note, here, “diverse” is seen as pertaining to geographic, linguistic, and ethnic distinction, as well as to methods of aesthetic development and expressivity. Specifically, the
meeting notes allude to the value of artistic output, mode of communication about art, aesthetic leanings, and other forms of creative discourse.

Although secondary as compared to the potential for developing meaningful approaches to art, another theme that arises in the planning documents is the *opportunity to practice curiosity in the face of ethnocentric habits*. These themes took center stage at a meeting in October of 1995 in a lively discussion between Dan Chumley, a US-based mime, and Shi-Zheng Chen, a Chinese theater director and musician who worked with acclaimed performing artist Meredith Monk. Chen earned an MA from Tisch School of the Arts at NYU at the beginning of his career, so had spent considerable time in the US and therefore had more exposure than many of the other Asian born Fellows who joined the 1996 APPEX cohort. In the meetings notes, both Chumley and Chen emphasize a concern that not all APPEX ideas will be marketable (Mitoma 1995). Chen goes on to comment that inter-Asian “racism”—or what I would label ethnocentrism—could be an issue addressed by the project, due to culturally-bound preconceptions. Chen presents the idea as rooted in nationalism, or what in Performance Studies we might call a concern about the socio-politics of crossing boundaries and borders, as I mention in the preamble to this chapter. Several points arise around inter-Asian biases, such as “nationalism that some Asians may have in their own culture” and the need to “anticipate cultural conditioning” (*ibid*). Several interchanges emerge around the need for a “listening environment” in reference to non-violent communications. Further concerns are raised around the differences between Asian and Western approaches to conflict, feedback, and discussion overall.

Building off Chen’s comments, Chumley also stresses “the importance of listening to what is not said” as a means of placing importance on both the communicative capacities of art
as well as the socio-political imbalances of communications between portions of the greater Asian and Asian-American populace, and the varying ways in which they have been socialized to communicate, or as Chen says, “anticipat[ing] cultural conditioning” (*ibid.*). Chen speaks specifically of his own Chinese background and voices concerns that some social conditioning openly generates ‘racist’ attitudes towards non-Chinese Asian ethnicities while influence from the West might be welcomed (*ibid.*). Here we can see how race is being conflated with ethnicity; *race-ism* is a Western social construct through which we articulate the ways in which cultural background and phenotype are integral to how we are read by others, as well as how we formulate our own worldviews. In reference to *Whiteness as Property*, racism within exchange programming could show up as an overarching ideological principle wherein some aesthetics are worth more than others as evidenced by logistics such as allocation of funding or by narratives such as those presented via program notes. The varying veins of APPEX’s founding ideology, including references to ethnicity, situate this project as a parallel to the academic versions of interculturalism.

Crafting a *processual rather than outcome-dependent artistic environment* is another theme that arises in the planning notes. At the same October 14, 1995, meeting and attributed to all attendees, a decision is made that APPEX’s imperative should be less about performance proper, and more focused on a laboratory attitude. The meeting notes allude to the ways in which artistic process can be influenced by social background and create environments for interpersonal tension or cohesion. Although unclear who precisely introduced the topic, “Make things and throw them away, so nothing [is] too precious” stands out as a guiding principle. The document goes on to discuss, presumably as introduced by Chen, how the master/student dynamic for Americans often includes “explanations” and direct communication revolving around opinion.
and personal perspective (*ibid.*). To address concerns such as differing linguistic and
communication tendencies, ranges in interpersonal communications and working styles, and
avoiding preciousness of ideas—a vision for a workshop model begins to emerge. Contributors
stress the importance of improvisation within artistic innovation, while noting the ideological
differences between the openness of process within Western culture and the dedication to respect
within Eastern cultures: “improvisation is very important—how do we do that…a reactive skill
of trust involving openness and trust. Movement based improv will be easiest rather than text”
(*ibid.*). In parallel to the culturally bound value on improvisation versus set performance,
contributors agree on a need to include some element of formality to counterbalance the
perception that a laboratory is highly informal: “Some people will want to do more formal
showings. This will help build respect as well.” This indicates that a need is observed to
construct a version of formality, even if just as a container for the overall program (*ibid.*).

While many of the initial planning participants share compelling ideas, from my
perspective, Chumley and Zhang’s voices are prominent because they offer tremendous insight
from critical yet complementary vantages. Their contributions offer metaphorical bookends,
holding the overall planning in place from disparate yet necessary perspectives. Although
APPEX remained a work in progress through its formalized conclusion in 2010, by the end of
Mitoma’s planning sessions in 1995, the initial concept was set.

Regardless of how the overall APPEX format is crafted, the attendees of the planning
meetings express agreement that Mitoma’s role is imperative because quality leadership is
crucial to how the entire project runs: “Judy’s job is to make sure everybody can reach their
potential, she is the top, facilitator’s role is to work on art and workshops. Judy likes to get her
hands dirty. She does not want to stay at a distance but likes being in there, involved” is a sentiment echoed by all present (ibid.). Mitoma does not weigh in, so this common assessment of her role is not affirmed or denied by her explicitly. Having worked with her myself, albeit two decades after this meeting and during an entirely different project, I would agree with a Great Leader assessment of her style, not only in behavior, but in her approach to artistic processes. From my perspective, there is, however, one crucial caveat: Mitoma “performs” as Chief Executive with a crystal clear vision, rather than as a facilitator of varied perspectives.

My greater point is not to solidify a single perspective on how Mitoma or any head visiona
y ought to behave, but to construct a form of critical behavior in which the head administrator is enabling rather than obstructing whatever the imperative of the program develops into. If APPEX is an “art tank” or aesthetic innovation lab, Mitoma’s role would need to look one way, and as she represents APPEX’s intercultural work within an R1 institution, her role would need to look another way. The ability to shape change depending on audience and objective begs the question: how can leaders of cultural exchange programs responsibly activate roles ranging from social innovator to artistic producer to critical educator to administrative representative?

The project certainly became more enclosed over time, but it did not necessarily become more insular. A familial attitude developed because Judy and other administrators involved familial elements, such as close living quarters, sharing food, and regular process reflections, but becoming kindred was not necessarily equivalent to becoming clannish. Noting that humans of extremely different backgrounds can congregate to produce something meaningful, even beautiful together could be argued utopic. Yet the realities of the program become increasingly complex and messy the closer one gets to the actualities of the program and its narrative and
experiential outcomes. Judy’s choice to run Cudamani in a family-like way, and the choice of Cudamani as a whole to uphold a family-esque container makes it all the more nuanced as a program. As a funding model, however, a familial structure can somewhat simplify the resources required to bring humans together from across the globe. Resource gathering and allocation gets increasingly complex in parallel to the complexity of an administrative (and therefore power) structure. By keeping the decisions all in the family, so to speak, more resources, including energy and focus, are available to support artists and art making processes. Precisely what is lost (creativity, variety, options, etc.) is difficult to explicitly determine and would amount to an exercise in imagination. The force of family is a powerful and poignant metaphor; still we must ask: How can participants of differing backgrounds come together as a family of sorts without ignoring all the greater implications? How does invoking a familial structure shape the participants’ perception of the work?

As I review the archival documents, the atmosphere that Mitoma strives to create for the artists she works with slowly begins to reveal itself. She is an astute administrator and a confirmed advocate who channels her drive to support artists. Mitoma curates and shapes the experience of her guests with an acumen so sharp that it appears invasive at times. From my vantage, she engages the practice of hosting with such vigor as to almost become aggressive. I appreciate how Mitoma’s explicit approach to community surpasses the rhetorical-only approach I have encountered in many other arts and educational scenarios elsewhere: she walks her talk and vocally demands that others do as well. Thus, her tenacity and rigor are a welcome change that indicate how carefully crafted interpersonal experiences enhance learning way beyond surface encounter. Hosting as a methodology, a pedagogy, even, taps into the human capacity to
receive and interpret interpersonal experience, at which point (and perhaps only at which point) full presence to others becomes possible.

As a host, Mitoma seems to be compelled by being of service to the artists she loves; her dedication appears almost dogmatically altruistic. She uses piping hot food, comfortable surroundings, and public praise or recognition of talent to highlight the strengths of each Fellow cohort. These techniques have positive and potentially replicable application within a wide range of contexts. Crafting an ambience of community is Mitoma’s unwavering focus, with an emphasis on creating a welcoming yet close atmosphere for work and art, even requesting that adults sleep in the same housing areas (partially to accommodate funding parameters, but also as a tactic for bonding). Small gifts of thanks, of greeting, or of appreciation are disbursed to APPEX Fellows semi-regularly and in public scenarios such as group meetings, accompanied by effusive speeches about the value that person has added to Mitoma’s life—these sweet gestures are an integral part of her process. Mitoma’s style of support is almost forceful and her formats for giving seem unyielding. She has a vision for artists’ success around which she does not compromise, and that vision includes uninterrupted support, in accordance with her perception of what artist support ought to look like. This attitude makes me question the degree to which the support is actually crafted in favor of the artists as people, and more as artists as conduits of artistic creation. In other words, the support is intensive and tailored to Mitoma’s ideal scaffolding for creative projects. If she engages tailor made support for specific individuals, I have not been privy to that perspective.

Mitoma’s approach to hosting and way the in which she crafts a container for aesthetic communications is certainly linked to food and to communal experience, but it also relies on creating a situational and even emotional buffer between the artists and the surrounding
environment. At first glance, Mitoma appeared to me as a facilitator, or someone who enables deep interactivity, but with increased exposure to her work, I see her now as more of a patron: with highly effective skill and impressive precision she seeks out, procures, and applies the tools through which to design and implement programs, yet her approach within the program itself is more of a manager. While this distinction may sound semantic, I see it as imperative to understanding how social technologies develop, as evidenced by the fact that APPEX became a more and more insular experience, now managed entirely by Mitoma and her family. I have no interest in labeling a facilitation methodology “better” or “worse” than that of a manager, but I do want to parse how these differing approaches and intentions shift the ways in which humans convene, and thus, the aesthetic products created therein. As a communicative tool and social technology, art is not neutral and is imbued with the author as well as the constellation of factors that amalgamate to create an artist’s worldview. After ongoing and amalgamated points of influence, though admittedly defying precise definition, the hosting procedures become the center of the project, and what might have otherwise been facilitation becomes patronage. The impressive gift of patronage has a long historical arc of shifting cultures and impacting collective knowledge, yet upends the sentiment of servant leadership. Patronage is undoubtedly impressive and impactful, yet it neglects the marrow of human systems; the most enduring aesthetic and humanistic developments are co-created by internal and external force, with situational scaffolding enabling the expression of core shifts. Patronage is not bad per se, but actively moves away from servant leadership, or ways of engaging power structures without replicating them. The potential to be of service is generative and therefore impactful, a means to potentially surpass a standard leadership alone.
How much hosting is too much? When hosting starts to smother agency and assumes a dictatorial role, its impact is too much. In the field of pedagogy, practitioners hold that interpersonal relationships are not critical, regardless of how benevolent and supportive, if they undermine equilibria of power. Rather than ignore power, critical pedagogy foregrounds it so that it may, as possible, be attended to and then ignored so that the rest of the work may be engaged as readily as possible. Critical leadership, or a pedagogy of hosting, if you will, would entail explicit attendance to dynamics of power, with admission and attendance to exertions of power. Applied to APPEX, Mitoma’s pedagogy of hosting holds that specifically designed and upheld parameters for supporting artists will invariably lead to a circumstance of heightened cross pollination and creativity. She is an offer-er; she offers tangibles by way of space and sustenance, and offers intangibles by way of advocacy and organization. She is also wildly, almost ferociously protective of the artists she loves, demanding that any administrative necessities surrounding the work are tertiary to the art itself, to the extent that the people ‘behind’ the art live in service of their craft. Thus, while creating a high caliber and historically important art tank, Mitoma’s approach is that of an ultimate, almost aggressive host, with the art itself being the guest of honor. In her model, everything and everyone are to live in service of the art, and happily so. Mitoma leaves no room for questions, such that anyone surrounding the project—including the artists generating it—live in service of its emergence.

The frequency and cruciality of food and accommodations and gatherings cannot be understated within the pedagogy of hosting. The sensorial enjoyment is as respected as the community enjoyment: food becomes our tissues, flavors impact our energetics, and breaking bread (or eating rice, as the case may be) with the same people with which you just took a performance workshop is almost invariably bound to feelings of sharing, respect, and
camaraderie. Mitoma was conscientious, also, of the forms of food her staff served, with rice and spices and cuisines representative of South East Asian cultures frequently featured. If neither linguistic language nor dance language are universal, surely eating food is, at least on some sensorial levels. Surely the human sensorium—the ultimate interface between the world and the body—is the key to rigorous and effective exchange. What better form of exchange might be developed than sharing food, the ultimate in sensation that bridges between the external and internal?

Because Mitoma is unwavering in her insistence on what a productive environment looks like for art, like many advocates, she is almost insistent that her design format works. I argue that as a pedagogy, Mitoma’s approach is not “critical” as defined as an approach intended to upend systems of oppression. On a human-to-human level I would even argue that such aggressive “support” may become oppressive for some learning styles, as some forms of communication and expression need more room—not only logistically but energetically also—to messily flail about before they take more coherent form. Yet I so respect and appreciate and acknowledge the rare sanctuary for artists that Mitoma crafted through the APPEX project. Her pedagogy of hosting offered a bastion of sorts within a world that virtually never sufficiently appreciates art materially, spiritually, organizationally, or attitudinally, with magnified issues of inequity for artists of color from “developing” corners of the world that many North Americans have never heard of. Mitoma’s pedagogy of hosting, then, may not be in and of itself a highly critical method of arranging humans in time and space, but is highly radical within the context of a historically white institution that defaults toward upholding discourses of the Global North in distinction to discourses of the Global South.
I can posit any number of reasons why Mitoma’s pedagogy of hosting is “good” or “bad,” yet the true question of this project is whether the approach interrupts whiteness generally, and how it may be useful in equitable cultural exchange programming specifically. As my exploration of Critical Pedagogy expands, I explore an entire ideological and ontological shift toward a version of equity less concerned with including more artists of color and more concerned with the representations of and narratives surrounding cultures. The pedagogy of Edutourism revolves around collectionseeking and disseminationideological transmission, which is by its very nature a proprieties mindset stemming from manifest destiny and frontier ideologies. In this way, Edutourism revolves around serving whiteness. In contrast, Mitoma’s pedagogy of hosting is built upon the claim that upholding a container for art is a form of transgression by virtue of art “being” inherently transgressive; Mitoma’s paradigm reifies the trope that art is a benevolently revolutionary force and that therefore supporting art and its processes is automatically a progressive project. While the potential for subverting normative subjugations and systems of power through art is demonstrably real, the presumption is not only lazy in its abdication of examining the meanings that arise through representational aesthetics, but can become dangerous as art is offered misaligned accolades. The trope that art and progressivism are virtually synonymous is not useful throughout aesthetically-based cultural exchange, nor, I would argue, anywhere. Unfortunately, my perspective is that relying on creating a container for art-that-subverts inadvertently reifies this very trope—the inherent criticality of art. Art created across cultures, regardless of the racial, ethnic, or other demographic markers of its authors, is only critical if project administrators permit the art’s agency, with ample room for it to be whatever the artists need it to be.
“Dear APPEX Fellow”

The letterhead belongs to the University of California – Los Angeles, the sender listed as the Center for Intercultural Performance, Department of World Arts and Cultures.

To my knowledge, there has never been a gathering of artists like this in my country—the possibilities are so exciting! The energy and interest in this project increases as the news spreads. I have had many requests from people who would like to visit APPEX and meet you. While we are always open to these requests, we also want to protect your time and the process to which we are all committed and are working hard to find a good balance (Mitoma 1996).

Prof. Mitoma’s greeting letter is both an outreach and a framing document; she is nothing if not a multidimensional designer with a bold enthusiasm and fierce commitment to protecting time and space for artists that comes across as much in her correspondences as in her meetings. The letter goes on to discuss the particulars of housing, how the Center reviewed the artists’ intent letters, and how the arrival process will work. It is at once a welcome, a schedule, and a directive; somehow Mitoma’s tone almost always strikes an impressive balance between productivity and graciousness, both motivational and easeful.

The letter continues,

As the time draws near, I am thinking of how much preparation some of our artists are making. In three cases, artists are actually having to learn English in order to participate. This goes far beyond simply making the time to attend the program. I know that when we all meet for the first time, we will all have much to tell of these months of preparation. I look forward to hearing these stories (ibid.).

This portion strikes me as differing from other accounts of language as a bridge and as a barrier, and flies in the face of the trope—present in the APPEX self-published book, *Narrative/Performance*, and throughout the Western dance world—that dance is a “universal language.” For one, it does not attempt to conceal that a common spoken language—in this case English—will be necessary for Fellows to communicate with one another, and to have the depth
of experience possible on an individual level. Just as it would be preposterous to invite Fellows with no performance experience into a performance-based project, so too it would be unhelpful to invite a Fellow with no command of English whatsoever to partake of an English-based program. Yet the letter also strives to transcend the spoken language and addresses more broadly the notion of preparation, noting that preparation looks different for different people, and that it spans time, geography, and individual intention. Mitoma wishes to make visible the labor of preparation as much as to share and to understand the specifics of preparation and what those specifics might demonstrate about Fellows’ varied backgrounds. The ability to prepare effectively emerged directly from Mitoma’s pedagogy of hosting, as well as the meticulous recruitment of the artists most suited to Mitoma’s vision for project.

Although the calls for APPEX were open, Mitoma hand-picked many of the Fellows herself, based upon her own preference for their aesthetic, their work with examining cultural themes, and considerable input from the WAC Faculty and other artists with whom Mitoma shared a long-standing history. Of note, while artistic excellence was absolutely required, it was not the sole criteria upon which Mitoma recruited or accepted prospective participants. Aesthetic excellence was the point of the project, yet was regarded as both the method through which exchange would occur and the way in which the exchange process would be shared with the larger community. In this sense, although APPEX was artistic in both method and methodology, its subject was not artistic excellence per se. The primary concern was that Fellows would be open to experimental and process-based work that concerned itself more with asking questions than re-creating the precise arts of their cultures of origin. This note is particularly important for the Asian and Asian American Fellows, many of whom grew up in environments that expected them to pay homage to family and cultural heritage by replicating pre-existing aesthetic forms.
Certainly, this notion is not unfamiliar to many of the Fellows from non-Asian ethnic backgrounds, but given the focus on APPEX—and the observations I and many other scholars have made regarding Asian-based art forms, for APPEX, the willingness to ask about the context and impact of traditional aesthetics was virtually mandatory. As such, Mitoma’s selection process was more concerned with encouraging Fellows who were enthusiastic about the messiness of cultural legacy without ignoring the importance of familial and ethnic heritage.

Because I define equity in terms of its relationship to equality—the former being active implementation of the concept of equality—I have been looking at APPEX through a somewhat straightforward lens. I have sought to understand where within its programmatic implementation were opportunities to support its Fellows in becoming greater advocates of equity despite socio-political constraints. And I am still asking those questions. Yet I was also reminded over the course of speaking with four of APPEX’s star Fellows, all of whom are prolific and beloved teachers, that equity is not only institutional, and requires a pedagogy that asks internal questions about how education can be a catalyst for shifting narratives about culture. Critical Pedagogy is not an end goal that we reach after an equitable plan has been implemented; as explored through the artists’ testimonies, pedagogical refinement is the process of exploring how to respect students by pushing them to limits of what they can reasonably achieve within the greater context of what their communities expect.

The example that stood out to me most arose during my conversation with Gamelan player and composer Dewa Berata. Berata has the distinction of being the son-in-law of APPEX’s founder and Director, Prof. Emerita Judy Mitoma, as he is married to and shares two beautiful children with Mitoma’s daughter, Emiko Susilo. Susilo is also a multi-talented performing artist, and the two share a home in Ubud that has hosted years of performing arts
summer sessions from visitors from all over the world, including several cohorts of APPEX Fellows.

Berata and I sat on the covered terrace in front of the home he shares with Susilo, perched comfortably on floor mats, cups of tea between us. He smoked, I wrote. Berata, like the other Bali-born artists I spoke with, was entirely positive about APPEX, explaining that his own experience had been nothing but generative and that he felt the program overall was a wonderful opportunity for artists across the globe to learn from one another. And I believe him, not because of his family ties or my western training that everyone from Bali is taught to be agreeable, but because I have no reason not to; his bright eyes, sincere smile, and open body language did not indicate anything to the contrary. I also noted, through Berata’s words and the words of the other Fellows, that the degree to which APPEX’s model may have been improvable was not terribly interesting. After all, virtually any model can be improved upon. I wondered, then, what his personal reflections were, and how he had integrated the lived experience of his APPEX Fellowship with his ongoing artistic process.

Perhaps more than anything else, Berata’s APPEX involvement impacted his pedagogical outlook: in the years since, he focused considerable energy on incorporating girls into the traditionally male world of Gamelan. Berata’s motivation was only somewhat related to his gorgeous, whip smart daughter, and stemmed predominantly from his recognition that young women approach Gamelan with a different energetic, infusing the art form with entirely different qualities than his male students. Although fascinating, I am primarily interested in how the differing male/female interactions with Gamelan flies in the face of western notions of equality. Berata says that his female students play differently from his male students, from body postures to the sounds they produce while using the very same equipment. To him, these distinctions have
been an exciting means of expanding the art form he loves and a way to explore how difference can enrich art. To me, Berata’s pedagogical approach is a direct manifestation of equity: he appreciates that people are not equal by asking how the one consistent factor—difference—can enhance opportunity for all. This attitude also underlies why Berata felt APPEX was so successful: the most transformative learning occurs when artists have a platform to share who they are and how they interact with their art.

In Berata’s estimation, the Denpasar and Ubud audiences expected female Gamelan to be, at best, bad. An exclusively male Gamelan was presupposed to be musically superior because women lacked the proper energetic to master the requisite hours of intensive physical endurance. Berata wondered what, then, he and his students might discover about the music’s potential qualities if they approached the instruments differently. A new approach included different composition, with a shift in melodies and tempos, as well as a new approach to how the body inter-relates with the instruments. For Berata, shifting the male-centric tradition is a way to more fully appreciate Gamelan by showcasing that its aesthetic is even more broad and more nuanced than what audiences had come to expect. He knew, however, that audiences would be resistant to female players, in his estimation not on principle, but because of an expectation that the music would suffer. Berata composed new music and worked with his first female students until their instrumental prowess and performance abilities were even stronger than what local communities had come to expect when watching young men play. The audience’s positive—if surprised and perplexed—reception was in alignment with Berata’s expecions. Quality art speaks for itself!

Equity, for Berata, is about intentionally creating opportunities for all of his students, regardless of how comparable to or different from one another they may be. Not unlike several of the Critical Pedagogues most beloved within progressive education circles in the west, he sees
his job as meeting his students’ needs by understanding and appreciating what they do have to offer. The field of Critical Pedagogy can learn by expanding its applicability within the performing arts, and vice versa. Berata’s approach does just this: by embracing his students as whole, complete humans as they are, he prepares them to meet audiences where they are. Having great intentions and being an educator who craves equity does not ensure that others will be receptive. Still, in the years since his APPEX Fellowship, Berata’s critical pedagogy has maturated. He has found a way to view each student in their infinitely intersectional glory, and not assume that all students ought to be approached the same way.

Toward the middle of my trip to Bali, I spoke with the acclaimed Gamelan teacher I Made Sidia, an APPEX participant from 1997, 1998, and then again in 2003 and 2004 for *The Art of Rice* performance, at his home outside of Ubud. He had just finished eating dinner with his family. Sidia taught a class of boys in the 10-11-year-old range immediately prior, so a few of his students stayed for dinner, and their parents gradually stopped by to retrieve them. By the time we began to chat evening had set, and the weather had cooled a bit. We perched across from one another on Sidia’s front stoop so as not to disturb the end of dinner for his family. Tea and tasty local snacks lay on a tray between us. For those who have not yet had the pleasure of visiting Bali, I will note that Sidia’s home, indeed his entire neighborhood, looked like any number of well-kept middle class neighborhoods from a North American suburb, with the addition of tropical flora. Sounds of Sidia’s family floated out into the evening, infusing the soft air and dark ambience with a personable warmth.

Sidia and I both relaxed as the conversation began; my awareness of being a white westerner interviewing an elder of the Gamelan community, which has felt to me, at times, rather
patriarchal, and his nervousness about conversing in English both faded as we responded to one another’s mutual enthusiasm about cultural exchange. My decision to interview Sidia was as easy one because he was a three-time APPEX Fellow, making him one of the few Balinese participants not related to Mitoma whose exposure to APPEX’s methods was extensive. Of equal import, Sidia is involved with Cudamani to this day.

Throughout our conversation, Sidia recounted glowing reviews of APPEX while also offering substantive feedback on how Fellow relationships relied directly on the high volume of communication required throughout the APPEX program design. As with the rest of my research, the term ethnicity never arose, but Sidia did speak of ego as related to culture of origin. I noted that my own view of ethnocentrism—placing one’s own ethnicity at the epicenter of cultural importance—was comparable to Sidia’s, even if we were not using the same semantics. Sidia’s connection of cultural aggrandizement to ego status was a fascinating reminder that hierarchies are rooted internally via emotional connections to Self and Other. He noted that interethnic communications were often challenging when attempted externally to meaningful shared experience. However, from his perspective, virtually all APPEX Fellows succeeded in creating trusting relationships with one another almost immediately upon arrival to Los Angeles. Over the course of each residency, shared artistic experiences served to deepen the initial connections. The ease between Fellows developed organically as the artists spent time together, not only in the studio, but in the house where they slept close to one another and shared meals.

Familiarity, which inevitably arose out of APPEX’s attempt at an immersive design, including a few weeks of close living and working proximity to other Fellows, was a highly effective catalyst for well-meaning adults to discover forms of admiration for one another, even if they did not love every minute together. For Sidia, the immediacy of interaction opened his
“heart and mind” and the interaction became entirely about the highly complex humans and their arts practices, and only secondarily about cultures of origin as a way to understand aesthetic nuances. Because Mitoma had selected Fellows for their openness to curiosity and learning, the focus throughout APPEX residencies was primed for appreciative interactivity. Overall, the logistical and hosting arrangement, coupled with APPEX’s recruitment tactics, created an environment where adults from differing communities could readily merge into a community of practice.

For Sidia, the experience of cross cultural collaboration was not fully solidified until he had the opportunity to return to APPEX year after year. Although his initial experience was positive, he began to fully conceive of “the flow of the program” once he discussed his initial experience on the UCLA campus with colleagues in Bali, and then had the opportunity to return to UCLA a second time, after reflecting on the process. He also recruited several other Balinese artists to apply for subsequent cohorts, so watching their initial experiences while undergoing his second experience brought him incredible insights about aesthetic collaboration as a Balinese artist working with colleagues from cultural backgrounds unfamiliar to him. He began to notice the assumptions he made about cultures to which he had never had significant exposure. For example, he had never tried the food from many of the other regions that other Fellows represented—as well as American food—and noticed that he enjoyed almost all of it, much to his delight.

Sidia was firm in his belief that ethnocentrism is bound to dissolve when people are asked to work together in close proximity. Even the biggest of egos, he insisted, soften when presented with exciting and fresh information about unfamiliar topics. Quelling overwhelming egos, from his perspective, is an exercise in patience. The more Sidia interfaced with people
from different cultures, the less concerned he felt with repeating the value of his own, and the
more he values openness and curiosity about otherness. This pedagogical and discursive
approach asks students and leaders alike to reflect on cultural comparatives without assigning
value or sorting traits into hierarchies.

Comparable to some of the current discourse surrounding xenophobia and white
supremacy, ignorance is not a result of lack of information, but is the product of being taught and
exposed to specific narratives. Sidia discussed how attending to ethnocentrism requires attending
to learning processes, even in the face of ugly preconceptions of superiority. Dismantling over-
developed egos requires new information disbursed patiently and conscientiously over time,
coupled with a gentle yet firm insistence that learning new information and new perspectives is a
required part of being a coherent professional. In his current classes Sidia tells his students,
mostly young men from rural villages throughout Bali, that they must overcome their desire to
claim Bali’s culture is superior. This tactic arose in part because Sidia noticed that students’
academic work ethic and overall learning capacity directly correlated to the degree to which they
felt excitement about other cultures. This observation has monumental potential: instead of
merely avoiding conflict, the ability to foster productive interactions with otherness is the
potential to change habituated worldviews and their resulting behaviors. Sidia now argues that
interrupting ignorance requires working on oneself rather than foisting perspectives onto others;
the best way to grow one’s own competencies and to become the best professional possible,
Sidia holds, is to couple pride in one’s familiar landscape with a sense of inspiration based on the
unfamiliar. In order to be the best Balinese man, musician, and educator possible, Sidia feels he
must love Balinese culture so much that he can challenge his Balinese perspective to grow.
Interestingly, Sidia shared that his methods for work with Balinese students were different from methods for students from Java, the larger neighboring island in Indonesia, as well as students from other countries throughout South East Asia. He drew on a Balinese phrase that translates to “place, time, situation/condition” as guiding principles for constructing effective educational tactics. Essentially, Sidia endorsed culturally dependent pedagogical design, where the students’ infinite intersectionality—not singular identifiers such as geographic origin—inform that which he deemed most effective for meaningful learning. Even throughout the tiny island of Bali, cultural competency might be different for students from, for example, different socio-economic, diasporic, and regional backgrounds. Other factors that could impact student experience include the class’ venue, what time of day or during which season class is held, how many students are enrolled, ages, and other circumstances.

Using the metaphor of when to enjoy a glass of wine—in the evening, wonderful; in the morning, less so—Sidia emphasized that crafting methods of teaching to a particular student demographic is more than giving the students what they already know they want, and is also about sharing when ethnic pride is wonderful and when it may get in the way of deeper learning. For example, Sidia noted that students were excited about an element of Balinese culture, and boasted that component of culture made Bali, when in actuality that element was an import via one of the many immigrants from Thailand or China; in an instance such as this, Sidia encouraged Balinese pride as a motivating force as long as deeper understanding of historical and contextual appreciation were concurrently cultivated for other cultures. Some comprehension of cultures outside of Bali, Sidia shared, is a crucial component of pedagogy, though less in a multiculturalist vein, and more as a tactic for cultivating appreciative attitudes toward the act of learning. I would characterize Sidia’s pedagogy as critical because he is not
satisfied with adding information to his students and strives instead to challenge his students to expand what they think they know. Cultivating active curiosity is Sidia’s chief excitement as an educator and as an artist.

In contrast to the personal notes generated during APPEX’s forming meetings, the funding narrative, consisting of grant proposals, reports, and other communications with funders, plays a giant role in fleshing out the program’s entire trajectory, from conception through execution and evaluation. The archives are organized partially by year, but to my eyes, most of the emphasis is on theme, with Ford Foundation funding documents, and to a lesser degree, Rockefeller Foundation funding documents, taking up the bulk of space. Immediately after the 1990 Los Angeles Festival, Mitoma took a sabbatical from her tenure at UCLA to work as a Warren Wilson Fellow with the Rockefeller Foundation, so I read her masterful articulation of APPEX’s goals and rationale as crafted with an insider’s knowledge of the Foundation’s eyes and ears. When reading the funding documents, I find myself surprised by Mitoma’s candor and admission of imperfection because my own prior grant writing experience revolved mostly around emphasizing successes exclusively. These documents, for the purposes of my project, constitute the bulk of the organizational narrative from the administrative side, with a later portion dedicated to the experience of the artist Fellows. By blending the two, we can begin to accumulate a picture of how the organization’s design impacted the lived experience of the Fellows as raced, ethnic people, as well as generators of culturally representative and transmissive material.

The sort of exchange Mitoma posited was unlike anything the field had previously seen. Mitoma demanded serious expertise from APPEX Fellows, and even in the case of emerging
artists, required dedication to craft as well. Though never directly expressed in the funding documents, a close reader can intuit between the lines that Mitoma’s dedication was not necessarily about expertise, and focused more on an unwavering immersion within the ongoing craft process. She does not tolerate dabblers. Where this impressive outlook becomes problematic is that, in some cases, experimentalism can appear the same as dabbling, and repeatedly the evidence suggests that Mitoma does have a significant discomfort with pushing the boundaries of what constitutes legitimate representations of various cultures.

The archives do contain several personal voices, particularly in the form of Fellow letters. Most of the material, however, is dedicated to Funding and related paperwork which, happily, reveals more poignant details about the program than one might expect. If nothing else, they offer scaffolding from which to reverse engineer the progression of events. After an initial round of funding for establishing the Center for Intercultural Performance in June 1995, the Ford Foundation money was used to operate APPEX’s inaugural seasons in summers of 1996 and 1997 when Fellows from across the globe congregated in Los Angeles. At this point, the Pew Charitable Trust awarded a four-and-a-half-year grant of $1.485 million for CIP to hire two new full time administrators and move offices to support the UCLA National Dance/Media Project. While this project emphasized film and new media throughout intercultural communities geographically spread through the United States, and not allocated toward APPEX in general, it also linked up with the Asia/Inroads conference hosted by the Center in 1997.

As represented to the Ford Foundation, the very first APPEX iteration, July 1996, welcomed the first round of forty-six artist Fellows from across greater Asia and the Americas, including “Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Myanmar, the Philippines and Vietnam [as well as from] Honolulu, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle, Minneapolis and New
York City,” all of whom were personally selected by Mitoma for their “outstanding work in the creative and performing arts, evidence of leadership in their respective cultures, and demonstration of interest in international collaboration. Preference was given to those with the least opportunity to travel to the United States and to those who seemed likely to benefit the most” (Mitoma 1996).

The 1996 version spanned a five-week intensive workshop series comprised of “composers, choreographers, puppeteers, theater directors, performers and playwrights” who “discussed issues relevant to their professional lives, rotated leadership as they exchanged artistic skills and techniques, and openly and enthusiastically related work together” (ibid.). The funding narrative emphasizes what I have found in my fieldwork: “Collaborative partnerships and projects sprang up and are being perused to this day…. the professional friendships that were established will continue to be nurtured throughout their lives” (ibid.). While this statement may sound sentimental or grandiose, again, my fieldwork has corroborated its validity, and affirmed that APPEX’s humanistic and aesthetic trajectory has been accumulative.

The 2000-10 APPEX span represents a considerable shift from US-based work toward Balinese-based work. Shifting geography is about more than language and food and socioeconomics, though certainly those factors cannot be overstated. The legacy of interculturalist work upholds a whiteness as property mindset wherein the west holds court over the ways in which “non-western” aesthetics are incorporated into and packaged for western eyes (and funding). Today the cultural exchange industry relies on various approaches—Edu-tourism, poverty tourism, exoticization, cultural appropriation, orientalist performance—but “intercultural” was a specific form of consumptive work that actively upheld jurisdictions of
power and induction of aesthetics from their contextualized lineages into formats more palatable to western normative audiences.

Even those scholars who now call out the Western-centric nature of interculturalist theater talk largely about geography as a marker of culture, rather than excavating the interplay between location and the ways in which humans develop narratives around their roles as upholders or interrupters of colonial narratives. For this project, I want to emphasize the institutional importance of shifting APPEX’s base from UCLA to Cudamani in Bali. The fact that Cudamani is still going strong is a testament to Mitoma and Susilo’s administrative and entrepreneurial skills, as well as the fact that a global market exists for meaningful touristic experiences. Cudamani may not offer full cultural immersion, but it does offer substance, authenticity, and a massive amount of heart.

The fact that APPEX achieved geographic bi-directionality is extremely impressive from both funding and programmatic standpoints. The clear majority of programs I have encountered throughout my research either operate as Edu-tourism projects that bring artists from the global North to South, or invite a select few practitioners from “developing” areas to be guests in westernized countries. The concern of this project is not whether programs are exclusive to specific regions of the globe, although geographic exclusion is real, and more attuned to the ways in which un- or multi-directionality impacts the narrative outcomes of each program. APPEX was remarkable in part due to its success in bringing over 230 artists from all over the US and greater Asia to the US as well as its success in bringing several of the same artist to Indonesia. On paper these feats may appear trivial or obvious, yet the impediments to equitably-designed bi-directionality are much deeper than funding restrictions and relate as much or more to global socio-politics. In APPEX’s case, the transition from Los Angeles to Bali as a hub for
cross-cultural communication via performance, instigated *Art of Rice*, an evening-length show that addressed these very themes.

Set in the outdoor, covered patio of Cudamani’s headquarters surrounded by foliage, the ambience *Art of Rice* is romantic yet grounded. The venue has the same intimacy as a downtown scene black box, the same rustic quality as the open-air theaters at Jacob’s Pillow, and the same loveliness as a classical chamber ensemble, with Gamelan and other instruments framing the stage. This venue is a short car ride to the famous Tegallalang rice flats in Ubud, and even though I could only watch the show via a 2002 video recording, the stage is the same site where I interviewed Berata and Susilo years later, during my 2016 fieldwork. I can just imagine the slightly cool evening air flowing through the veranda outside Berata and Susilo’s home as personal stories unite the performers through the unifying theme of rice. As I watch the video a full fifteen years after the performance recording, I can almost feel the nipping bugs and the surrounding humidity in the air.

After a lovely Gamelan overture, the first act is a calm duet between Cheng-Chieh Yu (of Taiwan and the United States) and Dewa Berata (of Bali). They begin seated, with Berata recounting a story in Balinese about how his mother harvested rice grain by grain. Berata complements his words with gestures, and Yu translates into English while framing the spoken words with gestures. The tone is somber and seamlessly fades into the second act, a solo by Kyaw Kyaw Naing (of Burma). Naing combines gestures and sounds from his traditional Burmese gongs with a story about how his mother prepared rice when he was a boy. This piece is slightly more playful in tone, as Naing smiles, injects a bit of humor, and concludes while spinning his gong mallets in the same fashion as a majorette’s baton.
The show’s initial romanticism quickly fades. After the first portion concludes, the ways in which rice is produced inexpensively, from growing to harvesting to sales, is linked to modern day slavery and the politics of globalization. The third act is a trio that demonstrates the importance of rice as a unifying theme amongst geographically diverse cultures by punctuating each portion of the two-part piece with overlapping interjections: “my story is about… my story is about… our story is about… rice!” Josefina Baez (of the United States and Dominican Republic), Peng Jingquan (of China), and I Made Sidia (of Bali) recount stories not only of how they consumed rice as children, but how their families were involved in the cheap production of rice as a commodity product. “Slavery… slavery,” Baez observes in a matter of fact voice, then continues, “What else but economics?” Despite the heavy topic, the tone of this act is quite upbeat, almost silly, and receives many appreciative audience giggles.

The tiny details of the remainder of the show are somewhat incidental, as act after act blend together into what feels like a dreamscape of interweaving cultures and aesthetic legacies that illustrate the narrative of rice as a player on a global stage. Rice is at once common friend, instrument of colonial and economic control, divisive and proprietary marker of ethnocentric individuality, overarching guardian of the sanctity of nature that far supersedes any human experience, and poetic marker of how humans strive to conceive of the similarities and differences that bind and divide us. That so many themes can be not only covered, but made accessible within such a short amount of time (the entire show is under ninety minutes) speaks directly to the strength of art as a discursive tool.

Just as inequitable material outcome is a tangible manifestation of racism, rice is a tangible manifestation of ethnic identity. As Dan Kwong proclaims in a scene toward the middle of the show, “My father was Japanese-American and my mother was from China. I’m American!
Sometimes growing up in Los Angeles was a little confusing…” Kwong goes on to illustrate how rice preparation in his childhood home involved calling Japanese rice bowls by Chinese names. The tales of ethnic identity that comprise *Art of Rice* are not necessarily negative, but they all relate in some way to the political and historical links between ethnicity and politics.

Rice, a character in and of itself, is portrayed as an agential goddess who transcends the parameters of human-made culture, while also being a keystone to cultures across the globe.

Perhaps my favorite scene introduces globalization as another character, noting how its relationship to economics is its defining characteristic; globalization, according to the *Art of Rice*, runs on the concept of efficiency, as though the ability to speed up production, delivery, and consumption of commodity crops were the single most crucial element. Where I crave for *Art of Rice* to dive deeper, but feel is a heavy subtext nonetheless, is that the efficiency underlying globalization relates to the conception, production, delivery, and consumption of race and ethnicity as well. Whiteness, as an imaginary made from institutional power and intended to uphold institutional power, comprises the mental gymnastics necessary to craft entire social systems that uphold the narrative that some humans are more valuable than others.

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So much has changed socio-politically in the twenty-two years since Mitoma founded APPEX, yet the realms of education and intercultural communications have changed very little. Thanks to the proliferation of brilliant new technologies and telecommunications, these and other fields appear very different, yet the foundational socio-politics remain highly comparable, and cross cultural implementation of theory into practice within the fields of education and performance remain tediously slow. The promise of education is, arguably, one of the world’s most commonly accepted narratives: as supposed Great Equalizer, education promises to save us
from whiteness and patriarchy by officializing how institutions accept and endorse the legitimacy of those who are systemically subjugated. Education, then, has become a tool through which to espouse equality and democracy while carefully controlling the means through which actual equity is established.

On the one hand, APPEX was not explicitly formed as a pro-equity project; the imperative was to create multi-directional exchange to support new ways of seeing into the messiness of cultural flows, rather than to formulate a method of disbursing access to artists and aesthetics typically under-represented. Yet APPEX’s success with geographic bi-directionality and aesthetic multi-directionality cannot be under-stated. The extent of cultural interweaving, at least by sheer number of participants is, to my knowledge, largely unprecedented and has not been achieved since. In addition to the impressive demographic numerical markers, the experiential weightiness for APPEX’s Fellows was monumental, albeit different for each participant. While, I would argue, APPEX did not concern itself with artistic output, the increase in understanding regarding aesthetic development across cultures and differences cannot be under-estimated. I can only guess what, precisely, Dewa Berata, I Made Sidia, and other Fellows other Fellows felt when they first disembarked at Los Angeles International Airport all those years ago, but I know that their lived experiences were as important, if not more so than the intellectual concepts behind their artistic work.

The concept of equity is, in large part absent from Cartesian logic systems; equality and multiculturalism are still the ideological preoccupations of the West because compartmentalization permits the notion that parts—body, societal, conceptual, etc.—are distinct from one another and therefore most functional when regarded as separate but comparable entities, all under the jurisdiction of a leading entity: nothing is permissible without the
governance of the mind. In Western ideology, equity is a necessary construct because the West insists on ultimate control, which by its very nature, requires that all other cultures remain under its jurisdiction; equity, then, rejects the premise of this notion because its end goal is to undercut hierarchizing forces.

Although discussion of equity is mostly absent from the APPEX archives, a comment from Mitoma speaks to how the concept of equity is, in some ways, culturally-dependent. Western approaches to equity are framed regarding material wealth or a “piece of the pie” rather than questioning the pie itself. Hierarchies arise out of social imaginaries wherein there exists preferred portions of a pie to consume, own, or to otherwise presume access. Although this project pertains to racial and ethnic equity, one of my objectives as a Whiteness Studies scholar is to press a discussion on the global contexts in which equitability operates. As Mitoma stated at the October 23rd, 1995 APPEX Advisors’ Meeting:

Reorienting hierarchies is one of my goals here. It would be nice to create a new kind [of] model that doesn’t replicate some of the things about our situation in America that we have the most…. I’m thinking about reorienting the hierarchies between people…. The goal is to create an environment for change and growth and positive opportunity but that doesn’t wield the unnecessary assumptions of an American perspective of what is good change of what is useful.

Just as the American exports of race and ethnicity are not necessarily linguistically or conceptually applicable in all global contexts, equity does not look the same, and certainly cannot be designed for use through the same methods.

Establishing uniform terminology is not the end goal, though it does give crucial clues about the concepts that guide the ways in which programming is designed for, executed, assessed, modified, and/or perpetuated. My objective is, however, to ask how critical pedagogues can translate the concept of equity into cultural exchange programming that far surpasses identity politics and the hyper-simplified notion of equality. No program will ever be perfect, but we can
start by looking to our bodies’ abilities to understand and learn via sensation. Indeed, my own bodily sensations while completing this project have been the key to unpacking the nuances of cultural exchange.

Bodies and the human sensorium, I want to emphasize, are not magical or ideal. Being present to bodily sensation is often hard work, and requires consistent and dedicated focus. Even if, existentially, bodies are independent of cultural constructions of race or ethnicity or phenotype or implicit bias, they can still become incredible uncomfortable and, for example, itch like crazy. Discomfort, perhaps the least glamorous of possible sensations, can be a master diverter of attention, thus begging the question: what, precisely, constitutes an anti-Cartesian stance toward intercultural communication?

Somewhere during my fieldwork in Bali I wrote in my notes “It seems as though physically experiencing each place, each culture, has been the prerequisite to get me to know what my own project is about. I’m not sure that I fully knew that before now. To be fair, I don’t think that’s the magic of Bali, but the delightfulness of being willing to show up and feel” (Murdock field notes 2016). The question, then, is one of how to exchange rather than what to exchange. I review two other case studies in chapter three, unpack some of the theory in chapter four, and then offer an inquiry into how social sustainability can be assessed in chapter five. While my social equity checklist is ten pieces long, the essential question remains: who and what is being served?

Chapter 3

Faces of Exchange:

Cultural Legacy through Edu-tourism and Social Ethics
I’m sitting in one of the expansive studios at the University of Panama watching eight preteens rehearse for their upcoming trip to Cuba. They’re tired after several hours of rehearsal, but also excited to return to the international dance festival they’ve attended previously. The session is conducted in Spanish by one of the senior faculty with intermittent English interspersed as all the kids are fluent and speak with the junior faculty in a mix of languages. Both the studio and larger dance building that houses it are large, well lit, clean, with a modern aesthetic that would make any North American university proud. The dance pieces themselves are a mix of aesthetics, with focus on ballet lines, contemporary modern movement, and what I feel inspired to call modern floor plans, indicating that the performance aesthetics at UP are comparable to those I have encountered at many of my colleague’s departments throughout the United States. The music is also a mix, some local, some Cuban, some North American.

“Please, tell us what you think,” says Prof. Mireya Navarro, the faculty member leading rehearsal. Navarro and I had just participated in a conference on the state of arts and culture throughout Panama hosted at a separate university earlier that day. I tell her I’d be delighted to offer feedback, but that she should please not feel obligated to invite me into their artistic space in such a potentially aesthetically impactful way. She assures me that the students will benefit from my perspective and that having an international, intercultural eye is a productive means of preparing for an international festival. When I respond that some Westerners might be surprised to know that Central American university dance departments such as theirs have been attending prestigious dance festivals for years, she smiles and says, “That’s fine. We’ll be making art and sharing it with our colleagues across the globe regardless of what image they have of us. Why wouldn’t we? It’s one of the best ways for our students to learn.” She also notes the socio-
political dynamics: Panamanian students have entirely more financial and material resources as compared to their Cubana counterparts, who have only once been able to visit their campus in Panama City. She and her colleagues make a point to bring additional materials with them as informal gifts to their hosting institutions. Socio-political narratives—such as who is in deficit and who can access property—are as locally constructed as the social construction of race. While in Panama the concept of race does not translate, the notion of equity in relation to location does.

The programs featured in this chapter, *Puentes de Poder* (PdP) and MoveEx, are emblematic of the face of exchange, albeit in entirely polarized ways. The key question of this dissertation (who and what is being served?) can be adjusted slightly to constitute the theme of this chapter: what constitutes exchange and what overarching concept does that activity serve? Rather than take each program as a case study on its own, I have crafted a comparison of the two, both organizationally and socio-politically, to comprise the case study. Two veins run through each: both projects utilize Panama as their site of exploration, and both invoke the narrative of dance as belonging to the community. On the other hand, the ways in which PdP and MoveEx differ point to glaring incongruences between benevolent intention and actualities of contemporary imperialism.

The distinctions represented in this document stem from investigations into PdP and MoveEx, including fieldwork interviews, participant observations, and site visits to Panama City, Panama, in March 2016. In this chapter I focus first on MoveEx and move to PdP because the former seems to me less nuanced yet more emblematic of socio-political imbalances. Further, while I personally find PdP more compelling precisely because its programming is more nuanced, MoveEx’s impact on the performing arts professionals I met in Panama had already occurred and therefore needed to be addressed before I could delve into newer programming. I
encountered artists and educators involved with both programs during most of my interviews because the organizations partner with several of the same groups, including Fundacion Danilo Perez, the University of Panama Dance Department, and the Department of Cultural Affairs. Otherwise stated, while I was intentionally seeking out perspectives that might juxtapose the social impact of each exchange model, I would have had to artificially dodge the social impact that MoveEx had on the community if I were to have chosen to focus primarily on PdP. Ultimately, the massive amount of enmeshment between the two programs made my job as comparator almost too easy; a chapter initially intended to explore the social impacts of aesthetic legacy became about the social impacts of inadvertent consumption in the name of service learning.

Of note, because I did not seek out comparative opinions, and came by them entirely organically, the research progression accommodated both my method (interviews and site specific inquiry) and methodology (understand the impacts of programming in relation to larger social structures). When I spoke with artists, faculty, and administrators I heard the consistent message that while the dancers from MoveEx were not harming anyone per se, they were seen as a passing pleasantry, a sort of periodic benign interruption to regularly scheduled programming. While not overtly stated, the clear thematic message was that the local organizations were accommodating MoveEx’s desire to offer dance classes, rather than seeing the eager young college students as being a boon to local programs “in need;” the benevolence was recognized, though found to be, at best, unimpressive in the context of local culture.

Asking what constitutes exchange and following up on the impacts of programming requires that we ask who MoveEx’s model is serving. Its narrative is constructed for a North American audience, with its Social Capital arising out of access to Brown, to “underserved” to
“do-gooding” to the neo-liberal excitement around putting one’s passion to effective use. MoveEx’s narrative is a welcome reprieve from the idea that dance is useless professionally, but preys on the notion that art’s utility is a tool for social change according to Western institutional parameters, such as sustainable international development. As I discuss at more length later, MoveEx frequently invokes the rhetoric of diplomacy, as well as the term itself, frequently as part of its branding and public relations. In this way MoveEx claims a comparable benefit to the larger social good as compared to APPEX, which I outlined in detail in chapter two. Both programs emphasize how performing arts can bring humans together in a way that talk cannot, extrapolating to mean that programming is better than standard diplomacy; neither ask, however, to what end diplomacy is beneficial? The premise is that the intention to be diplomatic ensures that program participants are engaged in a benevolent process, as though diplomacy were inherently good for all. This begs the question, can an individual be diplomatic at another? Or, put otherwise, who or what needs the diplomacy? Further, what form of buy-in to begin a diplomatic process is needed for a consensual relationship rather than insistence that another is a recipient of diplomacy?

MovementExchange—MoveEx for short—was founded by Anna Pasternak, a former professional dancer and international development student with a Harvard bachelor’s degree, in 2011. Her model promotes “dance diplomacy” trips for American undergraduate students from twenty-one different universities to various institutions throughout Panama and Brazil. The organization also promotes “Move to Change Day,” annual day-long community dance workshops led by its student members around the United States. Pasternak touts what she calls
“service through dance” and that the organization’s mission is to create change for social good through movement (MovementExchange website 2018).

MoveEx is built around a workshop model: an undergraduate dance student flies to Panama to offer a class for a ‘local’ group of students anywhere from five years through college age, at venues ranging from orphanages to arts centers to universities. The precise duration, genre taught, music used, and pedagogy employed depend entirely on the student teacher’s preferences. Each trip includes a pre-journey orientation led by one of MoveEx’s employees. The socio-politics of the region, who the students will be, how to run a workshop, and how to teach dance are the topics covered in tandem (MovementExchange Handbook 2017). Generalized reference is made to keeping students in line and ensuring they pay attention, but in general, MoveEx is not concerned with the intricacies of dance pedagogy (such as how to work with a student based on developmental stages), nor with the nuances of particular dance genres, local cultures, or the historical legacies of the styles they have chosen to teach. MoveEx states that the important considerations are whether everyone is having fun, getting along, feeling excited, and experiencing a sense of “community.” MoveEx’s notion of community could be described as people having fun together, a sort of communal celebratory attitude. These feelings, as demonstrated through laughter, smiles, and exuberance of movement, are the priority and can reasonably be cited as evidence of having carried out a successful program.

With between twenty and twenty-three student chapters at Universities across the country, MoveEx controls the basic parameters but allows the details to play out differently at each campus, almost like franchises of a national brand. The precise approach invariably differs, but the overarching model remains the same. Trips are usually one week to ten days in length, with approximately ten days being the mean. Students typically know one another at their home institutions, travel in groups, attempt

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3 The website names twenty groups but numerically states they have twenty-three.
to interact using basic Spanish (or Portuguese), teach a Western aesthetic such as jazz or contemporary or
generalized children’s’ creative movement, and are overseen by local staff who help to coral the students
to avoid unruliness and promote overall participation. Typically, MoveEx participants do not liaise with
the local teachers ahead of time and know very little about the children they are working with before
arriving, aside from the aforementioned deficit narrative presented at the home university’s orientation
meeting prior to departure.

According to the MoveEx website, which is the best source of information on the concept, a
“Dance Diplomat” is 1) “a person who uses their talent and passion for dance to influence positive social
change” or, alternatively, 2) “one who encourages others to dance to allow for cognitive, creative, and
social growth” (MovementExchange website 2018). Dance diplomats work in concert with “youth” and
“surrounding community” to develop “civic engagement, leadership, empowerment, and global
citizenship” (ibid.). How diplomacy occurs or what it entails is not explicated, but there is a tacit
assumption that diplomacy requires communication across difference. The description for the Brazil
program says “participants will discover the cultural intricacies” of the country (ibid.). Individual
participating dancers testify as to how being a diplomat helped them learn or have an experience that was
valuable to them, including themes such as “universality, personal growth, and the intangibles of sharing”
(ibid.). For example: “I will continue to support this program because it is one of the few times in my life
I have felt like I have the ability to help others directly” (ibid.). This profound piece of feedback
showcases how framing a trip can create a narrative about participation that far surpasses the general
enjoyment or the specifics of any particular activity.

The MoveEx website highlights other participants as well. One says, “I feel like all dancers can
be activists every day. It nourished me as a human being. I was hooked,” implying that the activity was
socio-politically important, and reinforcing the phenomenon of participants being enamored because they
perceive they are growing personally while impacting something greater than themselves (ibid.). Another dancer says, “It’s a beautiful thing and I’m so fortunate to have been a part of an adventure that has, hands down, been one of the best experiences of my life,” again showing that the learning and growing experienced by participants was profound because the trip transcended daily experiences (ibid.). Regardless of how the change is happening, participants regularly repeat that they have undergone a transformation based on seeing in a new way: “I cannot fully describe how much this experience opened my eyes” (ibid.).

The overall narrative is that traveling to new geographic locations is good because it contributes to both aesthetic and individual development. For example, the most recent blog post mentions how a MoveEx alumnus recently choreographed a piece at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles that drew inspiration from her 2017 “study abroad” trip to Germany. No additional information is given, so how the piece was influenced by time in Germany remains obscure. What is clear, however, is that the choreographer feels that her choreographic voice has developed due to the trip. Again, we see feelings about internal growth in relation to the experience being at least as important as the piece she created (MovementExchange blog 2017).

Another recent blog post outlines the positive feelings associated with teaching children in Chepo, Panama, and then offering a showcase for their parents. This particular performance was followed by an impromptu Bachata lesson (a Central American club, street, and partner dance form that includes an unusual rhythm comparable but distinct from salsa), which appealed to the participants because it was a “new” genre representative of “the culture in Panama” (ibid.). The strength of the experience, according to the wording, is that the interaction with the children lasted three days, which gave participants a sense of greater reach and impact as compared to the single workshop model. Also, having a showing on the third day helped to solidify the feeling that participants had “taught” and therefore offered something to
the kids (*ibid.*). The blog post immediately preceding reiterates the fun phenomenon of learning a local
dance, particularly in an impromptu way, giving the sense that the experience was emblematic of that
culture in a more immersive and deeper way than if the class had been carefully planned. The focus of the
post, though, is the assertion that dance automatically creates communication across differences: “[dance]
is its own language altogether, and so long as you have air in your lungs and a positive attitude,
you will always be able to find a middle ground of communication” (*ibid.*). This explicitly argues
that dance is a universal language able to bridge linguistic and other divides, a problematic concept in the
same way that color blindness erases all identities other than white; when all dance means the same thing,
the nuances and differentiations of each movement genre become homogenous.

The MoveEx website references the diplomatic process in one other portion of their site through
an image that appears to be part infographic, part logo. The central shape is surrounded by the various
portions of MoveEx’s organizational and programmatic structure that create dance diplomacy. Although
they are presented in a ring format, they can reasonably be grouped into two categories:

- MoveEx Univ chapter
- Domestic Outreach
- Domestic Education
- Domestic Sustainability

And

- International Dance Exchange
- International Outreach
- International Education
- International Sustainability
With the subtitle “a year in the life of a MoveEx chapter,” the infographic presents the organization’s model as requiring multiple complex moving pieces. The term diplomacy does not show up elsewhere, suggesting that the overarching model is supposed to amalgamate into diplomacy. The graphic does not reference the diplomatic process, but does elaborate on the notion of exchange, saying that they “immerse” participants in a “new culture based on service and dance” (MovementExchange website 2018).

In late Spring 2015, MoveEx’s student participants were invited to contribute to the organization’s mission and vision during brainstorming sessions at a weekend-long gathering near Berkeley, CA. Pasternak described the weekend as an opportunity for program alumni to

Figure 1: Movement Exchange “Dance Diplomacy” Model (MovementExchange website 2018)
collaboratively understand and developing the organization’s long term goals. The current (at the time of writing) website links the intention—“dance and service”—to tangible results such as “cross-cultural understanding,” “civic engagement,” “social equity and inclusion,” “creative expression,” and “sustainable dance education” (http://movementexchanges.org/about/). The language utilized on the website relates as much to administrative specificity and institutional-caliber success as to arts practice.

For those unfamiliar with the dance, international education, or study abroad fields, it bears noting that MoveEx’s model is not unique, nor is its overarching ethos. So many programs exist, in fact, that listing them here would be an exercise in tedium with little but encyclopedic relevance. The prevalence of touristic phenomena currently marketed as advanced learning is indicative of current global discourses on international and higher education, which, as I express in detail elsewhere, is a direct facet of social capital and the ability to gain access via traversing borders and cultural knowledge at will. My point in this recapitulation is to note that MoveEx is neither unique nor, in an isolated sense, to blame for its ubiquitous model and neoliberal ideology. I argue that the paying participants, while the most immediately culpable as measured by a direct line, are merely enacting the roles suggested to and reinforced at them since, in many cases, birth. Just as noted in discourses on racism, patriarchy, queerness, and ableism, familial transmissions need not be related to fear and xenophobia, and can instead serve an aggrandizing purpose wherein the recipient is assured that although others are important, they are the most important; to borrow from George Orwell’s *Animal Farm*, some are more equal than others. By accepting and subsequently invigorating the mythology that all education and all art are universally beneficial for all constituent parties is one way of insisting that others accept a gift that they may not want or need.
Pasternak, MoveEx’s founder, was raised in elite North American institutions that couple social value with well-intentioned development based upon Western ontological and economic standards of improvement, progress, and growth. My assessment of her pedigree is not a condemnation of her as a person, but is an observation of how lineage (when unchecked) and how purpose (when unexamined) can readily cause as much harm as good. The following critiques are offered as a discussion of the actual impacts of edu-touristic programming, without which superior models cannot be produced. The critique is also offered to showcase that, from a Systems Perspective—an analysis which encapsulates human, social, aesthetic, and cultural capital—the potential for improvement is immense, and thus applicable across sectors; room for increased positive impact is high.

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A few days after I first had the opportunity to interview Navarro in her office she invited me to contribute a few words about my research during a presentation she was giving on the state of dance education in Panama City. In imperfect but entirely adequate Spanish I offered the small group of educators, policy makers, and other local leaders four sentences on my work. I felt a bit awkward, as though I might be derailing Navarro’s intention for her session, but she informed me after that she felt it was important to notify local leaders that an outside scholar was taking interest in how Panama is upholding (or not) its cultural legacy. She appreciates that officials consider art to be an important part of Panama City, and notes that a considerable amount of support exists for contemporary and Western genres. The interest, however, in more niche forms of art, such as folk Caribbean, and African diasporic, are seen as fringe. The issue, as is so common, is the emphasis of, in the case of the University of Panama Dance Department, ballet to the exclusion of other forms.
Navarro, like most quality educators, feels incredibly frustrated by limited resources for her students. She craves ongoing classes in what are typically thought of as “extra” subjects, including West African dance, Afro-Brazilian dance, Latin styles, and contemporary “street” style interpretations. She loves Ballet with equal abandon and cherishes her time with students creating lyrical and conventionally beautiful performances. Her willowy frame is the epitome of any Ballet aesthetic, with gorgeously long limbs and lines and an undeniable grace. For Navarro, though, relying on Ballet as a central form of crafting narrative and showcasing bodies in space is woefully incomplete. What the curriculum needs more of are styles that will challenge their students to become more versatile performers in body and in ability to convey complex and layered ideas.

I confess to her that I am eager to know about what her experience interacting with MoveEx has been like. I tell her that I have some specific questions, but that I’d rather just hear about her observations. Without missing a beat, Navarro says the workshops had felt like a waste of time for her students. To be clear, nothing bad happened, and the afternoon had gone without a hitch. The visitors were friendly and offered a decent class. But to feel like a good use of time they would need to either offer world class instruction or, at the very least, highly developed genres that the students do not usually get to partake of. In other words, if they’re offering ballet or contemporary or other easily accessible forms, the workshops would need to be much better to be worthwhile; on the other hand, the quality could be a little lower if they offered diasporic forms or even performance salsa or breakdance. Navarro’s main concern was that her students were asked to spend their class time on something that, while pleasant and entertaining, did not have substantive added value. As a seasoned educator Navarro feels class time is somewhat sacred not because it shouldn’t be used to push disciplinary boundaries or experiment with great
ideas, but because it asks students to step up to a certain rigor. Thus, allowing enthusiastic mediocrity to claim that time and space is, in some ways, insulting to that learning container.

The tenor of Navarro’s replies are gracious regardless of how negative the content becomes. She is, in my estimation, entirely, well, diplomatic. My job, as interpreter less of language (we spoke entirely in Spanish) and more as a contextualizer of her feedback, is that, at best MoveEx’s impact is neutral, and at times, it is actively harmful, albeit in a more benign way than bodily or verbal harm. To be clear, Navarro and I spoke primarily about MoveEx’s work within the University of Panama, and only peripherally about their mini residencies at various area orphanages. It might be reasonably argued that, although North American college students are not necessarily the ideal demographic to provide mentorship and encouragement to orphans throughout Panama—one would think that Panamanian or Central American college students would be a better fit—the presence of enthusiastic dancers who are not asking for compensation from an under-funded, state-run childcare system would be a welcome set of guests to any institution. The question becomes, however, why not focus closer to home, such as on foster homes in the United States? The added cache of access to a “new” culture, paired in equal measure with the narrative that the trip involves impressive and valuable service is the selling point for MoveEx and other Service Learning or Edutouristic programs.

The value added, then, is for the guests. From educational, intercultural, and equity perspectives, we can point fairly decisively to net gain on the part of the guests. The larger question is, once the beneficiaries have been identified, at what cost are these visitors gaining credibility, information, experience, and social capital? What capital is spent in order to generate this form of social capital on behalf of an already socio-economically and institutionally advantaged group? If the benefit is financial—funding year round dance programs in orphanages
is arguably a great benefit—what degree of “donation” or monetary contribution is necessary, and then, to what degree are pay-to-play visitors needed? In other words, at what cost/at whose cost is this encounter occurring? Navarro would argue the cost is educational. Campbell, who I will discuss later in this chapter, would argue the cost is aesthetic and cultural. I would argue the cost is in relation to social capital and the associated overarching global narratives. Whether a program is net beneficial or net detrimental depends on whose perspective you are looking from. Perhaps the ability to see from multiple perspectives is at the heart of what the MoveEx people mean when they refer to “diplomacy.”

Michael Egner’s dissertation, *Between Slogans and Solutions: A Frame-Based Assessment Methodology for Public Diplomacy*, summarizes West-Iraq military conflict to show how Western governments have used the notion of diplomacy in relation to contentious issues in the Middle East region (Egner 2012). Egner describes “public diplomacy” as the difference between diplomacy as a closed-door procedure and diplomacy as the beginning of an attempt to make negotiation accessible to laypersons as a means of enacting a more democratic environment. He asserts that public diplomacy gave birth to the notion that non-governmental officials could have a worthy place at the table: “The phrase ‘public diplomacy’ was originally understood as a synonym for ‘open diplomacy’ (i.e., a prohibition on secret treaties). In the 1950s, the meaning shifted as it was recognized that these open diplomatic actions carried with them the potential for showmanship and propaganda” (Cull 2006). The document also notes the US State Department’s official definition: "engaging, informing, and influencing key international audiences" which offers a compelling description by way of active wording, but gives little actual illustration.
The open-endedness of official definitions of diplomacy lends itself to (re)interpretations galore, suggesting that the State Department could be content with the fact that many other institutions and programs have invoked the same terminology. The official diplomat distinction is reserved for those in leadership at embassies or state-appointed ambassadors, but does not bear any credential important enough to impact other programs utilizing the lingo. Indeed, there are now various programs—including arts programs—funded by the U.S. government under, for example, the State and of Education Departments (ZERO1 2018; Arts Envoy 2018). Countless other versions of arts-based diplomacy can be found across the globe, particularly in the cases of contentious governments, such as Israel, Qatar, Germany, and China. While I cannot speak to the precise mission statements of each program, the overarching desire is to perform a diplomatic function wherein local appreciation is built for the governments represented by the artists.

The language employed by the State Department implies that caring for the body politic may have been the initial intent of allowing the language of diplomatic relations to be utilized across a larger swath of the population; but with the rise of telecommunications and intercontinental dissemination of thought and aesthetics, open diplomacy has shifted to indicate the expansion of power via attention and subsequent popularity of various ideologies. Commonly referred to as the “attention economy,” open diplomacy is the ability to spread ideas in a highly palatable format. The intention is to create more democracy by way of increased access to and dissemination of information, but the means to that end involves spreading the information, which inadvertently becomes imperialistic. While expansionism is often affiliated with the process of conquering geographic territory via physical force, diplomacy can be argued as the conquering of ideological territory.
Ambassadorship, a subset of diplomacy, has undergone an identity shift since the 1950s. As Egner notes in his dissertation, a 1979 quote from the Comptroller General of the United States notes that "Public diplomacy" is a form of “international communication, cultural and educational activities in which 'the public' is involved" (Comptroller 1979, 136). Quotes from 1987 and 1988, both derived from the United States Department of State, indicate that news media, motion pictures, and telecommunications, broadly stated, are chief contributors to the ways in which the world is intended to see the United States (Egner 2010). We can see here evidence that the US Federal Government has approached global relations much the same way that individuals now curate their public presence via social media: the intention is to craft an image that is powerful yet humanistic. Had the government focused only on power it would appear megalomaniacal and therefore suspicious, yet if the focus were exclusively humanistic the image would be softer; I extrapolate the balance is intended to convey a wizened balance that interweaves a motherly and fatherly person such that the government can lead and nurture. By striking a balance, the Federal image implies that the benefit of others is at heart while the ability to govern is retained through expressions of power.

A 1991 memo, excerpted from The Projection of Australia Oversees, states simply: "Public diplomacy consists of overt campaigns to persuade the general public in countries overseas to be favourably disposed towards the country which funds such activities” (Egner 2012, 141). Here we see that diplomacy is indeed synonymous with ideological exports, or even garnering support as a form of propaganda; security is thus tied to safety and safety is tied to the story a government creates for itself. The 2002 report, “Building America’s Public Diplomacy through a Reformed Structure and Additional Resources,” specifically highlights "cultural, educational, and information programs, citizen exchanges, or broadcasts used to promote the
national interest of the United States through understanding, informing, and influencing foreign audiences," thus showing that diplomacy is seen as a cultural encounter, however generally defined (ibid.). Using this definition, then, MoveEx’s dancers are functioning as diplomats, though the premise that the impact of a diplomat is beneficial is misguided. Diplomacy as a social mechanism is separable from the concept of being diplomatic, the latter of which is a form of inter-relational performance. Amusingly, the Mirriam-Webster dictionary pinpoints that diplomacy is the “art and practice of conducting negotiations,” which could be a poetic use of the word art, but highlights that diplomacy entails a certain amount of creative imagination (Mirriam-Webster 2018).

The quotes that Egner uses to illustrate the 2004-2006 range of Western diplomacy indicates that both ideological power and the ability to dialogue are desirable political abilities. Diplomacy during this range is as much about control as about conversation. By 2007 the State Department articulates that "Public diplomacy is the [State] Department's tool to fight what the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs has termed the 'war of ideas'" (Egner 2010, 153). This statement clearly elucidates that the purpose of diplomatic relations is as much material as conceptual. Social imaginaries that retain power are the mechanisms by which security is sought and found; at one point, bars of gold under-wrote American currency, which then was transferred simply to the agreement that bills of cloth stood for the same value, a value which we now give without hesitation to numbers on a screen. The ability to create and retain power is the task of diplomatic relations. My research indicates that those disseminating and curating diplomatic relations are convinced of their value and efficacy, yet that those on the receiving end are underwhelmed or even feel distaste. The question becomes, then, what does diplomacy do to actual dialogue and collaboration? In the case of programs invoking the concept
of education throughout the attempt to create meaningful communication across difference, we might ask how presenting the content as performing art precludes the opportunity to challenge to delivery of information. If participants from California showed up to Panama City to lecture on why Western dance is great, the content might be seen as heavy handed. However, if the material is presented as a friendly class donated to a community in need, the receiving community must do additional work to highlight why and how they are not in need of that experience. Aid or help, regardless of whether in the form of dance, education, or a commodity crop, is sometimes more challenging not to accept. The diplomatic onus, then, is foisted upon the party who declines the gift—here, a dance workshop—regardless of the larger context in which it was offered and subsequently declined.

A final quote from Egner’s dissertation indicates that the conversation around diplomatic relations began to shift in the later 2000s. A 2008 description from the USC Center on Public Diplomacy, "What is Public Diplomacy?" says:

> [P]ublic diplomacy focuses on the ways in which a country (or multi-lateral organization such as the United Nations), acting deliberately or inadvertently, through both official and private individuals and institutions, communicates with citizens in other societies... It involves not only shaping the message(s) that a country wishes to present abroad, but also analyzing and understanding the ways that the message is interpreted by diverse societies and developing the tools of listening and conversation as well as the tools of persuasion (University of Southern California 2018).

The breadth of intentions embedded within this passage are thick; it references a “man-behind-the-curtain” attitude wherein the public image must be attended to and maintained at all costs; it also notes that the responses to the message must be monitored and categorized; it goes on to suggest that “listening,” “conversation,” and “persuasion” are all crucial elements of diplomacy (ibid.). This array of desired results indicates an ambitious list of intentions and requirements for diplomacy to be considered successful. In parallel, non-governmental institutions use the term
“diplomacy” to indicate that the visitor’s behavior and attitude have an impact, and presumably, that the impact ought not to be harmful. Diplomacy intersects with education in that a diplomatic agenda or a pedagogical approach can be covertly domineering if not held to standards of equitability. The less rosy side of the same idea is that diplomacy is a colonial tactic, such that if you talk to the natives with the right tone you maintain your power while getting your way. Whether this tactic is conscious or not is a different conversation.

The concept of diplomacy was previously associated strictly with government diplomats and reserved for state department tours. According to George Schultz, Secretary of State during the Reagan era, the chief role of a diplomat is to create relationships that can be leveraged into productive conversations (Kissel 2018). According to a current UCLA Burkle Center syllabus, “Diplomacy at Work: A Hands-On Approach to International Relations,” diplomacy does not need to be practiced by a governmental figurehead, but does require engagement with a political theater of sorts wherein each practitioner is enacting the role of peacekeeper (Lieben 2018). By this parameter, training in diplomacy emphasizes real time responses to active processes rather than education to a singular outcome. This school of thought suggests diplomacy’s main goal is to keep the peace so that trade and other economic endeavors might continue as unabated as possible. As evidenced by the recent, at time of writing, expulsion of over 100 Russian diplomats from twenty-one countries and retaliating expulsion of British diplomats from Moscow, we see that diplomacy, like much of politics, can be as much about the theater and court of public opinion that enables political might for use in subsequent scenarios (BBC 2018).

The move to democratize exchange in the West arose in response to World War I and was furthered by the Cold War and other threats of violence and took various forms not immediately related to politics with the advent of, most famously, the Fulbright (Fulbright
Education as a great social equalizer was part of the North American conversation since 1964 *Brown vs. Board of Education*, but gained significant traction in the 1980s and 1990s. Access to higher education promised to pave the path towards an obviously equal world where everyone could access a middle class American Dream; the bootstraps narrative was transferred from the fields to the factory to the classroom. I argue that, while the overarching narrative remains the same—school is the great equalizer—social capital is now gleaned not through degrees, but through international access, or the ways in which education equips students to cross boundaries and borders, whether through acquisition of skills or through programming that enables safe border crossing. The message is the same: play the game, follow the rules, learn to navigate a white, patriarchal logic system and thereby be allowed to play a (relatively) high(er) role within that system than if you had not participated.

Diplomacy, ambassadorship, and exchange programming arguably enjoy the most conceptual overlap within educational initiatives, with student travel abroad touted as the apex of mental and psychosocial development. The goal, one of which I am an adamant supporter, is to create social sustainability. I argue that social sustainability is the backbone of all other forms of sustainability; for example, the Paris Climate Accord is only as effective as its chance for implementation, which requires socio-political structures capable of upholding its potential.
Diplomatic and ambassador work is only as impactful as its effective implementation over time. As such, a social enterprise such as citizen diplomacy, is as effective as its conscientious design and implementation.

Theoretically, facilitating humans from disparate backgrounds to discuss challenging topics with grace and humility would enable discourses on systemic subjugations and how they might be interrupted. This impulse is often the undergirding sentiment behind study abroad, cultural exchange, and international educational programming of all sorts. Yet diplomacy is an entirely unregulated and ill-defined concept. My research question is not that the cultural exchange and international education field lacks definition, but that key questions remain: by whose definition is a specific program deemed exchange? And if exchange is occurring, by whose standards is it socially equitable? Just because a program occurs per the decorum of diplomatic relations, is no harm done? What and who is the exchange serving? From the laundry list of potential monikers—edutourism to study abroad—the wording matters less than the socio-political function. The educational sector has laid giant claims over the notion of exchange, to the extent that programming is now big business, not only in terms of institutional revenue via summer coursework, but also because exchange offerings and opportunities themselves are requisite for institutional branding. Exchange is paramount to the sorts of opportunities, privileges, and advantageousness expected of elite institutions.

The premise of exchange as an inherent good does not have one specific person, institution, or point of origin. The message that international relationships are beneficial and educational is pervasive across sectors and is conveyed through most liberal school, familial, and telecommunications messaging without due critical reflection. By highlighting the rift between this common cultural narrative about exchange and international education I aim to illuminate
the absurdity and self-delusion throughout communities that wish to embody social good. Only by naming the problem can we see the degree of dysfunction. The question stems from disbelief: How can something so well-intentioned be so dis-equitable? How did we get from little girls enjoying time in a dance studio to young women paying out of pocket to (inadvertently and lovingly) bring their chosen aesthetics to communities who they presume to be in deficit? Intentions do not exist in a vacuum. They are constructed of hopes and dreams associated with cultural values the types of behavior we think we share value.

MoveEx’s model almost does not bear repeating, as it is entirely predictable, comprised of the basic study abroad/change your life/change the world/practice diplomacy model peddled to college students since at least the multi-culturalist 1990s. As a pay-to-play model, students are recruited through campus representatives who are given a free trip by the organization if they recruit enough undergraduates to sign up. Participants need not be dancers, nor international development students, with the only true requirement being that they demonstrate enthusiasm, broadly stated. And, of course, they must be able to pay—diplomats who pay to practice their diplomacy.

The claim may seem innocent: dance is the universal answer to a better world via community building. By creating a sense of togetherness and amiability, dance bridges past the discomfort of not understanding one another, making the unknown more pleasant and accessible. In addition to the issue that, for MoveEx, the term “dance” is used as a stand-in for Western approaches to aesthetics and comportment, the issue is that no compelling evidence suggests that all people’s experiences of dance are equivalent from a cultural standpoint. Surely, one might argue, no harm can come of sharing enthusiasm for dance? Yet when we unpack the deeper
claims behind dance diplomacy, the moral imperative becomes rapidly absurd: MoveEx is our
Answer to World Peace. If only every middle-class college dancer understood that they could
make the world a better place by paying to go teach something creative in a developing country!
Enthusiasm about dance holds the answer to discourse on a global scale, regardless of any other
facet of cultural or individual needs because it is an inherently universal language devoid of
socio-political connotation.

The highly indicting language is all mine; the precise language used by the local
professionals I interviewed was far more tempered, and did, of course, vary. Yet the sentiment
was comparable: the young people who came from the United States to teach dance workshops
were benign, a sort of blip on the proverbial radar. When I pushed for more intensive replies, one
of the educators spoke about the nuisance of taking time from the regular programming to
accommodate what felt to be an external need that did not align with the ways in which local
education and performing arts could demonstrably benefit from enrichment. The qualm, then, is
not one of repulsion at North American infiltration. The issue, configured post-colonially, was
that the organizations’ and university’s needs for programmatic capacity building are aligned
with Afro Cuban dance or other aesthetics that are chronically under-represented and would
therefore be a of specific benefit to the students. The educators I spoke to are also hungry for
expertise in the way that most specialists crave the opportunity to integrate additional
exceptional work into their pre-existing projects. The students from MoveEx, however well-
practiced, are not global-caliber artists and do not contribute the level of rigor to which the arts
professionals I spoke with wish to push their students. The feedback was not negative, per se: the
overarching sentiment was that a group of Americans had popped in for a reason that seemed ill-
defined at best and misguided at worst. The narrative outcome for the Panamanian dance
community could be summarized as “so that happened,” with the overarching sentiment that they left before any actual interruption occurred.

MoveEx has made no attempt for geographic or social bi-directionality, such as Panamanian students to teach workshops in the home institutions of MoveEx’s participants. In an attempt at social legitimization, MoveEx hired a Panamanian Country Coordinator, Tinna Hernandez, to liaise with local institutions, and Panamanian dancer Andrea Gonzalez was hired to teach dance workshops at Panama City area orphanages year-round in an attempt to fulfill what MoveEx claims makes the organization special: “sustainability.” The question remains, by whose standards do these components instigate exchange? And if this is exchange, what and who benefits?

My conversations with both Pasternak and MoveEx’s administrative coordinator, who I will not name here, indicated a belief that dance is a universal language with the inherent ability to bring virtually all humans together for positive experiences; neither woman seemed to have considered whether dance classes or performances result in comparable thematic comprehension for all participants. Rather, MoveEx’s administrators conceive of a dance universal that arises from shared joy (Foster 2009; Ehrenreich 2007). Many scholars have commentated on the issues with a universal approach to aesthetics, with Susan Leigh Foster’s text *Worlding Dance* explicating how tropes of similarity are particularly problematic in regards to dance and other art forms that revolve around the body (Foster 2009). I did not quote academic literature in my conversations with Pasternak, but I did gently challenge her claims about the “power” of dance, and found that she was receptive and encouraging of the conversation as a philosophical exercise, but did not want to amend MoveEx’s marketing language. In her experience, claiming that dance is an inherently good monolithic entity helps craft the story that *dancers* can offer a
panacea in the face of global concerns. Dancers, of course, are the paying participants of Pasternak’s business. MoveEx’s allegiance to marketing over socio-political influence indicates that financial success is more important than equity: first be financially viable, then consider humanistic implications. In other words, the hesitancy that I perceive in shifting semantic focus away from universally-suggestive language is tied as much or more to participating students’ perceptions of the “power” of dance and how those narratives coalesce with motivations to find and allocate hard-earned funding for the exchange trips.

To understand MoveEx’s narrative on a deeper level, I analyzed the 2015 documentary film, *Move to Change*, created as an MA thesis by Blair Brown, then a graduate student at the University of California—Irvine. Brown’s film depicts a MoveEx exchange between US undergraduates at UCI, led by Brown, and the aforementioned institutions in Panama City (Brown 2015). The film features Brown, alongside eight UC Irvine undergraduate students, including three second years, two third years, and three fourth years. The film touches briefly upon a variety of topics commonly affiliated with study abroad and collegiate area studies, including language barriers (most of the participants do not speak Spanish), the “power” of the arts, funding out of pocket, socio-economic status of the participating middle class students, leaving the United States for the first time as a coming of age experience, and the notion that exposure to “new” cultures is important for personal development. A few clips of UCI faculty discussing the developmental and learning potential laced throughout cross-cultural exposure implicitly connotes that the opportunity afforded those who pay to play will be rewarded with a caliber of personal development experience that money alone cannot buy. The value, then, becomes access to MoveEx’s *programming* in distinction to paying for a plane ticket to Panama.
The film is decidedly positive, with upbeat music throughout. My brief interaction with its author indicates that she feels MoveEx’s version of dance-based cultural exchange is an extremely important model for all with endless potential for young adults in particular. She expressed that she hopes her film is widely viewed, not because she wants to be cited, but because she believes in dance diplomacy. The film invokes the term “at risk” to describe the young brown Panamanian children the US students will be “helping” during their trip: the film shows its author leading an orientation session revolving around economic insecurity throughout Panama, then segues into a conversation about the orphanages with which MoveEx partners. A student participant contributes, “When I think of at risk youth I think about how they don’t have the opportunities and the experiences in becoming adults and becoming leaders of the world” (Brown 2015, 4:15). Statistics appear on the screen (“In 2004, Central and South American reported 12,400,000 orphans [attributed to Children on the Brink]”), white typeface beaming from a black background, indicates the extent of the “orphan crisis” throughout Central America, indicating a dire state of affairs (Brown 2015, 4:55). Already the film’s tone is uncomfortably patronizing, conjuring images of enterprising American youth earnestly contributing their time and passion to aiding a culture in deficit. The focus of the film only briefly lingers on Panama even though the majority of it was filmed there. Instead, the overarching theme is the way in which the American undergraduate participants’ experiences coincide with generalized western sentiments about cross-cultural connectivity through the arts as universally positive.

Various sub-themes arise, including the premise that design flexibility, whether for a particular workshop, or in benefit to communication overall, is a requirement for success, thus alluding to an improvisational methodology. For example, the film recounts that after one of the students’ unanticipated tremendous success teaching a Bachata workshop, the group decided that
her class should be repeated at each of the other orphanages they planned to visit for the duration of the trip (Brown 2015, 12:55). The film quotes UCI Lecturer Paula Garb, specialist in Anthropology, Peace, and Conflict Studies, as well as International Studies:

In peace building you have to be open to creative moments. And being attuned to the arts, in one way or another, is essential for having that kind of openness. To be a good peace builder you have to be an artist, and to train peace builders in dance, music, and art should be considered part of the training curriculum. And my epiphany was, what I thought at that point made me really good at what I do facilitating difficult conversations, had everything to do with my dance training (Brown 2015, 20:01).

While Garb’s quote addresses communication across cultures, the film’s use of it alludes to a greater purpose for exchange wherein the participants’ personal experiences and skill development inevitably transcends individual implications. Yet the film chiefly revolves around the ways in which the American students’ conceptions of the world beyond Irvine, CA, as well as their roles within that world, shift. While the extensive use of quotes and artful depiction of dance workshops provide insight, the film is woefully devoid of a Panamanian perspective.

Language barrier may be one cause for this serious omission; the one student participant who spoke fluent Spanish at the time, recalls, “I had a very different experience [from the rest of the cohort] because I could talk to the person I was dancing with and share information with them” (Brown 2015, 13:46). The film frequently references the American students’ concerns about not speaking Spanish (e.g. a clip at 8:20 shows students using homemade flash cards), but the impact of the language barrier on Panamanian dancers or orphanage coordinators is omitted.

Ultimately the film hinges on the experience of being an American college student traveling to a developing country to share a dance genre. Other than Bachata, the film does not explicitly indicate which dance genres each student is trained in, but clips depict ballet and contemporary exclusively. Improvisation is alluded to in one scene where the American students form a jam circle with Panamanian college students (presumably those that Prof. Navarro spoke
of), the latter of whom appear to practice whacking, house, and other forms of dance originating from American club and street genres. The aesthetics, then, are depicted as secondary to the exchange experience, masking socio-political associations, aligning with MoveEx’s claim that dance is a singular entity with universal appeal. The film’s many moving quotes from the American students, coupled with the author’s desire for “as many people as possible” to be exposed to MoveEx’s work, implies that the experience of exchange is widely accessible and available.

MoveEx positions its predominately white, middle class, and college educated demographic as the norm for access to and creation of exchange. One student tearfully proclaims to the group,

We need it [sharing dance] just as much as they [the orphans] do. And I think it’s hard for us to want to integrate like that. I think for me, social justice is the main thing… People from all socio-economic backgrounds, race, religion, everything… if you can find a way to bring that together through movement, to participating with other people on something they enjoy… that’s almost more important than us dancing ourselves (Brown 215, 19:24).

The pervasiveness of personal ruminations implies that students did not have a purchase on how to leverage arts and exchange experiences into personal life choices. For example, after teaching a workshop one student reflects,

I remember automatically being filled with fear. Fear is the best word for it. I was really scared to all of a sudden watch her [one of the orphans] leave because I was sitting there picturing… I would give anything to be her family, to have her be a sister… anything. To watch her just run away… she was happy but it was a happy like ‘Oh I see people come in [the orphanage] and go all the time. And I think it kind of hit me that that was all I could do, but I wanted to do so much more. But all I could do was bring dance…. I don’t think things have really been the same [for me] since that point… It made me realize what I’m capable of and what the human race is capable of. And if people were open minded, if people were willing to work together, if people were willing to dance a little bit… the world would be a very different place (Brown 2015, 16:49).

These heartfelt proclamations indicate that students felt adrift in how to integrate their field work into their daily lives and career trajectories. The film does culminate on an exceedingly high
note, boasting that each student is carrying forth the “lessons learned” into lifetimes of service. Although not explicitly re-stated, the film subtly alludes to a theme of socio-economic imbalance between the Developed United States and the Undeveloped Central America/Panama; Panamanians are positioned as receivers of good will (and as having under-developed social and aesthetic capital in addition to socio-economic challenges). The standard White Person’s Burden is reified: Americans are congratulated for their desire to help.

The promise that American college students will learn about themselves and develop leadership skills is a central selling point around which MoveEx rallies funding and widespread appeal. This marketing claim is so ubiquitous throughout higher education and study abroad as to be almost invisible; college campuses, Sister City programs, Habitat for Humanity, Citizens International Exchange Service (CIES), and countless other institutions are built entirely on the premise that experiencing Otherness in all of its dreaded danger and alluring exoticization functions as a leadership activity; immersive learning, then, is a hobby, or something that one does, rather than an internally cultivated stance that is stewarded into heightened effectiveness through exceptional mentorship and experiential learning. The presumption is that by attending a program one is self-enriching regardless of whether internal personal mastery is engaged.

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All told, I spent three weeks in Panama City in the Winter of 2016, attending performances, rehearsals, a conference, conducting semi-structured interviews, and having informal group discussions. The vast majority of my direct exposure was to personnel and activities tied to Puentes de Poder, with some interviews and information surrounding MoveEx developing naturally due to logistical overlap between the organizations. I was pleased to discover that my sub-methodology, improvisational research, which I couple internally with my
overarching *bricolage* methodology, felt entirely appropriate as a navigational tool throughout a project that accidentally became a comparison between two programs. To deepen my understanding of PdP, I also engaged several pre- and post-trip interviews in Los Angeles, which revealed nuances within PdP’s approach to cultural exchange. Some themes appear comparable to pre-existing Edutouristic models, but most of PdP’s approach has proven quite different when examined more carefully. In conversation with Critical Race Studies and cultural memory, PdP offers valuable perspective in the context of assessing and designing exchange programming in a study abroad obsessed world. This much needed counterpoint arrived when I met PdP’s Founder.

Just as I was preparing my trip to Panama and becoming increasingly disheartened by the data surrounding MoveEx, I ran into a dancer friend in the lobby of a performance at Electric Lodge in the Venice neighborhood of Los Angeles. After a brief chat my friend, Willy, let me know that he traveled to Panama as part of an exchange program just the year before. He quickly agreed to send me the contact information for the woman who organized the program, and before I knew I was in the market for additional research, the data was in my lap. Even prior to starting the formal research, I knew the project was different because it centers around professional artists and because it focuses on African diasporic art. If that information were not enough, I also quickly learned that PdP’s leadership was happy to talk to me about race, whereas Pasternak had become visibly, audibly, or otherwise demonstrably uncomfortable when I spoke about race. Quickly, what seemed like entirely too much information for a dissertation chapter turned into an unexpected yet fascinating comparison.

PdP’s founder, Nikeiltha Campbell, was raised in Colón, Panama, the Caribbean-facing, self-described “*costa negra*” or “Black coast” of the tiny country. Campbell internalizes her African ancestry as a fact of her life; she experiences the path of her African roots, however
circuitous they may be, throughout her interactions with the cuisine, hair and textile stylings, musical rhythms, and dance comportments of the Panamanian coast where she lived as a child. She arrived in Los Angeles in 1994 and after living as a professional artist in Southern California for over twenty years, she has developed a singular perspective on the ways in which histories require advocacy, not for the sake of recollection, but for the sake of Selfhood in relation to community. She does not feel that others ought to have the same relationship to art that she does, and she is averse to increasing arts programming that is not accompanied by contextualizing material, such as historical, social, and cultural information. Campbell is a world-class drummer, which is notable throughout her career as a professional musician, and is integral to her performing arts practice. For her, rhythm speaks to the community, bridging time and space, ancestors and offspring, through the mechanism of the drum. An embodied vocality of diaspora, for Campbell, the drum has a non-sentient bodily awareness that cannot be explained through linear space or time. As a form of extra-conscious cultural memory, Campbell experiences her ancestors through the sonorous roots that her drum allows her to share. Campbell’s vocation is rare not only because she is a woman drummer—uncommon in Africa, Panama, and the United States, but because she is so talented despite beginning her practice at an unusually late age. After years of resistance to drumming, she finally acquiesced and answered the call. She sees her role now as much about making music as about gathering community, both literally through percussive circles and dance spaces and through a sense of living memory offered by the music.

Campbell has been traveling between Panama and Los Angeles for years to practice and teach. In 2014 she decided to name this work, and “Puentes de Poder,” or “bridge of power,” received its moniker. Putting a name to the work has yet to afford the funding and promotional structures that Campbell hoped they would, but she recognizes that the delay is largely because
she is so focused on the art and has barely scratched the surface of promotion. She has yet to finalize PdP’s status as an unincorporated Limited Liability Corporation model and has only dabbled in branding. PdP has relied primarily on their Panamanian partner organizations, including *Fundación ADINA*, *Fundación Arnold Walters*, and *Fundación Danilo Perez* for organizational and production support. PdP’s base goals are in producing performing art, with the ultimate goal more aligned with channeling the richness of African lineage. When I inquired precisely what PdP does Campbell gives a slightly different answer every time, indicating that no one activity takes precedence. Instead the organization is happy to wear many hats: performances, lecture-demonstrations, community practice workshops, and family-oriented jam sessions.

Thanks to Campbell’s voracious world-class percussion skills, she has enjoyed professional success through commercial work based in Los Angeles, as well as educational programming in school settings. Although, as she says, drumming found her at a somewhat atypically advanced age, she has taught and performed consistently while retaining strong ties in Panama, particularly with ADINA administrator Janina Walters. PdP formed out of Campbell’s pre-existing travels between Los Angeles and Panama because she wanted to expand the dual opportunities for educationally situated experiences of African aesthetics and expansion of African aesthetic explorations within greater Panama. With each trip between Los Angeles and Panama, Campbell has become more inclined toward collaborations with other artists as a means of developing the aesthetic content of the projects, and as a way to reach farther into the celebration of African aesthetics as spread over times and places. Of note, thus far, Campbell is the only PdP participant of Panamanian descent who has relocated to another geographic
location, thus reinforcing that PdP does not focus on Panamanian identity at large, and instead focuses on cultivating identity exploration and celebration.

Although I maintain the importance of not equating an organization’s narrative outcome or its programmatic realities with the intentions and ideologies of its founder, in Campbell’s case, her ideology around her performance practice is integral to the specifics of the PdP case study methodology. Specifically, Campbell’s attitudes toward cultural memory and the ways in which that memory impacts real-time identity formation are inseparable from how she relates to and expresses her art. For example, Campbell’s experience of how she became a drummer is that she could not avoid a relationship with drumming, and that the drum exercised agency in calling her to it and to the practice of interacting with it. For her, this conceptualization of how she came to the work of drumming is not a belief or religious notion, but how she conceives of and engages with her craft. Campbell’s ontological experience is differently aligned from that which is considered plausible within Western ontological options.

Campbell’s relational experience with drums extends to how she sees herself as an intermediary between the communities for which she performs and her drums as entities that beckon the community; Campbell views the drums as having agency to call the community together to learn about identity via the power of the drum to incite internal reflection and outward expression. For her, the process of coming to the work of drumming and of calling the community was entirely embodied, wherein her tissues craved something that she had somehow known all along to which she had simply not been explicitly invited. Campbell’s origin story could read as an essentializing claim that “Black people have rhythm” or “rhythm all originates from Africa” or that belief in a spirit acts as a placebo of sorts for unusually fast acquisition of drumming skills. I propose that the discourse of cultural memory can help to reconcile the
seemingly disparate needs of, on the one hand, a preoccupation with being political correct, and on the other hand, an uncritical non-interpretation of whatever our informants tell us (Connerton 1989). Interpretations and perspectives on current situations depends on how we conceive of the past, which in academic discourse can mean that the way in which we analyze data is informed by our use of established archives and canons (Connerton 1989, 2). My reading of humanistic versions (in distinction to biological versions) of memory theory is that a significant amount of translation is required between narrative recollections and the proposals for what those narratives ought to mean for the construction of culture in real-time (Marks 2000). Otherwise stated, our relationship to narrative is simultaneously constructed by our efforts to recollect—an entirely imperfect and plastic process—and the ways in which we are taught by our cultures to create meaning (Marks 2000, 202). Specifically, where sensorial experience is concerned, the body and the mind co-construct meaning as simultaneous interpreters of messages delivered by acculturating factors (school, family, mass media) and our efforts to make meaning of our sensory inputs via our physical being (Lawrence 2013).

Without cultural memory discourse, the PdP case study would be in precarious analytical (read: politically incorrect) territory. By using cultural memory research to navigate an atypical ontological outlook, we recognize there is more than one proper means of reading interconnections between humans and their cultural practices (Kaeppler 1991). One approach is simply to explore but not necessarily definitively answer questions that might be as much subjective as scientific. For example, scholar Adrienne Kaeppler asks, “Is the body remembering something separately from the brain as Cartesians might claim?” and goes on to posit: “the mind has such powerful organizing abilities that its categorizing and structuring work is manifested in vocal language, visual language, and physical (body) language. Although these are really not
separable, habit and long training might make it ‘feel like’ the body is remembering on its own” (Kaeppler 1991, 110-1). Applied to an analysis of what Campbell says about her relationship with her drum, it would be unfortunate to write off what could be interpreted as an essentialist stance on culture. In turn, reading diasporic legacy through exclusively Western disciplines reifies those disciplines; I argue that some of the language common to Performance Studies and Critical Race Studies (race, ethnicity, religion, normativity, phenomenology, among others) require translation before they can be effectively applied to PdP or any organization that explores the boundaries between individual and communal expression. As I have argued elsewhere, I see Performance Studies as largely outmoded due to its continual difficulty in keeping up with the politics and neuroscience upon which it calls. Conversely, CRS is shifting rapidly as it emerges from a North American construction into a more globalized discourse, but struggles to reconcile its Western lens with use throughout the rest of the world. As such, I propose that memory critically informs the ways in which we read the core tenets behind socio-political conversations, such as CRS’s focus on the inter-centricity of race and racism. Memory is the mechanism through which we can unpack constructions and reifications of meaning, particularly as we trace the complexities of contemporary diaspora.

Campbell frequently describes her work as an invocation of African diasporic identity. While diaspora is at play in PdP’s work insofar as a geographic and cultural lineage is being invoked over time and space, Campbell’s connotation bypasses considerations of aesthetic hybridity and social marginality. She acknowledges that aesthetic forms morph over time and that African aesthetics are indeed marginalized in Panama, Los Angeles, and beyond. However, her focus is on prompting the emergence of awareness of African lineage, rather than on hybridity or on codification of aesthetics. A cultural memory analysis shows how emerging arts
display the displacements endured as an innate part of the diasporic experience (Fisher 2008). Campbell is concerned with preservation, exposure, and identity exploration, seeing the three as tied to one another and, of course, to the music she plays. For PdP, art is a catalyst for Self-exploration for individuals and community members alike, yet holds that discovering one’s sensorial predilections is not a prescribed process and will invariably be experienced differently by all parties. PdP, then, is unimpressed by art for art’s sake and craves the perpetuation of form in relation to emergence of identity over diaspora.

During my fieldwork in Panama I was told by one of the dancers I met that “the blood of Panama is the blood of the world” because Panama’s history is implicitly tied to the physical sacrifice of the laborers who immigrated from dozens of geographic locations to participate in the Canal construction. The woman who shared this sentiment with me was expressing the ways in which she understands cultural lineage as an integral part of Panamanian history and culture. Her words jump out to academically trained ears as an unfounded proclamation of an aggrandized history of her country, a whitewashing of the violences and sacrifices endured by the labor during the construction of the Canal. Yet her words are crucial to understanding the narratives of contemporary Panama, for two somewhat opposing reasons. First, this statement is indicative of a cultural memory borne from aligning Panama with a First World global position, a cosmopolitanism where Panama City is a major global hub, not only of banking, but of arts and culture. I expect to encounter many additional comparable sentiments, revealing the attachment of many Panamanians to a melting pot history full of selfless sacrifice by noble laborers about whom the contemporary population is proud. I propose that these narratives are crucial to
include, not as out-dated and non-politically correct concepts to deconstruct, but as concurrent and interrelated element of whiteness.

CRS teaches us that race and racism share the same core. The rhetoric of multi-culturalism erases the violences perpetuated during displacement, such as laborers traveling to work on the Canal out of economic desperation. Using language that ignores variations in cultural experience based on race or ethnicity creates a recollective fabrication that tidies up an inequitable and sometimes bloody history. In relation to narrative outcomes, we can see that the use of memory to invoke a certain version of history is a powerful social force that paints a specific and intentional backdrop onto which another intentional story can be created to explain presents day socio-politics. I do want to emphasize that this form of whitewashing is common across the globe, and is not specific to Panama, and presents an opportunity to position my analysis of the narrative outcomes of cultural exchange with Panama as applicable to CRS as a global field. I note this form of cultural memory whitewashing in order to better understand Campbell’s desire to build explorations of the nuances of Panamanian identities.

The second reason that the “Panamanian blood is the blood of the world” forms this case study is that as a critical ethnographer I challenge the social dynamics that I encounter in favor of increased equity (Madison 2012). Part of that equity is not insisting that interviewees’ vantage points must be questioned in relation to a western academic vantage point. “Melting pot” rhetoric, although not currently in fashion in the United States, is not inherently good or bad, and is at the mercy of those who leverage it as a whitewashing tool. Additionally, as a critical collaborative ethnographer I must allow interviewees’ perspectives to retain agency (Chang 2008). The layered “tinkering” approach of my bricolage methodology not only offers room for disparate perspectives, but insists that I include as much information as is reasonable. And even
in academia, memory theory accommodates politically unsound perspectives insofar as the disciplines allows for the construction of reality in real-time, a recognition of history through the construction of legacy.

Campbell engages her drumming, education, and performance practices precisely because she feels the need for awareness of African lineage; she actually senses the absence of comprehension around aesthetic linkages throughout the Angelino and Panamanian communities with which she works. As soon as I began talking to Campbell about her art, and particularly her artistic collaborations and teaching, she used the term “African diaspora.” When I asked her what diaspora means to her, she told me the aforementioned story of how she developed her relationship with her drums (they insisted that she play) and the development of her relationship of her drumming with the communities she drums with (the drums call the dancers). Diaspora, for Campbell, is about awareness, not only in the mind, but in the body. For her, performing art is the living relationship between her ancestral roots and her expression. When I asked her about the political implications of advocating for Africa in a world that under-prioritizes both art and African heritage as general entities, she indicated that she focuses on the art first and foremost, largely because she does not have the time or energy to attend to factors beyond the art.

Preliminary conversations throughout the dance and greater Panama City communities indicated that art is appreciated as being a valuable entity, but that efforts to see performances or to take classes are rare. I anticipate that the Panamanian conception of art will continue to unfold as a respected yet unengaged entity, something to appreciate the notion of but rarely to seek out. Thus, Campbell’s attention to the art without explicitly addressing politics is in alignment with the current conversations throughout Panama.
Although Campbell and Walters are enthusiastic about PdP, they have not excavated the socio-politics of diaspora from an organizational angle. As women of African descent, their emphases thus far have been on their artistic bridges to their ancestors. PdP’s desire to honor yet transcend geography, time, and even history, supports how culture lives within beings. I expect that this project will bring to the surface that sensorial and lived experiences of history are conspicuously absent from many western educational approaches to comprehending identity. Once again, this conceptual lacuna is where I anticipate utilization of the discourses of cultural memory to most immediately apply (Hirsch 2008). Although PdP is an enthusiastic proponent of studying histories and contexts, preliminary research indicates the project skirts direct discussion around race and ethnicity, largely because those conversations (to which I am acclimated) do not apply within a Panamanian context. Initial research indicates that the socio-political implications around racial and ethnic equity that this project is concerned with are embedded more within memories and cultural sub-consciousness, and I expect these intangibles to constitute the richest elements of chronicling the work of Puentes de Poder. Campbell believes, for example, that PdP participants do not require direct prompting to consider racial, ethnic, and other identities because participating in PdP with any degree of consciousness automatically creates an interventionist approach to arts programming. She holds that being human and grappling with humanity via aesthetics is an instigator of questions and curiosities around cultural contexts and their relating senses of Self.

Part of why PdP is important and notable is because the absence of African aesthetics in Panama is remarkable given that African cultures and ethnicities are foundational elements of Panama’s construction and longevity. I expect that PdP’s efforts to prompt consciousness around African-ness through an educational/festival model will succeed as a smaller microcosm of the
larger Panamanian population. In time, PdP plans to include visual arts, and perhaps cuisine and language as well. With each aesthetic and cultural addition, I anticipate that PdP will reach additional groups, but the scale will be prohibitively small to make a country-wide impact. Campbell herself is unclear on what she considers to be a sufficient indication of programmatic success. Campbell and Walters have expressed plans to hold an international conference in approximately two years that will offer a concentrated platform for combining performances, classes, and lecture-demonstrations, so I imagine that completion of this ambitious project will bring a sense of great accomplishment while establishing new relationships within the Panamanian and wider artistic communities.

During my fieldwork in Panama, my attempts at conversation about race and ethnicity indicated that my own fervor around increasing equity is rarely matched. I arrived with the lens of a Critical Race Studies and Whiteness Studies scholar, understanding, at least conceptually, my own socio-political privileges. What I had suspected before my trip, however, did reveal itself to be a substantive concern: Race and ethnicity do not translate into Panamanian culture, and thus CRT does not translate either. Whiteness Studies shows us how epistemological constructions, no matter what their intentions—in the case of CRT, to subvert the center—bring with them the baggage of their cultural origins. Although raza does indeed have linguistic parallels, they do not indicate histories of subjugation, nor contemporary hierarchies. Race, my Panamanian interviewees shared, is about phenotype and is therefore an unimportant indicator of persona; no one was terribly interested: they said, “Oh, that’s that concept everyone in the US is obsessed with.” Ethnicity, on the other hand, was of tremendous importance, with opportunity to appreciate ancestry, heritage, and the beautiful breadth of Panamanian culture. The Caribbean coast (where Campbell grew up) is called “La costa negra” in reference to its Caribbean
descendants, geographic proximity, and cultural similarity. When pressed, almost everyone noted that the schools on the Black Coast are underfunded and that there are fewer community resources, making the “American” notion of race and racism applicable to Panamanian life as well. Yet, rather than import my own academic training as a CRT scholar—an action that, arguably, would be decidedly non-critical, I ask what I can learn from this Central American take on systemic and institutional racially-bound subjugation. For me, this mentality is an offshoot of the pedagogy of guesting that I discuss in relation to visits to Other locations.

For *Puentes de Poder*, a tiny and community-oriented initiative with music at its core, the major obstacle to offering a richer program is funding. Much of the Panamanian community, including the artists with whom I spoke, are enthusiastic about additional opportunities for high caliber performing arts programming, such as concerted interest in African diasporic aesthetics. By contrast, I received ample feedback, most of which was entirely unsolicited, that MoveEx has not established robust exchange relationships, as exemplified by a lack of bi-directional engagement with local artistic communities, nor delivery of aesthetically complex material, local or otherwise. The deep desire among Panama City-based arts professionals to participate in and support not only additional exchange programming, but the development more culturally aware programming is palpable. Adhering to the strength of local culture and to diasporic legacy was demonstrably not a dismissal of introducing more rigorous standards and robust programmatic choices; if anything, it was the opposite. Playing second fiddle to western aesthetics, understandably, is the element that turns off Panamanian artists.

The striking difference between MoveEx and PdP appears at first glance to be demographic: the former was founded and is run by a middle class, Harvard-educated white
woman out of the San Francisco area (my description, not hers) and the latter was founded and is run by a Panamanian-born Black queer woman out of greater Los Angeles. I have met both of their mothers, thanks to incredible support for their daughters, largely in the form of providing delicious food (pedagogy of hosting!). In this comparison, identity cannot and should not be ignored, but not in such a surface way as phenotype. Both women are trained and practiced performing artists and both genuinely want to create community through the media they hold so dear. Pasternak is also an accomplished traveler and has studied international development academically. My experience with her was one of repeated attempts to recruit me to implement her programmatic model in the World Arts and Cultures program at UCLA where my utility was strictly that of a representative of something inherently good for me, my colleagues, and the world at large. PdP’s founder, by contrast, gets her credentials from being Panamanian and from a mission statement to better understand, honor, and share the ways in which Afro-diasporic music has a track record of supporting community that spans thousands of years. The clearest difference is that one founder wishes to create, manage, and govern jurisdiction over a process and feeling that is, arguably, not containable. The other founder wants to pay homage to the art by being its conduit, and by inviting others to learn about its historical trajectory.

The ways in which Edutourism does damage are tantamount to aesthetic and ideological mission work, are more aligned with the narrative that the tourists have about their trips. The poverty tourism popular for giving affluent North American and Western European travelers glimpses into the extreme conditions of favelas, for example, is ethically questionable, but arguably has very little real time detriment within Brazil itself. The greater problem arises in the perpetuation of social capital garnered by the act of paying for access to Others. Social capital remains as related to institutions of caliber as ever, but has expanded from its antiquated origins
to include at least a comprehension of, if not actual ability to border cross into, contested
territory. Coloquially termed “slumming it,” the idea is for the widely respected person to gain
entry into the socially challenged area, and then to return to safety, untainted yet bearing the(clout of (supposedly) understanding that which is forbidden to actually be. Capital arises out of
multi-lingualism, multi-citizenship, multi-disciplined, and even multi-racial but only so long as
the metaphorical permanent residence is one of highest echelon.

One question throughout the exchange field, as well as pertaining to MoveEx overall, is
whether exchange can occur uni-directionally. The typical solution is for workshops or
performances to be offered by all parties regardless of location or language, and the quandary
remains that there is no reasonable way to test the overarching impact of the limitations wherein
affluent travelers go to the “exotic” location. If Panamanian artists traveled to Los Angeles to
offer workshops at UCLA in groups, what would the narrative of the Panameños be upon return?
And would Bruins receive the experience as an influx of spicy multiculturalism? In my
theoretical work, I postulate that narrative outcome relies in equal measure on global social
imaginaries and on the implementation of site-specific pedagogy. In a different portion of my
work I propose a pedagogy of hosting: from food to music to lovingly designed opportunities for
sharing personal experience, the ways in which experiences are literally and metaphorically
catered are community-building game changers. Intentional, pedagogically-minded hosting is not
inherently uni- nor multi- directional, however; my question becomes, what might constitute a
pedagogy of guesting? If hosting is about the funding structures and the mechanisms for creating
connection across difference, guesting is how a participant shows up to exchange, thereby
determining the narratives through which they construct their visits, real time experience, and
view of their trip’s result.
The pedagogy of guesting begins with the conscientious intention to notice and then detach from one’s giving muscles. Being a guest means doing as the locals ask you to do, not as the locals do (that would be appropriation) nor as you simply wish to do (that would be tourism). Although a simple statement, cultural expectations and communication styles quickly complicate dynamics of interpersonal give and take; some well-meaning visitors from Western cultures presume that their hosts will directly let them know how to be respectful. The intricacies of exchange and intercultural communication would be simple if commutations were so straightforward; not only do internal expectations differ, external means of setting boundaries and advocating for those expectations also differ. A pedagogy of guesting requires a presumption that one knows virtually nothing and that the temperature of the location, individual hosts, and collective create a latticework of dynamic pieces that must be attended to. The complication, given the Western expansionist mentality and desire to give as a form of internal satisfaction, is that sometimes doing nothing is more respectful. One remedy might be to conceive of giving space as a non-tangible means of offering and service rather than the absence.

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A recent live broadcast of *Atlantic Live* featuring author Alex Wagner discussed her book, *Futureface*, which chronicles her journey of searching for family roots as a means of understanding where in the world she might have a sense of belonging (*Atlantic* 2018; Wagner 2018). The title comes from Wagner’s response to a *Time* magazine cover that featured an ethnically ambiguous, brownish face that was supposed to represent the amalgamation of all races as a supposed representation of the future of humanity. This image struck a chord with Wagner who identifies as part Burmese and part Western European by ancestry, as well as American due to her upbringing in Iowa. As she states in the broadcast, “I was conceiving of this
brown, post racial future where the history of blood and plunder… you could be free of that by being this avatar [of highly mixed racial origin] from the future. But of course no future is free of the past and race can never really be free of the history of race” (Atlantic 2018, 7:45). Regardless of whether we identify with White culture, a diasporic identity, and any number of ethnicities now does not preclude considering the larger context, its histories, and legacies. As such, we also cannot presume a time when those histories and contexts will no longer be relevant, which even the complexities of shifting phenotype do not render irrelevant.

Figure 2: A *Time Magazine* cover from November 1993: “Take a good look at this woman. She was created by a computer from a mix of several races. What you see is a remarkable preview of The New Face of America: How Immigrants are Shaping the World’s First Multicultural Society.”

Figure 3: A *Time Magazine* cover from November 2014: “The Face of 2050: A New Species? National Geographic determines future features of humans.”
The magazine image prompted Wagner to seek her family’s geographic origin, cultural meaning, and sense of belonging, as well as a deeper sense of self. During her talk, she goes on to say that her cross-continental trip was less about DNA or blood or facial features, and more about the fundamental need to feel a sense of belonging. To her, blood represents the desire for an origin story:

The idea that some fundamental identity is in your blood is why I went back to Burma, for example, and went back to Luxembourg. Because I had a feeling while I was writing this book that I would go and put foot to ground in Rangoon and I would step on the ground in [Luxembourg] and I would feel the vibrations of our forefathers and I would have this revelatory experience and I could finally have this lightning bolt of belonging… that the hemoglobin in my blood would start zinging… that part of the blood is a fallacy. That narrative of blood is a fallacy (Atlantic 2018, 9:10).

The need for kinship and a sense of belonging rings loud throughout Wagner’s tale. She speaks to the desire to feel connected, to feel fundamentally alive and human. The beauty of belonging to something bigger than oneself is not a new sentiment, and is something I feel myself and that I hear within conversations with friends, family, and colleagues. So when I hear that same narrative embedded within both MoveEx and PdP’s foundational narratives, I am not surprised. My job as a researcher and designer of socially equitable models of international education and cultural exchange is to note how MoveEx and other touristic models insist that a sense of collective joy can be created. In parallel, PdP invites participants to experience collective joy if we know how to listen to its call. The need to feel that one belongs is certainly human, so the method through which we choose to create and share a sense of belonging is where the complications arise. As Wagner says, she wanted to discover a sense of belonging that “was powerful and irrefutable in a way that other parts of my identity didn’t seem to be” (Atlantic 2018, 12:20). The desire to feel connected is so strong that all other socio-political considerations
can go out the window and we can design, participate in, and uphold social inequities all in the name of something socially meaningful.
This chapter is about the potential for aesthetic capital to interrupt dangerous social imaginaries, such as fascism, xenophobia, and xenophilia, as well as to posit the ways in which aesthetics can create more equitable social narratives. This chapter is rooted in theory because in my experience theory provides a valuable grounding off of which to build practical applications as I do in my work with immersive learning. In some ways, this chapter is not strictly necessary for the rest of my work, but I feel passionately that social imaginaries are not only philosophically interesting, but are the underlying force behind the subconscious, unconscious, and internally felt elements of human (and therefore) institutional behavior, making them mandatory for the ways in which scholar-designers approach social innovation. I begin with Critical Race Studies and Whiteness Studies as a means of introducing the concept of social capital from a community cultural wealth standpoint, and then argue for the notion of aesthetic capital which, at time of writing, is rarely found within the field. The chapter then discusses how xenophobia, xenophilia, and whiteness are related to the history of Western social context and are continually transmitted via institutional, media, familial, and community interactions and mechanisms. Next, the chapter discusses whiteness as property in relation to how whiteness unfolds over time (Harris 1995; Alcoff 2015). I position the discussion through a Cultural Studies reading of how whiteness impacts and is impacted by aesthetics. The chapter concludes with brief remarks on how whiteness as a social imaginary might be interrupted, de-centered, or
otherwise soothed of its claims of exceptionalism via critical pedagogy, cultural exchange, and other immersive social technologies.

My dissertation focuses on the bodily senses, shifts, and felt experiences of exchange. I argue that, along with those corporeal and sensual experiences traced within my first four chapters, there is also the larger and looming question of whiteness itself, a phantom that overshadows all else. This portion of my work does not refer to exchange in the same way—educational programming in faraway locations—and focuses instead on the narratives, both social and internal, that undergird the ways in which exchange may or may not become possible.

As I build upon Critical Race Theory, which is burgeoning in my own studies and the academic life around me, I work to expand the theoretical conceptions in ways that may not immediately seem relevant, but are integral to the fields of learning and exchange. When considering the body as a site of learning, I propose that phenotype and optics are only minimally relevant, but that the social context—including the imaginary of whiteness, under-writes the experiences within, access to (material or presumed), and value/merit placed on how learning is regarded. The body’s appearance, then, is extremely integral to learning as information is synthesized via sensorial processes.

As a white woman, I have been hesitant to declare myself a Critical Race Studies Scholar, as the incredible scholars of color who have crafted CRT since its formalized inception by Legal Scholar Derek Bell in the 1970s certainly do not need my help (Bell 2008; Delgado and Stefancic 2012). Since I began theorization through a CRT lens, I realized that, practically speaking, the field can benefit from the ally-ship and backing of white scholars, however
awkward or imperfect they may be; sometimes white people can only hear white people, especially where race and ethnicity are concerned.

I begin my exploration of Aesthetic Capital in Critical Race Theory, and most specifically under the tutelage of Daniel Solórzano, a second-generation CRT scholar (post founding fathers and mothers in Legal Studies) and first gen to blend CRT with education. Critical Race Theory, and specifically the subset of Whiteness Studies, is about race in relationship to power; in turn, power is related to systems of control, such as hierarchies, which are symptoms of existential dread: the experience of needing control stems from the need to survive, and the illusion that survival will not be possible without controlling the environment. Critical Race Theory also champions the processes by which those who are shoved to the bottom of the hierarchy subvert, challenge, resist, and otherwise innovate as both practices of survival and practices of seriously vital revolution.

Aesthetic Capital was one of many—seventeen, Solórzano recalls—forms of capital born from observing the values throughout communities of color, and in doing so, debunks the standard deficit narratives surrounding those communities. From the initial seventeen, six were chosen for publication, and thus were carried into second generation CRT scholarship within education. My favorite summary of Capital in relation to CRT is from the article “Whose Culture Has Capital,” written by Solórzano’s mentee, Tara Yosso. She writes: CRT layers multiple calls, imperatives, and proposals, from outsider to mestiza, to transgressive, to “re-envision[ing] the margins,” to dreaming new possibilities via theory (Yosso 2005, 3). Ultimately, CRT is “a framework that can be used to theorize, examine and challenge the ways race and racism implicitly and explicitly impact on social structures, practices and discourses (ibid.). Yosso draws several pre-existing theories together, including Bourdieu and expanding to women CRT
and Chicana feminist scholars (Dolores Delgado Bernal and Gloria Anzaldua, among others), and describes how “the knowledges of the upper and middle classes are considered capital valuable to a hierarchical society. If one is not born into a family whose knowledge is already deemed valuable, one could then access the knowledges of the middle and upper class and the potential for social mobility through formal schooling” and goes on to call out how “The assumption follows that People of Color ‘lack’ the social and cultural capital required for social mobility” (ibid.). Yosso does not undermine Bourdieu’s theorization of capital, but asks readers to acknowledge the blind spots within his approach to social theorization. The central point of naming capital within CRT, then, lies in challenging narratives of lack and deficit.

Aesthetic capital arises out of CRT as a marker of the value of art and expression within communities of color and the ways in which aesthetically generative processes by people of color are worthy, external to validation by normative culture. Where I propose to lovingly push CRT is an invitation to utilize and expand the power of aesthetics as a narrative building, interrupting, comprehending tool with the potential to instigate not only personal potency and appreciation, but to develop socio-political leverage. As an artist, educator, humanist, and a dedicated student of the human sensorium via both the intellectual concept and my own embodied experience, I feel how my intersubjectivity with aesthetics shape my internal cultural narratives and those I transmit into the larger world. Aesthetics offer value through access to narrative analysis and the creation, maintenance, or interruption of narrative. Carefully and actively curated aesthetics offer sensual insight into the Other via the Self. Aesthetics, generally, is a marker of culturally-bound storytelling via the way in which narrative is integrated between mind and body.
Yosso, along with many other CRT scholars, pinpoints how personal, community, and emotional components of culture are both valuable and directly responsible for meritorious attitudes, such as ingroup cohesion, grassroots networking, and productively slanting or countering interpersonal and familial dynamics as a means of countering dominant and destructive expectations surrounding race and ethnicity. Although outlined by several other scholars, I call upon Yosso’s analysis because I had the pleasure of hearing her lecture.

According to Yosso, the elements of value and worth—elements of community cultural wealth—firmly established within CRT are:

- Familial Capital
- Social Capital
- Navigational Capital
- Resistance Capital
- Linguistic Capital
- Aspirational Capital (Yosso 2005, 11).

Although some of these forms of capital are not immediately recognizable from a dominant perspective, Yosso and I agree that, as forms of less tangible capital or wealth (such as resistance) can lead to material and tangible versions of capital or income (such as a loan) (ibid.).

Stemming from first generation CRT scholar Cheryl Harris’ seminal text *Whiteness as Property*, Yosso and I agree that most wealth comes from property, not dollars. Here, property refers to how assets lead to additional wealth, or as Alejandro Portes quotes from James Coleman:

“Whereas economic capital is in people’s bank accounts and human capital is inside their heads, social capital inheres in the structure of their relationships. To possess social capital, a person must be related to others, and it is those others, not himself, who are the actual source of his or her advantage” (Portes 1998, 7). Here we see how social capital, while not a direct through-line to income, is directly aligned with wealth. Community cultural wealth, then, is a facet of stored
and maintained value by both social and, although to a lesser degree, income, or at least the potential for income.

Solórzano has posited to his current mentees that additional forms of capital may be necessary to grow CRT, including an appreciation of community aesthetics, such as public art as well as pedagogies that read cultural contexts via art texts. Another mentee of Solórzano, Lindsay Perez Huber, has opened the discussion on capital once more by writing about Spiritual Capital (Perez Huber 2009, 706). In some ways, the notion of capital may sound incongruous with concepts such as spirituality and aesthetics, and indeed, Solórzano is known for asking his mentees how we feel about utilizing the rhetoric of capitalism to qualify and illustrate the legitimacy of non-normative communities and racialized Others. As we have discussed in Research Colloquia, the fascination with terminology, while riveting in an enclosed academic context is, at best, misunderstood and, at worst, a deterrent where actionable societal policy, discourse, and socio-political change is concerned. As a writer, editor, and theoretician, I could not be more enamored of the conversation. Yet, as I propose, and as some assessments of social change would argue, championing the conversation is not working (Crossick and Kaszynska 2016). Further, in addition to questionable favorable outcomes domestically, my Cultural Studies training indicates, and my international fieldwork corroborates, that discussion on Critical Race Theory is becoming another rhetorical export by hovering above grounded, daily realities. While language has the potential to heal or to harm, (Solórzano’s writings on racial micro-aggressions are proof of the potential for subtle rhetorics and gestures to inflict physiological damage), potential interruptions to whiteness seem mired in semantics rather than actionable recourse.

From my background in Cultural Studies and learning across cultural divisions, I see that some of CRT’s tenets, while brilliant, require some amount of conceptual translation across
international and/or ontological borders. This necessity of translation is not unique to CRT, and occurs wherever a theory, lens, or method is a direct outcropping of the social and political realities of a given locale and era. The need for translation, then, is not an indictment of the theory, nor a claim that it will invariably be universally applicable, if only scholars could find the perfect translation. CRT is a Northern and Western lens. However, its relationship to global whiteness is unquestionable because whiteness is a method of classification, hierarchization, and sustenance of, arguably, history’s most efficient subjective ideologies, save—or perhaps coupled with—patriarchy.

Aesthetics are to appearance as whiteness is to phenotype; while visual presence or markers can be contributive factors, optics are not the point. I propose that Aesthetic Capital signifies the capacity to transmit, recognize, and synthesize the qualitative strengths of imaginaries, narratives, and constructions of personal and collective reality. Aesthetics, in my usage, is a means of recognizing the process of meaning-making via social and interactive frameworks. Aesthetics invite recognition or re-cognition—referential and inventive—that create potential far beyond an economic model of a marketplace. Aesthetics are at once logical, emotional, embodied, and felt, which is why they are precisely equipped to develop responses that reveal and counter dangers such as xenophobia, and by extension, to instigate opportunities such as decolonization. While art and aesthetics are not immediately synonymous, they inherently inter-relate as they both pertain to culturally-bound stories via personal and collective experience.

Aesthetics, while related to conceptions of beauty, is not explicitly about pleasure; rather, aesthetics are a social technology arising out of a need to imagine and transmit values. As Eric Kandel states in his discussion of art as a social technology, “Art is not simply a by-product of
evolution, but rather an evolutionary adaption… that helps us survive because it is crucial to our wellbeing” (Kandel 2012, 441). He also argues that,

Storytelling is pleasurable… because it extends our experience by giving us opportunities to think hypothetically about the world and its problems…. [with storytelling] artist and beholder alike can visualize and turn over in their own minds, examining relations between characters acting in different social and environmental settings…. Language, storytelling, and certain kinds of art work enable the artist to model our world uniquely and to communicate those models to others” (Kandel 2012, 441-2).

Art, as a form of fiction, allows meaning to unfold from a personal, internal perspective, enabling humans to analyze relationships and events through the mind and senses of another person.

From a CRT standpoint, Aesthetic Capital is a lens for countering deficit thinking, and for upholding the experience of internalized, *de-colonial* narratives. Aesthetic Capital began as a means of healing the wound between “high” art and “low” art, wherein community or public art is common and museum art is precious. Aesthetical Capital offers a framework for rejecting the dichotomous premise of high art and folk art; aesthetics are not just beautiful or enjoyable, they teach us in ways that logic may fall short. Solórzano began his foray into aesthetics via murals by noting how public art served as a text through which students could examine the relationship between perceptions of beauty, desirability, and wealth. By reading art as text, and thereby challenging normative notions of what constitutes a text, Solórzano asked his students to see education as an accessible process—not a regurgitative model—and a process that could potentially shift their world views, and by extension, shift institutions in the world.

From a whiteness studies perspective, aesthetics is utterly integral to reifying or undermining normative narratives. Multicultural and neo-liberal vantages on social interaction and education would have us believe the trope that art transcends difference, but this presumption relies on the notion that aesthetics speak for themselves and transcend the need for
translation in order to be critically and comprehensively understood. By challenging whiteness studies to recognize broader social systems and technologies, such as Critical Pedagogies, aesthetics and social imaginaries are inextricably intertwined, and thus uniquely capable of re-writing whiteness, and by extension, the narrative and subsequently material outcomes of whiteness. If Aesthetic Capital is exclusively a recognition of excellence and validity within communities of color, it serves to justify worth only, rather than to highlight how aesthetics are foundational to why and how deficit narratives are institutionally constructed and perpetuated.

I began this text at the time of the 2016 presidential election in the United States; for reference, Donald J. Trump was just elected President of the United States on a platform of open hate speech, xenophobia, misogyny, and other rhetorics of fear. I find myself reminded that the challenging portions of any scenario are often not the politics, but the human dynamics under-writing them. At times like this, gruesome parables such as The Walking Dead or Blindness come to mind because the blights (in both cases mystery viruses) are secondary terrors as compared to the primary threat to safety: humans who operate cruelly based upon a generalized notion of preserving safety. My nightmares these days are not full of orange-hued politicians or endless loops of CSPAN; they are of everyday humans falling into complacency and acquiescence in the face of fascism. My fear is of despondency, my own and others’.

I am reminded often of Bill McKibben’s book, Eaarth, on climate science and human habitability of planet earth. Although the book covers atmospheric shifts and CO emissions, its true thesis lies within human discussion of disaster (McKibben 2011). In short, McKibben draws attention to positioning threat “on the horizon,” a serious peril that someone really ought to do something about lest it overwhelm us down the road. Earth’s climate, however, is not about to
change, it has changed significantly and is currently changing significantly. Habitants of relatively affluent areas feel the impacts less because we can afford to pay for stop gap measures that ameliorate climate shift impacts. But whether or not humans take note of the initial information, or decisively act upon the information, does not alter the reality of the climate threat itself. By extension, human re-framing of the threat and/or reaction to it is the fundamental threat itself.

A trend in the October 2017 news, a pregnant nine months after Trump’s inauguration, are current and former politicians’ public and scathing indictments of the current administration. The rhetoric that has most stood out to my ears is former President George W. Bush’s straightforward implication that White Supremacy is reinforcing and being reinforced by the current federal cabinet and its public rhetoric (Bush Speech on Trumpism 2017). Aside from my personal reflection that it has taken a measured response to extreme hatred to align my own responses to that of Mr. Bush, it occurs to me that in public discourse, disgust with supremacy is being called out without recognition of its relationship to whiteness as a system of hierarchization. White supremacy is a discrete social movement that stems from the violence begun during the trans-Atlantic slave trade and upheld over time under guises such as eugenics, Jim Crow, and the prison-industrial complex. Whiteness, while absolutely related to white supremacy, is the social imaginary and mental gymnastics by which humans and communities are classified and hierarchized, as well as mental gymnastics by which violence against marginalized communities is deemed appropriate or even necessary in order to maintain order. Challenging white supremacy, then, is an easy or even trendy means of dissing overt racism, whereas whiteness is a conceptual mechanism located within a propertied or access-based standpoint.
Many of the conversations I have experienced since election day (a polite word where placements of hurt and disillusionment dominate) are around blaming others for pain and fear, indicating a desire to lessen internal pain by projecting it onto others. Simultaneously, the Online and IRL (“in real life”) meme “Love Trumps Hate” has gone viral, and stimulated similar protest cries, such as Water Protectors at Standing Rock shouting “I love you” to the paramilitary forces sent to fire rubber bullets and tear gas. Here we see two tropes at play: “defend our own” and “love conquers all.” These rhetorically dichotomous claims remind me of the other dichotomies I discuss, including the notion that unfamiliar arts aesthetics exist in an exalted state or as an imposition to legitimate culture. The parallel between responses to art and responses to politics exist within a larger frame of cultural evolution, and point to a Western conception of Self and Other as separate, an ontology that refuses mutual formation, where love or hate can be given and received, and are not by-products of larger inter-relational dynamics. Modern conceptions of love and hate—philia and phobia—are certainly tied to our ancient Western narratives.

Mutually reinforcing dichotomy are powerfully charged. As poles, xenophobia and xenophilia both serve to dissociate with present reality through external distraction; the former offers a scapegoat, the latter, a panacea. The onus for improvement falls to one (external) force, a convenience that ignores the messy complexities of most sentient systems. Further, because the force is external, the onus for improvement lies apart from the Self, creating a symbol through which to dedicate internal hope: eradication of the problem solves pain, or embrace of the solution solves pain. Understanding xenophobia, then, requires a comprehension of its philia-based counterpart.

As in many fables, a mythical bastion offers respite from trauma and terror. Performance Studies, and the arts generally, often embrace the transformative potential of storytelling, which
is corroborated by Jungian and Feminist psychology’s work with symbolization through characters and archetypes. Yet mythologies can also serve the Ego by removing intellectual formation of Self from embodied sensing, particularly inside of ourselves; the myth is a diversion, a powerful tool with distinct utility for surviving acute trauma. When mythology becomes the regular means of staving of sheer despair, the psyche becomes congested and loses the ability to engage in other modes of sensation. Analogously, when I went to the emergency room last year for an acute infection, I was incredibly grateful to have insurance that covered intensive antibiotic treatment, and was diligent in adhering to the entire course. This allopathic model, however, cannot be used on an ongoing basis, nor does it assist me in re-building my strength post-treatment. I chose a variety of other methods to address my significantly weakened immune system and nourished myself from the inside-out using well-researched nutrient-dense foods and herbal medicines, as well as adhering to an acupuncture regimen. I also visualized my tissues regenerating and allowed myself to sleep without guilt despite a hectic schedule. While the allopathic medicine was necessary to stave off death, attending to enduring modes of self-care saved my life. From studies on placebo, prayer as medicine, and even shifts in physiological states during dissociative personality shifts, belief in medicine is as, and sometimes more powerful, as Western medicine. Mythology and medicine are, in this way, synonymous. Love for that which might save us from trauma and terror, allowing us existentially to endure, is entirely rational.

Is displacing fear of danger onto an external force so different? So irrational? If phobia connotes fear of death or mortal peril, the entity to which that fear is aligned is a symbol of peril. For example, in the United States, the political invention of “super predators” or beastly gang members—always hulking Black and Brown hyper-masculine bodies—were invented
boogeymen concocted to legitimize drug and policing policies to fulfill contracts with private prison companies. In this instance, the humans to which the term referred were equated with anthropomorphized weaponry with explicit designs to prey upon unsuspecting peaceful populations. By this extremely narrow and unfounded version of rationality, the existence of urban Black and Brown men was an endangerment, and therefore the fear was entirely founded. Compounding factors exist in the perpetuation of the prison industrial complex overall, which is largely extant due to desire for financial gain. Yet the logic that founded the possibility for the prison-industrial complex, however depraved, is trace-able, and although not remotely accurate, remains rational.

The outsider becomes the symbol of mortal danger, not necessarily due to any attribute they may or may not possess, but because of the sensation of death to which they are tied. The perception that doom is imminent is learned, and in the case of xenophobia, learned from cultural and familial transmission and perpetuated by political and media “manufacturing consent” (Lawrence 2013; Hirsch 2008; Chomsky and Herman 2011). Fear is a symptom based upon perception of danger, and, while problematic because it renders people susceptible to manipulation, is not in and of itself “bad,” nor are the humans feeling the fear. The manufacture of fear for political gain, on the other hand, is ethically bankrupt. Distinguishing between human feelings and the socio-political factors instigating, upholding, and manipulating those feelings, and by extension, those humans, is crucial in the process of learning to not condemn human emotion and sensation. Even within Western logic structures, the Cartesian distinction breaks down: thus far I have invoked survival to connote access to enduring as an organism, such as with water, air, food, and the ability to be removed from violence, yet ample research now confirms that psycho-social experiences are implicated within physiological status, a proverbial
latticework where the warp and weft are largely indistinguishable from one another.

Functionally, the behavior of humans experiencing fear, not the sensation of the fear, is problematic when directed physically, verbally, or institutionally toward other humans.

Renowned legal scholar Cheryl Harris deserves the highest of accolades for her academically groundbreaking and emotionally devastating piece *Whiteness as Property* (Harris 1995). Harris’ discussion of the propertied mentality behind whiteness gives shape to the daily lived experiences of innumerable people and communities through history. Still, her piece does more than name a phenomenon; she opens a conversation about not only what whiteness is, but also regarding how whiteness has manifested over time, as well as how it persists so insidiously. Though the historical roots of whiteness will forever be crucial to comprehend, I believe that the contemporary status and future of whiteness are of utmost importance because therein lies the ways in which we may interrupt the “logic” that keeps whiteness alive. By intermingling Harris’ seminal piece with contemplations from Linda Alcoff’s text *The Future of Whiteness*, I discuss how whiteness as a totality lays the groundwork for white aesthetics, which is turn, spawn exclusionary perceptions and actions (Alcoff 2015).

Whiteness is a product of white supremacy, yet it has more than one parent because it functions as a status/affiliation, shielding agent, and lens all in one: whiteness is a product of historical phenomena including but not limited to the trans-Atlantic slave trade, chattel slavery, legal gymnastics that respond to the elite class’ desire to retain the rights afforded them by the judiciary system, and the relationships between narratives of cultural normativity and the perpetual reinventions of Western logics. In short, whiteness is both a tactic and strategy, a construction of and a contributor to the safeguarding of power. Whiteness is a colonizing force.
As such, it has many allies, patriarchy and heteronormativity being an obvious two, which is why the practical application of dismantling whiteness requires an attendance to the ways in which various identifiers and their cultural contexts overlap, but those intersections are not the focus here. Whiteness is the focus because we can trace it to its own aesthetic, as well as to its own (delusional) claim of universality. As Alcoff suggests in *The Future of Whiteness*, social categories such as whiteness cannot be dismissed by labeling them a product of an ideology, such as post racial. Her criteria for identity signifiers include the use of identity as a descriptor, as well as the historical context related to that identity, two areas that some neo-liberals are eager to cite as reasons to exclude identity from recognition of signifying privilege and/or oppression.

Alcoff also notes that whiteness is “a feature of collective or group subjectivity,” thus providing a connection that overarches time and appearance, and recognizes its relationship to culturally based lenses (Alcoff 2015, 893). Further, Alcoff complicates the notion of whiteness as a descriptor by recognizing that “white” as a semantic identifier connects historical context and current lived experience because it recognizes the hierarchization in which that identifying descriptor is situated. She also discusses whiteness as a composite of three experientially grounded forces—empiricism, subjectivism, and the imaginary—thus recognizing that whiteness encompasses tangible and otherwise visible historical legacies alongside emotional and mental constructions (Alcoff 2015, 1354). Rather than situate all constructions of whiteness within historical legacy, Alcoff expounds upon the imbued implications of being, having, accessing, and contemplating whiteness as a concept. Whiteness, then, provides a “shared orientation” or rallying point around which individuals and cultures alike can attach importance and allegiance (Alcoff 2015, 1417). Alcoff goes on to note how, although preferences for specific identifiers are not inherently “good” or “bad,” the failure to engage in exceptional inquiry is not only an
absence of academic excellence, it impedes “our ability to imagine a different future,” thus
prohibiting the growth of equity, or put another way, reproduces whiteness “as is” (Alcoff 2015,
1475-6).

Even with this summation of what contributes to and perpetuates whiteness I have yet to
note explicitly what makes whiteness dangerous. Harris’ exploration of whiteness as property
shows how whiteness functions to exclude Others and to bolster the Self. Certainly, access to
material wealth, opportunities, and preferential treatment are desirable means of interfacing with
the world. Yet we are still missing the final step where whiteness goes from being a status or an
idea or a framework to a danger-potentiating actuality. As whiteness is taught in the home or
otherwise transmitted to children throughout larger communities, it becomes the rationale behind
which children accept and sanction behavior, however inadvertently preferential toward
whiteness that behavior might be. As Critical Race Theorist Charles Lawrence III shows,

Children learn not so much through an intellectual understanding of what their parents tell
them about race as through an emotional identification with who their parents are and what
they see and feel their parents do. Small children will adopt their parents’ beliefs because
they experience them as their own. If we do learn lessons about race in this way, we are
not likely to be aware that the lessons have even taken place (Lawrence 2013, 319).

Through imprinting and a desire to link our own ego’s health to the health of our caretakers and
communities, we absorb the patterns and predilections around us, thus condoning a complex of
privileges before we even understand what they are or where they come from. As we
subsequently become more aware of the community we live in and the systems of power
surrounding us, we must reconcile the systems of inter-subjectivity we have observed (and, I
argue, viscerally feel even as bystander child) with our new observations of socio-cultural
realities rapidly becoming part of our central awareness. Our developing egos, forever malleable
but particularly fragile during acute developmental stages, engage in “an epistemology of
ignorance” wherein “a set of substantive epistemic practices designed to protect [our] beliefs that society is basically a meritocracy” are enacted to reason why oppressed demographics, namely in this case people of color, are responsible for their own wellbeing (Alcoff 2015, 1513-20). Thus, any person who develops a self-aggrandizing mental model is departing from socio-cultural actuality.

In short, an individual living with a white-centric mental model is delusional, and in the case of a white individual, also narcissistic. As mentioned, Alcoff (and Lawrence) note that this delusion does not spring forth arbitrarily, but is “systematically taught” to children (Alcoff 2015; Lawrence 2013). Given that whiteness thus becomes not only a status or a preference—examined or otherwise—and is a delusional departure from actuality, that individual’s baseline capacity to reason in relation to socio-cultural inter-subjectivity becomes at best misguided, and at worst, entirely broken. With no attendance to repairing the (broken) whiteness version of seeing the world, whiteness can only be ameliorated, which does not dismantle the dangerous ideologies therein.

Because no one concept can explain all particularities of any one identity, it behooves us to ask how whiteness functions, what it serves, and what it disables. Rather than attempt to neutralize the potential threat imbued within the deranged logic of whiteness, Alcoff wonders what preventative measures may be possible to prevent constructions of Self and Other from becoming constructions of Ingroup and Outgroup. She argues that whiteness need not be abolished, but prefers to proactively neutralize the supremacy of whiteness, emphasizing that white identity does need to learn (and earn) its “place in the rainbow” (Alcoff 2015, 3227). I propose that questions of intercepting exceptionalism beg the question of whether whiteness is responsible for white-to-white preference or whether whiteness’ relationship with exceptionalism
functions as a distraction from mechanisms of oppression (Alcoff 2015, 913). Specifically, Alcoff asserts that identities are not only categorical distinguishers, but reflections of “our material environment,” also noting the relationship between whiteness and preferential treatment, indicating that she agrees wholly with Harris’ work on whiteness as property (Alcoff 2015, 913-33).

To more effectively unpack how fear is translated into culturally-bound hierarchical narratives, I propose the need to examine how and why humans sense fear. In The Passion of the Western Mind, Richard Turnas explores how disturbed child/parental relationships result in an individual’s inability to achieve sustained senses of safety and security (Turnas 1993, 419).

Turnas goes on to postulate my precise question: how might we re-situate the causational trauma that begets fear and pain if we replace “world for mother and human being for child,” laying out four central points:

The human being’s relationship to the world is one of vital dependency, thereby making it critical for the human being to assess the nature of that world accurately. 2) The human mind receives contradictory or incompatible information about its situation with respect to the world, whereby its inner psychological state and spiritual sense of things is incoherent with the scientific metacommunication. 3) Epistemologically, the human mind cannot achieve direct communication with the world. 4) Existentially, the human being cannot leave the field (Turnas 1993, 419-20).

Turnas’ discussion offers a foundation for imagining a scaled version of how human development primes inability to negotiate what is perceived as a challenge to safety and how that challenge can be ameliorated. In other words, the metaphorical and inescapable parenting of cultural context forms not only a person’s overall worldview, but shapes the intellectual and emotional response, giving some form of ability to navigate through perceptions of danger.
Examining fundamental fear of Other is complex precisely because it asks us to reconcile the reasonable desire for feeling secure with the construction of how the Other represents physiological or psychosocial danger. I have alluded to danger via visible violence, yet fear of biological violence is alarmingly insidious. The history of North America is riddled with overt policies and legal practices—which were fully intact until the 1967 Supreme Court case, *Loving v. Virginia*—designed to safeguard the narrative of a pristine (Aryan) gene pool (Saunders 2011, 340). Eugenics, an integral part of this discussion, addresses notions of quality wherein some attributes are linked to a propertied, white mindset, while other qualities are associated with deficit. In this case, the fear is linked to the degeneration and disease of civilization, a societal pox. Here, constructions of familiar and Other are comprised of intertwined notions of purity and worth, thus linking whiteness as property to whiteness as cleanliness.

Not only does whiteness suggest having, it suggests “deserving,” in clear distinction to the “undeserving… who do not try hard enough” (Snyder and Mitchell 1995, 18). Or, as Johanna Hedva puts it in “Sick Woman Theory,” other bodies are those that are “un-cared for, the secondary, the oppressed, the non-, the un-, the less than… an identity and body that can belong to anyone denied the privileged existence – or the cruelly optimistic promise of such an existence” (Hedva 2015, 6). Many Critical Race Studies scholars have noted the ways in which Three Fifths laws, the One Drop Rule, and the logic underlying them uphold the notion that biology exists on a spectrum from pristine to infected. Performance studies also traces the construction of bodily fluids as representative of disease: saliva, semen, breast milk, snot, sweat, and blood as carriers, and thus requiring formalized regulation. David Gere notes that, in the United States, by 1983 “the Center for Disease Control issued guidelines for blood bank testing and mandatory exclusion of all people in high-risk groups” and that “The generally accepted
notion was that if high-risk blood were to pass through a break in your skin, it would kill you, slowly” (Gere 2004, 65). Perception of threat exists both in what the foreign bodies might do as well as what they might carry, thus deeming the body micro-organismically unstable. Foreign bodies, therefore, are perceived as immediate biologic threats and gradual cultural threats.

The body, within Western epistemology, is an alarmist entity, poised to either neutrally carry us through a physiologically benign existence, or (at best) transgress social sensibilities and even threaten our very cultural existence. The mind, within Western ontology, circumvents the treacherous vulnerabilities inherent to corporeal existence through detachment from experiencing sensation. The human sensorium becomes something felt or something noticed, but never something experienced. Immersion into experience, traversing “the abyssal separation between body and mind” is a highly vulnerable activity with no distinct beginning or end, nor temporo-geographic location (Damasio 2005, 249). Without being tethered to time and location, the amalgamation of which constitutes history, we become susceptible to losing track of the politico-cultural constructions of nation and calendar, as well as becoming vulnerable to a confusion of Self-symbol. The absence of social technologies—such as critical pedagogy, storytelling, and dialogue—designed to develop skills for navigating through anxieties and other challenges of existential realism that accompany corporeo-cognitive experience, increases the chance that the anxiety will become overwhelming and require displacement from the Self onto Other(s). The result of integrating body and mind into a humanistic whole results in a felt, immersive experience; wholly experiencing fear without an ameliorative social technology, then, manifests as xenophobia, the logical response to which is quashing of the dangerous Other: violence. To heal itself, Western epistemology must heal the intellectual wound upon which it was founded.
Countless scholars have written extensively on xenophobia from a multitude of disciplines, so here I will mention only a few which I have chosen because they refer, however seemingly peripherally, to the body. Biological purity serves as a focal point because of the connection to perceived physiological harm in distinction to a fabricated and arbitrary hatred. Ian Robert Dowbiggin’s text *Keeping America Sane* discusses the origination of conflating ethnic Otherness with imminent danger where “immigration, degeneracy, and criminality quickly became a reflex response of North American psychiatrists confronted with the challenges of treating foreign-born patients in the early twentieth-century” (Dowbiggin 1997, 142). Stemming in part from Canadian physician Charles K. Clarke, then superintendent of the Kingston Asylum, who described the majority of his Central and Southern European patients as “defective immigrant[s],” Dowbiggin goes on to illuminate how the term “xenophobia” was coined by G. Alder Blumer in his 1903 talk on immigration at the American Medico-Psychological Association:

In what was to be a common refrain among psychiatrists until the war, Blumer underlined the necessity ‘of keeping out insane and other defective immigrants by stringent federal statutes.’ This necessity, he asserted, carried ‘obvious’ and ‘especial importance with respect to the State of New York…, for while her foreign-born population is only twenty-five percent of the whole, fifty percent of the inmates of State hospitals are of foreign birth’” (Dowbiggin 1997, 192).

Rather than recognizing fear-based immigration policy as a fight against humans, Blumer saw combating a rise in immigration as a fight to keep the commonwealth safe and tidy. The logics of early feminism come into play, with insistence on temperance and vigilance. With worth assigned to women by their ability to produce offspring for men, and with the thought that genetic purity stemmed from breeding like with pristine like, white, wealthy, and (relatively) influential women were anxious to preserve access to a predictable gene pool with which to mate; they were active proponents of eugenics, thus reifying their own worth as sexual and
reproductive chattel, and swaying cultural norms towards condemning and dispelling the unknown (Dowbiggin 1997, 137-8).

We cannot ethically address the purchase of xenophobia within individual humans, though we can impact overall culture through expanding and fortifying cross cultural communication methods. I posit that controlling the logic of xenophobia is not only unrealistic, it may be unethical from a freedom of thought standpoint. Unless we decide that speech, which many scholars have linked to thought, ought not to be “free,” we cannot reasonably claim that feelings ought to be controllable. As Haakon Flemen says in his discussion of fundamentalism:

If we step out of the strictly historical perspective… For instance, there is the implication that the root of fundamentalism is not the fundamentalists ideas in themselves, but the underlying feeling of inferiority. If this is correct, confronting fundamentalist ideas aggressively and disdainfully might harden rather than soften the fundamentalist conviction. Creating a social and psychological climate of trust and safety, on the other hand, might curb its growth (Austed 2014, 139).

Humans should not be penalized for experiencing fear; educational environments within the wider context of social interchange have, through social technology, the ability to enable discursive mechanisms that offer behavioral and experiential alternatives to enacted violence. Culture dictates much of what we do and do not actually vocalize, making for a Foucauldian-esque sensibilities-based self-censorship, which indicates need for culturally responsive pedagogy for communicating across difference.

The common thread is the unknown, collectively accumulated and placed symbolically onto that which is not defined. We so desire a completely reliable world, devoid of fear and anxiety, that we are willing to devote our trust to something we have decided will save and absolve us from the wreckage of our tittering human minds. Fascination with or barricade against Others may be inherent to humanity, at least for those whose minds are formed by Western epistemology (Henrich, Heine, and Norenzayan 2009). And so we are helpless in our need for
the Other to form our Selves. Why is this a problem? The problem arises when we allow our internal anxieties to externalize as rhetorical, physical, and institutional violence, effectively allowing our fear to become someone else’s problem. Rather than acknowledge our own internal anxiety, we displace the anxiety externally and eagerly choose to believe rhetoric that places the problem onto the Other.

The potentiating effect of messaging and narrative cannot be overstated, for they have the power to create feelings, which invariably lead to the perception of a necessity to act. “If you create feelings of inferiority in people, it makes them prone to fundamentalist ways of thinking. If you then offer them certain ideas—or as Noam Chomsky says, manufacture consent via a carefully curated projective model, they might adopt them as their own. This is known as the phenomena of suggestion” (Flemmen 2013, 136). Flemmen goes on to say, “suggestion is not manipulation through unconscious processes… suggestion exploits the conscious, rational, and logical parts of the mind” (ibid.). Feelings of inferiority require that we re-organize reality. The Ego does not want to consider that its experience has been constructed via manipulation, so the mind justifies its worldview as a (reasonable) attempt to create “a clean, uncomplicated community” with “cultivation of clear, impenetrable boundaries” (Austad 2013, 186). Thus, by avoiding the infliction of the anxiety into our own lives, the projection allows the luxury of not having to be neurotic or to form a neuroses. Social technologies disturb the isolationist and anti-relational mental acrobatics that perpetuate justification of behavioral affronts to basic human respect. Too many discussions of cross cultural communications imply utopic community cohesion is possible and desirable. Working toward social sustainability requires that we detach from an outcome-related stance and toward a processual stance that prizes ongoing shifts in worldview rather than a momentary decrease in violence.
Having a working definition of Whiteness as Property sets a foundation for unpacking why white aesthetics are not only a facet of culture, but are also a product of ideologies of power via perceptions of value. Harris points out that “‘white’ was defined and constructed in ways that increased its value by reinforcing its exclusivity” (Harris 1995, 283). On the surface, it would not be unreasonable to claim that any identificatory category has exclusive attributes, but the step of constructing those attributes as desirable requires that the attributes must come from an association—real or imagined—with exceptionalism, which is a branding of sorts, a metaphor with weight given the topic of property.

The invention and reification of whiteness as property runs parallel to the invention and self-perpetuation of the concept of the archive. In short, as Performance Studies scholar Diana Taylor explains in her seminal text, *The Archive and the Repertoire*, we can see that not only does the archive “sustain power,” but that power “succeeds in separating the source of ‘knowledge’ from the knower,” ultimately creating a logic wherein the “archive exceeds the live” (Taylor 2003, 19). Euro-American ontologies exclude the lived experience of individuals whose ideation and generativity are not as yet sanctioned as recognizable forms of knowledge, particularly within an academic or scientific context. Marginalized peoples, including many communities of color, are seen in the classroom and in the courtroom as being sources from which to extract data, but not as wealths of knowledge, only the latter of which is deemed valuable for knowledge creation. The West-and-the-rest classification system, which often functions in the United States via a white-colored dichotomy, affects aesthetics through “appropriating key characteristics of nonwhite aesthetics, or even venerating these alleged
mythical ‘primal’ or ‘primitive’ qualities, while still denigrating or treating with patronizing condescension the real people and cultures that generated these aesthetics” (Picart 2013, 162).

Functioning as an ideological archive of sorts, whiteness is a location for and mechanism through which ideologies are stored and ontologies are thus perpetuated. The primacy of access to both knowledge in its current form and the creation of emergent knowledge functions as a circular pre-ordination wherein everything generated must be an immediate outcropping of everything sanctioned. For example, the invention of white dance aesthetics was not arbitrary, as each form (ballet and modern/ post-modern, and a plethora of sub-genres) followed the preceding sanctioned genre in a cultural cascade. Attending to the specifics of the ways in which dance lineages organically self-construct is a key factor in noting that historical context is politically fraught, and not a neutral chronicling of the passage of events. By the time Ballet was invented, its proliferation was almost inevitable precisely because French king Louis XIV crafted the genre as a tool through which to exercise and demonstrate power. An aesthetic of whiteness already existed in the form of court dances and the nuanced comportment of courtiers in distinction to that of laborers; Ballet has been carefully crafted over time to refer to that archivally-driven supremacy of pre-existing power. Comparable to the American Dream, white aesthetics are “bootstrap” aesthetics that protect elitism as desirable and rarefied; including bodies of color in, for example, Ballet (congratulations to the amazing Misty Copeland!) does not shift the socio-political implications of the aesthetic, but shifts the narrative surrounding access of whiteness wherein neo-liberal notions of equality are accessible through subservience to labor. Evolution of aesthetics are evolution of culture—and therefore of socio-politics—that occur under the jurisdiction of a pre-ordained cultural context, and not in an aesthetic vacuum.
The self-referential logic of the archive applies to Harris’ work because it situates a propertied mindset as an enactment of whiteness wherein property is manufactured through the archive, and not as a ‘natural’ state that existed prior to the evolution of cultures. Western thought camouflaged its subordinating agenda by masking it with claims of naturalness, an evolution in nature, rather than owning its role in creating and perpetuating subjugation of non-whites through the supremacy of archived scientific history, never noting the ways in which western science is a portion of cultural evolution and not a primordial Truth applied toward contemporary questions. The premise of the archive relates directly to Harris’ premise that, rather than being white, an individual is constructed as white, meaning that whiteness is a referential status that relies on the archive to corroborate its preferential status. Where contemporary aesthetics are concerned, we see the possibility of referencing established, archived materials and thought as the mechanism by which whiteness is re-catalyzed. Within the field of performance, as we see through Caroline Picart’s work, referencing the ubiquity and claimed masterfulness of white dance aesthetics has indeed been a catalyst for re-affirming white superiority under the law, this time in reference to concert dance rather than personhood, as was the case during chattel slavery.

The claim, generated by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw and repeated by Harris, that “whites have an actual stake in racism” is less a reflection of wanting to view non-white Others as inferior and more a reflection of wanting to avoid the handicapping associated with living as a person of color. Certainly, direct racism is rampant, but examining the “bystander” racism that comes from wanting to avoid handicapping will better assist with analysis of the ways in which aesthetics are prioritized and hierarchized within cultural exchange processes. I analyze the ways in which having expertise in Euro-American-based dance genres heightens access to
performance and educational opportunities elsewhere in my work. I have been repeatedly struck by the ubiquity of the West-and-the-rest divide within the performing arts throughout the duration of my field research. Even though many “world” dance forms are treated as desirable additions to “regular” programming, and are indeed seen as compulsory for exceptionally well-rounded courses of study or venue programming, the sheer multitude of aesthetic genres subsumed under the “world” category bears witness to theflippancy with which racialized forms are bundled for an anonymizing effect, whereas Euro-American forms contain, reasonably stated, a lonely two-and-a-half genres (ballet and modern/post-modern).

The supposed singularity of Western aesthetics, in both the public imagination and in legal framing, creates the exclusivity of those forms while also manufacturing the exoticism of Other forms. The distinction between white performance genres and “ethnic” performance genres, many of which have adopted the term “world,” fail to accompany this idiomatic shift with active equity through funding, marketing representation, or other sanctioning actions. In the introduction to her edited volume, *Worlding Dance*, Dance Studies scholar Susan Leigh Foster notes that “ethnic” dances are conceived of as pertaining to a specific locale, ushering in a veritable United Nations of dance performance where equal players are consumed and celebrated equivalently (Foster 2009, 2). By contrast, western performance is considered a masterful product of “genius,” offering a “transcendent” experience for viewers, while *world* forms remain relegated to art-house status: collectable by the erudite elite as ‘proof’ of magnanimous thought and associations (*ibid*). Foster’s observation about the ways in which presenting institutions group aesthetic forms as an act of reifying “group identity” politics—subordinated or in control—corroborates Harris’ note that “assigning a racial identity” associated with subordinate status actually “[erases] racial group identity” (Foster 2009, 287). In other words, if “world” (or
“folk” or “regional”) forms are merely an exotic break from the monolith of Western-born genius, all world forms are stripped of their contextual nuances. According to legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw’s work on intersectionality, ignoring the marginalization of any one group inflates marginalized status across all non-normative demographics. Whether as presenting bodies, curricular designers, or cultural exchange facilitators, normative culture must confront the awkward reality that without going unchecked, “‘allies’ can reproduce intersectional subordination within the very resistance strategies designed to respond to the problem,” which, when applied to the proliferation of white aesthetics, may mean that simply including non-white aesthetics as part of a project does not interrupt the preponderance of whiteness, nor does it highlight non-normative aesthetics (Crenshaw et. al. 1996, 1262).

Property, as Harris points out, is as much about having expectations as about meeting expectations (Harris 1995, 280). The experience of being a person with white skin, then, is less immediately crucial where property is concerned as appearing to have a social status that coincides with various socio-cultural privileges. One might argue that phenotype is now less immediately linked to appearing to currently have or not have privileged access to resources. I would argue that skin color is only one phenotype used to mark non-white ethnicity. However, although phenotype may only be correlative and not causative to the expectation of privilege, correlation functions as one strong link between certain phenotypes and assumed lack or assumed access, and that link contributes to mental models and their preconceptions. Given that the law is a reflection of administering (the concept of) justice as conceived of by legislators and litigators—a relatively privileged class—what the law values and protects is a reflection of what the culture values and protects. As Harris puts it, “expectations” essentially are property (Harris
Harris also notes that because “whiteness is simultaneously an aspect of identity and a property interest, it is something that can both be experienced and deployed as a resource,” making it not only an identity status, but a cache from which to extract socio-political expediency (Harris 1995, 282). White status, or its assumed status via cultural phenotypic association, has been an “active property” by virtue of being “used and enjoyed” (ibid.).

Beyond semantics, demographics, methods, and theories, what makes art white? If the brochures of presenting venues used comparable terminology for all performing arts shows, the content of the shows would still not be the same. The equality with which marketers could treat various aesthetic genres would not be representationally accurate, nor would it balance out the cultural preconceptions attached to white aesthetics or ethnic aesthetics. To understand the relationship between whiteness and aesthetics we can refer once again to the propertied affiliations of whiteness; the expectations imbued through property are related to the same expectations imbued through universalism, thus the polarizing treatment of aesthetic art forms perpetuates narratives of genius and/or the normative default on the one hand, and exoticism and/or folksiness on the other hand. While the discussion on copyright within Picart’s text refers to American Concert dance, we can reasonably extrapolate the rationale behind copyright for application to cultural exchange processes—whether or not an exchange is regional or international—because its basis lies in the same Self versus Other dichotomy discussed previously in this paper. Since the basis and construction of whiteness requires a Self/Other mental model, encountering Other aesthetics during exchange processes invariably creates opportunities to frame the exotic Other’s aesthetics in relation to the ubiquitous aesthetics of whiteness. For the purposes of this work, rather than make claims about how social technology
can dismantle the Euro-American/folk aesthetic dichotomy, I focus on how the potency of white aesthetics has not been sufficiently challenged given its continued relationship to property.

The relationship between aesthetics and property relates to perceptions of value and merit. On an institutional level, fixed ideas of what constitutes merit—coupled with an utter blind spot regarding the existence of those “unwritten rules”—perpetuates both resource allocation systems and narratives of intrinsic value (Matthew 2016, 10) The bothersome notion here is that, should we concentrate hard enough, value can be determined and used as an assessment tool by which all else shall be measured. Thus, even when the logic of comparison is sound, the marker of what is deemed valuable immediately and unapologetically hierarchizes. Although I appreciate the analysis, one example that (I wonder whether consciously or accidentally) asserts:

‘Cognitive and aesthetic values in cultural artefacts’ begins by clarifying the character and function of some terms in the debate. It starts with the assumption that cultural value is dependent on both aesthetic value… and cognitive value…. They examined the relations between the cognitive dimension and the aesthetic value of cultural artefacts by looking at three specific case studies: the Paleolithic wall paintings at Chauvet Cave, Shakespeare’s Sonnets, and Ridley Scott’s Blade Runner. These case studies were very different to enable an exploration of whether the relationship between the types of value differs across cultural artefacts (Crossick and Kaszynska 2016, 19).

This report, *Understanding the Value of Arts and Culture*, commissioned by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, serves as a state of the arts report and is attempting to state what *is* and abstain from making assertions. Even as they try to understand the creation of narrative via examples of aesthetics, they reify that normative aesthetics are the parameter by which other may be compared. Yet the report goes on to unpack the ways in which art speaks to formations of senses of Self, noting that aesthetics are uniquely positioned to develop healthy internal narratives. The use of how psychosocial import relates to value leads me to believe that claiming
aesthetics are peripheral to real life suggest the authors are choosing to ignore deeper implications.

The ways in which cultural engagement can lead to enhanced effectiveness and understanding of oneself as both a cognitive and affective agent is central to its importance. This can operate for all types of cultural experience – a play or a film, a live concert or an art exhibition, a video game or a novel. It can influence the way we think about issues such as growing up, illness and ageing; it can provoke reflection and challenge for those working in disciplined modes of thinking, such as doctors and scientists…. This inevitably shades into how we think about others...  (Crossick and Kaszynska 2016, 43).

We see quite clearly that in this assessment, value, merit, and capital are all intertwined. Complexity arises when we explicitly discuss aesthetic capital; in CRT, the notion of capital is invoked largely as a countermeasure to marginalization, a way to fight for and claim not only legitimacy, but importance. I want to challenge CRT to take this notion a step further, recognizing that my white privilege may be missing the mark, and assert that aesthetic capital is far more important than claiming that people, communities, and art created by people of color has value. I do think that having a term to remind us of this fact may support the actualization of institutional equity. Given that I am speaking from outsider status, I can understand the need for explicit reminders and assertions that fly in the face of normative and deficit discourses. From a whiteness studies perspective, I am eager to engage in interruption of whiteness, which requires, in my mind, the claim that the capital—or power—lies in the unique capacity of aesthetics to connect and communicate and explicate in ways that seemingly straightforward logics and arguments often fail to do.

Sense of Self, it seems, is a form of capital, a necessary—yet insufficient—counter-currency in the face of oppression; healthy Self-image is required for mitigating whiteness when developed in concert with other forms of capital (Lorde 2009, 3558). (Although outside the purview of this work, I propose that Selfhood Capital is a potent form of value and worth that is
worthy of exploration from a CRT perspective in another project.) As Alcoff says: “The solution will not be found in a flaccid universal humanism, nor in a pursuit of white redemption, nor in a call to a race-transcendent vision of class struggle. Rather, the solution will be found in facing the truths about who we are, how we got here, and then developing an offensive strategy for achieving a future in which we can all find a place” (Lorde 2009, 3504-6). A far cry from despair as well as from a kumbaya session, Alcoff proposes that every single one of us actively contributes to discovering how to recognize whiteness so that we are not overcome by it.

Alcoff concedes that the provocative name of her book, *The Future of Whiteness*, is a reference to the interactive requirements of battling whiteness, for claiming omniscience over the future of power dynamics in our world would be tantamount to selling snake oil, no matter how badly we may crave a glimpse into what we hope will be a more equitable future. This plea must be especially heeded in relation to aesthetics where the concept *post-modern* nods to “neutrality” and “universalism” thus impeding the field’s ability to legitimately move past the hyper-whiteness upon which overarching cultural aesthetic claims were crafted. How, then, can aesthetics adequately interrupt whiteness? Social technologists need to develop communications that move beyond the mono-dimensional cultural story of whiteness, including programmatic design by and for marginalized communities. Ultimately, I see the question thusly: How do we actively reconcile the intersection of “the future of whiteness” with the needs of communicating across difference to enact social sustainability? We must ask ourselves: what it looks like to design for equity? And then: what does it look like to implement that design in real-time, iterating and adjusting for emergent inequities?
Xenophobia and philia are inextricably tied to formations of Self and Other, individual and culture. Humans are \textit{infinitely} intersectional—not only through the demographic identities such as race, class, and gender we are taught to notice—and therefore need translation from human to human. On a grander scale, each individual nuance compounds into the need for translations across demographics, the mistake occurring when the affinity found within groups is exclusively based on demographic markers. Meaning making, aesthetic values, and knowledge production shift from being collectively produced to collectively supportive through deep translation. Thus, transcending phobia and philia is a process of being present to what \textit{is}, an exchange between internal narrative and external circumstance. Exchange is much more than a trade of one reality for another, with the possibility for fresh social narratives arising only once space is made by diminishing pre-existing narratives.
Chapter 5
Assessing Equity:
A Checklist for Social Good

The notion of an increasingly interconnected world is everywhere. With it, an increase in connected analyses of and solutions to problems are coming to the fore. Little discrepancy remains about the relationship between actions and consequences, evidenced though scrutiny of social media, the Internet of Things, blockchain, and the ways in web-based communications shift how narratives are created. Conversations on how humans impact one another are increasingly specific and serious; the zeitgeist recognizes the inter-relationships of how individual humans affect communities, how localities shape nation-states, and how geo-political regions push global shared consciousness. Paradoxically, as population estimates climb toward nine billion for the coming decade, in some ways, the manner with which we talk about our relationships and interdependence is codifying.

The much-maligned Millennial, GenZ, and GenAlpha cohorts are prioritizing social and environmental “good” at rates unthinkable to their immediate forerunners popularized by several for-profit endeavors, but corroborated by the Case Foundation (Millennial Impact Project 2014). Regardless of how one characterizes younger generations, as comprehension of global problems becomes pervasive, emerging thought leadership is toward what works, even when that requires “disruption across industries from the ‘fixer’ culture (innovating from existing resources)” (“Generation Z” 2018). As the 2014 “Millennial Impact Report” claims, “The idea isn’t to be recognized for doing good; rather, the point is to be able to do good and make a tangible difference through the workplace” (Millennial Impact Project 2014). With these rapidly shifting
attitudes toward self, career, society, and culture, emerges an interlinked latticework between intention and impact. The notion of being effective is now wed as much to how intuitions implement their directives over time as to the raw ingredients utilizes to do so.

Even the United Nations has shifted from promoting Millennium Development Goals, a wish list of concept discussed mostly in isolation, to seventeen interconnected and mutually enforcing Sustainable Development Goals for use across sectors (“Partnering for Resilient and Inclusive Societies” 2018). Although the precise actionable consequences of rhetoric are debatable, a change in priorities is on the rise, and with it, perspectives on the role of institutions, most notably the onus of business to “do good” (“Total Impact” 2018). Systems analyses include the employees who carry out the will of the entity for whom they work, and younger generations are increasingly particular about how they are treated on the job (Generational Kinetics 2015). Doing well, regardless of sectoral affiliation, is a challenging idea to codify and track, yet businesses are recognizing that social efficacy is a comprehensive endeavor, with heightened success stemming immediately from regarding all resources with respect.

Perhaps because even when we do not get on planes, we can read about or watch smartphone footage about corners of the world far from us. The ubiquity of information means an increase in visibility but, in another paradox, is accompanied by an increase in opacity of meaning due to tech-enabled methods for carefully curating, grooming, and presenting information. On the one hand we have a fascination with appealing display based on a hunger for attention, and in parallel comes a distinct perfection fatigue. Despite carefully designed optics and messages, younger generations in particular crave outcomes and impacts proven to show benefit. And not just any change, but a move towards something better socially, something improved humanistically. In anticipation of appealing to younger generations, the entities within
the business and financial sectors clamor to decree standards for “change.” Related to Big Tech’s (predominately China and the United States’) hunger for Big Data, whomever controls the narrative about impact for social good controls the behaviors—often monetary, often political—about who deserves resources (Webb 2018). Why exert exacting or militaristic control, so expensive and with so much backlash, when the human imagination is so powerful?

Suggestibility and narrative formation have a demonstrable track record of manufacturing consent, from wars to what car to buy to who to sleep with. Data about the world is only the beginning; how information is used to curb and instigate behavior is the creation of power itself.

Whether for altruistic or selfish reasons—or perhaps both—the business and investing world seems to be catching on. Enter Sustainable Impact for Social Good. What does control have to do with impact for social good? For one, the field has yet to ask, “By whose standards, exactly and precisely, is impact for social good designed, assessed, and iterated upon?” Whomever has purview over the conversation writes its parameters. A look into some of SISG’s players suggests that the field is merging a wide array of concepts under a financial header, thereby struggling to be indispensable financially while attempting to heed updated academic conversations, such as that debate between equality and equity. In an effort to marry intent and impact, I see a slight shift away from a perpetual fascination with equality—the notion that all (people, cultures, ideas, places, circumstances, etc.) are the same and toward the notion that equitable (contextually-based) solutions are needed to ameliorate the countless barriers to humanistic and environmental sustainability.

A paradigmatic shift from dealing with equality, a tidy and numerically simple concept, to dealing with equity, a messier and socio-politically complex topic, is slowly emerging across sectors, perhaps as a silver lining amongst existential threats and extremism that seem so dire as
to herald in fresh systemic analyses more crucial than isolated information. The fascination with impact for social good implies an attempt to marry financials with humanistic outcomes: on the one hand, the idea is that money is input carefully so as to generate a socio-politically important output, while on the other hand, the entire transaction is predicated on the desire to affect something greater than the linear input/output model, showing that the welcome change wherein emphasis is placed on outcomes as much or more than intent.

The idea of Impact for Social Good is essentially an industry application of social equity. While no single definition exists, the implication is that no investment—time, money, attention, promotion—ought to be made unless the “return” is at least accompanied by, if not responsible for, socially beneficial action. This attitude is an undeniable change from a “single bottom line” wherein dollars made or assets gained is the only worthwhile metric. In my estimation, the idea, indeed the field, is so new it would be unfortunate to formulate a single definition at this stage. Yet the haphazardness of the definition seems to be impairing the field, as though in an attempt to offer enough structure, too much attention is diverted thusly. Surely an iterative definition would serve the field; without more definition linking intent and impact, how can impact be rigorous or of quality?

Sometimes the conversation is about giant visions and celebrity, such as in the case of an Elon Musk or a Jeff Bezos (Salmon 2015). In this case, the conversation tends to be as much about ways of thinking as to on what scale and timeline, precisely, impact will be defined or measured. In my estimation, the scope of measurement is less important than the degree of potency. Change can be bifurcated into additive or multiplicative, with the former being incremental but widely disbursed (such as if every car on the road were to use half as much petrol right now) and the latter being exponential (such as waiting for any change until all cars
no longer needed gas eventually). In this example, the paradigm remains intact, wherein car
culture is still the default. A shift in power dynamics would mean de-centering individualist
transportation entirely. The lens of analysis decides what solutions indicate success.

Which socio-political human dynamics are measurable in relation to Sustainable Impact
for Social Good? In contemplating the academic conversation on equity versus equality in
relation to a social sustainability framework, I propose we can reasonably measure these
elements:

- **Sustainability** as defined by repeatability congruent with cultural circumstances, practical
  adaptability, and iteration in real-time
  - makes all other elements implementable thanks to scalability over time and space
- **Good** as defined by ensuring that a project is supporting social equity
  - makes all other elements worthy of the considerable resources needed to actualize
- **Impact** as defined by the comprehensive and contextualized outcomes of a project
  - makes all other elements relevant by examining accountability to intentions in
    light of actualized outcomes;
- **Sociality** as defined by the intersubjectivity of human bodies, ideas, thoughts, narratives,
  behaviors, enactments, and systems
  - makes all other elements relevant by examining the connectivity of human and
    social capital, and the power flows that underwrite capital.

Each of these categories works synergistically; considering them in isolation is fruitless.

*Sustainability* is the backbone of what makes human endeavor feel worthwhile and
plausible over time. While a one-off project can be stimulating, creating entire investment or
entrepreneurial infrastructures would necessitate the kind of dedication that does not waver on a
longer term scale. A Sustainable approach asks for clarity in how and why a project might
endure.

The *Social*, in this case used as a noun, implies human interactivity, internally with self
and externally with one’s larger environs. Feelings about and responses to human interactions are
also of the social realm. Sometimes used interchangeably with community, communications,
culture, sociality is less aligned with collectivism and more important as a way of noting that
absolutely everything happens in context. Even our own formations of selfhood or how we identify as a piece of a larger puzzle requires seeing the landscape in which our selfhood exists.

*Good,* in relation to impact, is the objective of all other categories, an arbiter of sorts for why assessment is needed. The challenge is that *good* becomes dogma as soon as it ossifies, and must be philosophically questioned so as to increase likelihood that the assessment process is utilized productively rather than as an indictment tool. Otherwise stated, as paradigms shift, changes in the *zeitgeist* emerge, and notions of political relevancy ebb and flow over time. *Good* needs to be perpetually re-evaluated in two lights: 1) What conversations are timely based on the psychosocial status of individual cultures within a globalized world? 2) How might we pioneer socio-politically equitable ideas despite the encumbrances of, on the one hand, hyper adherence to political correctness, or on the other hand, fear mongering control rhetoric? Essentially, complicating the notion of what constitutes *good* begins to define *impact.*

Used here, *impact* is the tangible, material, narrative, and behavioral outcome that actualizes the conceptual underpinnings of the other elements. As equity is the systemic realization of the encapsulated notion of equality, *impact* is the systemic realization of the idea of good with regard to the concept of equality. In the language of monetization, *impact* is a project’s bottom line. In the language social entrepreneurship, *impact* becomes a tautology of sorts, amounting to the degree to which social good results from the project. When impact is used to describe a linear progression (more capital, more growth, more money), its utility is straightforward, encapsulated, and readily measurable. However, when impact is used to examine a system’s complexities, it references the amalgamated results of all factors’ influence on one another. Unchecked, this form of systems analysis can become easily unwieldy, yet with a template, systems offer immeasurable insight.
Impact is assessed in too many ways to repeat here. Even a brief field review, however, tells us much about how assessment is currently used to discuss impact. A cursory review of three organizations that span across sectors indicates that each has an ever-morphing criteria for assessment and planning. Each also attempts to be of service to ideas larger than themselves and analyzes data in relation to wide-ranging implications. Impact for Social Good is undefined in part because the institutions that champion it are currently writing its significance into human history. In other words, ISG is a social construction, much the same way that race or gender is social construction. Over time, the definition(s) of ISG will change, and with it, the ways that assessing impact will change. Seeing how the concept of social good arises within an institutional setting, then, is mandatory.

**World Economic Forum (WEF):**

WEF draws from NGOs, consultancies, think tanks, and a network of policy and (primarily) quantitative research professionals to create a master list of the criterion for enacting social good. The efficacy of impact is positioned in light of economic growth and prosperity as a proxy of sorts for social impact. The 2017-2018 Global Competitiveness Report lists 12 Pillars of Competitiveness: 1) Institutions, 2) Infrastructure, 3) Macroeconomic environment, 4) Health and primary education, 5) Higher education and training, 6) Goods market efficiency, 7) Labor market efficiency, 8) Financial market development, 9) Technological readiness, 10) Market size, 11) Business sophistication, 12) Innovation (Klaus and Sala-i-Martín 2017). The list culminates with a statement about each topic’s interconnection stating, “[the pillars] tend to reinforce each other, and a weakness in one area often has a negative impact on others” (*ibid.*). The brief methods statement implies that the vast majority of WEF’s rankings and assertions rely on reported quantitative data. WEF’s assessments are conservative in that they only include
institutional perspectives and refrain from claim over-reaching, stating instead that scores are calculated “irrespective of the country’s stage of development” (Klaus and Sala-i-Martín 2017, 321). This tactic is admirable in that it offers a way to escape logical fallacies such as presumptions the United States is more socially advanced because it is wealthier than, say, Nicaragua. Despite conservative research tactics, the WEF lens is one of liberal prosperity wherein all countries, stakeholders, sectors, and institutions are inter-linked. I might argue that liberal inclusivity is not as socially responsible as progressive accountability; however the liberal or globalized model is common, popular, and must thus be considered. Thanks to WEF’s outlook, Gross Domestic Product and other strictly economic lenses are dismissed in favor of adding humanistic factors such as good jobs, wellbeing, environment, fairness, and health into equations for success (Wallis 2016).

Global Impact Investing Network (GIIN):

This not-for-profit’s stated goal is to increase impact investing by removing barriers to, educating, and advocating for the field. The purpose of GIIN is advocate for ISG by advocating for itself and for likeminded not-for profits and businesses. According to their website, GIIN’s Impact Measurement and Management approach involves a four-step process: 1) Set goals and expectations, 2) Define Strategies, 3) Select metrics and set targets, 4) Measure, track, use the data, and report (GIIN website 2018). Their flagship product, The Impact Toolkit, is an open source database that “consolidates, the leading impact measurement and management (IMM) systems, methods, indicators, and data” (GIIN Toolkit 2018). One approach to measuring impact is to code businesses and resources into a “standard resource typology,” “framework,” “measurement technique,” “guideline,” and “principle,” the array of which indicates how many formats for studying, cataloguing, and deploying the concept of ISG already exist (So and
Staskevicius 2015). Perhaps the most compelling feature on the GIIN site is the opportunity to customize the toolkit by telling GIIS where one’s priorities lie.

Highlighting the economic value and business outcomes of ISG is a consistent practice in the field, which GIIN does through a 2016 report, “The Business Value of Impact Measurement” (Bass, Cohen, and Schiff 2016, 5). Despite a focus on financial metrics, the report relies on interviews with thirty industry insiders. Each topic has an economic bent, tracing through three steps, from “metrics driving value,” to questions formed, to finally the claimed “value” itself (ibid.). While the entire conversation is framed in economic terms, by the interim step, “questions informed,” the report notes some of the humanistic implications of doing business with social impact in mind. Additionally, each “impact objective” cites at least one humanistic outcome. For example, under the umbrella topic Investment Decisions, relevant questions include, “Will the growth of this business lead to benefits for large numbers of low income individuals?” (Bass, Cohen, & Schiff 2016, 16). Thus, although the report is discursively geared toward business efficiency and profit, the deeper imperative appears to be creating measurable benefit for actual humans in real time. As mentioned, the use of interviews suggests an attempt to humanize the concept of impact, even amidst reliance on numbers.

To go a layer deeper, one of GIIN’s official designates in their Impact Toolkit is B Lab. The Lab is the non-profit entity that creates and oversees the B Analytics, which is a “framework” and “measurement technique” for assessing a corporation on myriad social good parameters, including environmental and humanistic. The resulting certification, cleverly called B Corp, is a bragging right of any company that proves adherence to specific criteria as per B Lab’s standards (B Lab website 2018). Comparable to Fair Trade or USDA Organic Certification, bearing the B Corp stamp of approval is supposed to offer consumers an assurance
that the certified company practices human and environmental sustainability. B Lab also has an Impact Assessment service to determine effects of specific investments once they have completed their intended cycle. Notably, B Corp iterates its review process over time, and currently has version 6 slated for roll out in January 2019 (BLab website 2018).

The B Lab assessment website ushers companies through a three-step process: 1) Assessment that can take between 90 minutes and three hours for a “rough baseline,” 2) Comparison to other businesses who have undergone the assessment process, and 3) A customized improvement plan (BLab assessment website 2018). The assessment portion revolves around topics such as governance, workers, community, and environment. The sample questions (available to non-paying customers) require the respondent to know internal factual information, such as the question, “What % of the company is owned by full-time workers (excluding founders/executives)?” (BLab website). Somewhat paradoxically, the inquiry does not include perspective or lived experience. Thus, although company value and financial impact is based on human and environmental outcomes, the methods are almost exclusively numeric. In this sense, B Lab is almost an inverse of GIIN’s larger structure. The distinction is important because it reiterates that no consistent definition exists for ISG as a concept and that therefore its application is being institutionally created.

Skoll Foundation:

This funding body and world forum host advocates for and participates in giving money to social entrepreneurship organizations. The criteria on their website are nebulous, and although not explicitly ISG-centered, revolve in some part around a visionary leader model. In the case of Skoll itself, the aforementioned leader model hinges on Founder Jeff Skoll (http://skoll.org/about/about-skoll/). The primary means of indicating impact efficacy is not
disclosed, with only minimal information provided about the financial awards the foundation disburses. Criteria for the award are listed as: 1) being led by a social visionary entrepreneur, 2) potential for scale-ability and widespread implications, 3) collaborative partnerships on local, regional, and national fronts, 4) focus on disrupting unjust social and/or environmental issues, 5) addresses a serious and pervasive problem, and 6) ongoing participation in the Skoll network. Merit, then, seems to by a hybrid between humanism per a great leader model and humanism as a widespread phenomenon that can be disbursed widely.

Compounding my reading that Skoll’s criteria are implemented at the discretion of the organization from its socially and economically elite status, and not on the basis of transparent criteria, the description of necessary characteristics goes on to include ephemeral qualities, such as “strong,” “clear,” “leadership,” and “sound” (Skoll Foundation website 2018). While the merits of perspective and opinion are many, the ephemeral quality of these criteria seem to allude a robust qualitative analysis. Ironically, Skoll may be inadvertently contributing to an antiquated hierarchical model by using more preferential and less transparent assessment methods. Particularly given the collectivizing and ownership overtones of the final criteria—the requirement to be an active network participant—Skoll is proposing an exchange of one set of resources (time, attention, branding) for another (money, connections, pedigree).

Although in process, the current state of the field shows that impact is commonly assessed through a wide range of techniques and worldviews, from behaviorally oriented surveys to numeric assessments, to preferences in outlook. Per GIIN’s Impact Toolkit, there are fifty-two known systems for analyzing ISG, so disparity and discrepancy is inevitable. A more cohesive and complete definition would increase comprehensive understanding of the current field and its practiced methods. As the ISG field adopts a far more nuanced—and thus deeper and more
thorough—way of describing itself, a wider array of methods and techniques for understanding social good would become easier to manage. ISG will continue to need the concrete salvation of numbers, despite the common knowledge that quantitative analyses never tell the whole story, unless a clearer way to talk about social good can be established. A perpetual advocate of cross sectoral collaboration, I hold that integrating interdisciplinary research with focus groups and quantitative surveys would offer a far greater picture of the forces at play. Once data exists, it ought to be analyzed from linear and intuitive standpoints. By engaging a thorough array of data collection and interpretation processes, we craft a highly dynamic latticework within which to ask the right questions.

I conceive of the ways in which equity is designed, implemented, assessed, and iterated as equity hygiene, or attendance to how correlates between processes and outcomes promote or deter socio-political wellness. Achieving perfect equity is not the goal, but holding ourselves accountable to the undying need to work toward equity should be a priority. Why? Yes, because it’s the right thing to do humanistically. But also because the larger potential of social equity is recognition of and enhanced work towards interconnected global security (Nielsen Report, 2014). Security, global history tells us, can only be mandated, purchased, or surveilled into existence up to a point. A more enduring approach to social equity requires juxtaposing declarations of intent with real-time outcomes.

Some companies or organizations may be prepared to take on equity assessment work themselves while in other cases an external or partnership review may be in order. An even stronger method would involve distributed, multi-sectoral and multi-perspectival assessment, comparable to the ethos behind blockchain. To borrow from the comic classic, those committed to sustainable impact for social good ought to ask, “Who watches the watchpeople?”
(Appreciatively adapted from “watchmen”). Unlike numerical parity based on identity politics, this argument focuses on an array of infinitely intersectional qualities and circumstances that coalesce into a constellation of perspectives. Implementing assessment across social and professional spheres would distribute evaluation through a variety of opinions, ideologies, and worldviews. A systems analysis incorporates every nook and cranny, including extremes and common perceptions, thus yielding a deeper and ultimately more applicable inquiry.

Systemic sight that permeates highly complex scenarios is far more functional via a clearly defined assessment model. Examining where intent does or does not align with impact, I subscribe to a checklist model as adapted from Atul Gawande’s *Checklist Manifesto* which holds that a deliberately constructed and straightforward set of criteria for accomplishing a goal is one of the most immediately useful and eventually scale-able forms of design (Gawande 2009). In some cases, detail does not only lead to excess, it leads to harm (Gawande 2009, 16). In famous cases, such as medical and aviation scenarios, the harm is obvious both in its immediacy and in its direct connection to potential or even invariable physical harm. When applied to overarching systems of human interactivity, a checklist could seem like a blunt instrument where a scalpel might be more comfortable (Gawande 2009). Yet the messiness of human procedure, particularly one like ISG that is so subject to interpretation, is precisely why I argue a general framework is useful.

Make no mistake: the brevity of this list reflects thorough research and studious curation, an intentional nod to Mark Twain’s famous adage, “I didn’t have time to write a shorter letter.” I did indeed take the time; in the face of ISG’s nebulous nature, I offer an artful template off of which to determine the degree of integration between actualized result and original intent. The elegant simplicity of a list organizes otherwise lengthy analyses into a pithy format that
represents years of work clearly and efficiently. The ten-item social equity list layers well with pre-existing assessment frameworks, and can adapt to a variety of ideological and ontological positions, meaning that the list’s utility is immediately practical, with the only pre-qualifier being a desire to assess equity. Perhaps most crucially to our present era, the list functions in a capitalist framework, which is the current prevailing method for harnessing and utilizing all forms of capital, including social, human, and cultural.

To establish a substantive and comprehensive directive for social equity, I look to my formalized case studies, representing almost twenty-four cumulative years, at least three hundred affiliates, three universities, roughly two dozen governments on four continents, thousands of hours of travel and workshops, and hundreds of thousands of dollars. After taking a walk through the material I have come to ten major insights. This checklist is inspired by the same logic that undergirds checklists on planes and in hospitals. While international education and cultural exchange do not have immediate life or death consequences, I continue to assert they are of comparable consequence in their ability to shape worldview (Gawande 2009). The items represented here are “quick and dirty” in the face of complexity: admittedly incomplete and imperfect, yet infinitely better than decreeing that no action should be taken because the ideal is too long, too laborious, too demanding. The summation is as follows:

1) Who is paying?
2) What is the nature of compensation and to whom is it adequate?
3) What kind of a resource expenditure is required?
4) Where is the program happening?
5) Who is traveling to where and who stays home?
6) In what language(s) are the program materials and activities?
7) Who is documenting the procedures?
8) How is the schedule set and whose timeframe does the program follow?
9) Who is at the decision making and planning table?
10) What themes are supported and who do those themes interest?
Each of these questions is pregnant, and each could warrant its own chapter. They are important
to assessing actual impact, as well as to a rhetorical inquiry into the parameters of impact. As
such, I elaborate on each here.

1. **Who is paying?**

The biggest consideration in payment is what, precisely, is being paid for and, as such, who benefits immediately and longer term. Money is invariably a tool of power in that it is used to enable, block, or grant access. As such, funding is not inherently benevolent nor subjugative, and instead is far messier than the tidiness of numbers might suggest. In APPEX’s case, large Western-based institutions gave substantial sums to artists from developing countries, many of whom would not have been able to participate otherwise. Yet the money was allocated for travel and housing, with an extremely modest per diem, whereas the US-based administrators were covered by regular salaries and benefits, the logic of which states that the opportunity to participate is as, if not more, valuable than ongoing dollarized income. The stamp of the funder is then carried by the funded.

The funded retain agency and dignity when funders do not assume that output is equatable with uni-directional power flow. We might call this *consensual funding* where everyone is on the same page about the intentions behind the dollars. Not unlike other forms of consensual power, such as consensual sex, presuming that paying one’s way makes their participation agreeable is entirely false. Pay-to-play models, such as that found in MovementExchange, encourages the idea that good intentions on the part of program founders and participants, makes the actualization of the project inherently good. Additionally, the act of offering money is often seen as a legitimizing force, as though being willing to pay for something reinforces that the benevolent intent must be good if someone is willing to pay. As such, the resulting narrative is
that the parties not paying (in this case Panamanian institutions) ought not to complain because they are not asked to contribute financially. The onus, oddly, falls in part to the parties who are not paying with money, even if they are expected to pay with time or attention. One correlate might be to a date that is agreed upon only because one person agrees to pay for dinner and wants to be romantic, even when the romantic sentiment is not mutual. Without belaboring ties to eroticism, I will note that consent is fluid, and cannot be presumed today just because it was offered yesterday. The query for funders and Westerners alike ought not to be can I access you via money, but I would be honored if you would confer with your community about whether my funding is agreeable to you, and if so, what form(s) of access might be beneficial to you?

2. **What is the nature of compensation and to whom is that adequate?**

This question is surprisingly complicated. Compensation is often regarded as a clearly delineated input/output equation; it exists on paper, in an accountant’s budget, and happens or does not happen. The first set of complications exists when deciding what appropriate compensation is, given the ‘commensurate experience’ of the parties being compensated and the economics of the countries from which they come. The decision on compensation relates directly to valuation of personhood, knowledge, and labor, or the way in which social capital translates to financial capital; the two concepts are not the same, but are tied in terms of economic credit and contribution credit.

In the case of APPEX, for example, the Center for Intercultural Performance staff was paid in USD and the contributing Fellows were paid in airfare, housing, and the opportunity to create art as part of a prestigious international cohort. I will avoid debates about what is worth more, salary or comped amenities, but I do wish to note that conducting business in USD is used to justify why participants from developing countries do not “need” as much because, ostensibly,
the dollar will go farther. Firstly, this is not the case, as the notion of “developing” is tied to social narratives about regions and not to on-the-ground infrastructure: Panama City is more developed than some parts of the United States and is colloquially referred to as the Miami of Central America, with dollar-based price tags to match. Secondly, in the instance that experience is adequate compensation, the presumption is that that which is being accessed is valuable or that the experience of accessing it is rare. The crux of compensation, I argue, is the determination of value and then the ways in which that value is acknowledged externally. Accolades are an integral part that do not stand alone, but without which a large paycheck is irrelevant.

3. What kind of a resource expenditure is required?

This question is subtle. It taps into the little and generally unnoticed elements of producing anything whatsoever. It also refers to intangibles and the barely conscious elements of how humans direct their energies and attentions, or not. What human resources are anticipated and expected that organizers may not even be aware they expect? Who or what actions are taken for granted? For infrastructure and services, are choices made that support or drain local business? How is sustainability measured?

In the case of Puentes de Poder, a spoken and unspoken desire to celebrate, uphold, and explore the intricacies of African diasporic aesthetics fuels the project. The easily recognizable part pertains to upholding tradition and creating new ways of sharing culture. The more nuanced element is that the chance to innovate upon African legacy within a diasporic and highly transregional context can be undertaken by a handful of specialists and not engaged with by students or a wider community. In order to create programming accessible to a wider group of cultural innovators, a need for more intensive understanding of African diasporic legacy must be recognized, then cultivated, then designed for. Another way of exploring resource expenditure is
asking how much support a project can leverage, or at least how little resistance a project might have to contend with. If a significant amount of effort must be diverted from capacity building to creating a discourse wherein the project is seen as worthwhile, the project’s narrative is built around considerable social inequity. The resource, then, is figuring out how to operationalize and focus determination and then share that labor.

4. Where is the program happening?

This question needs to be asked in terms of geography, type of institution, physical accessibility, and larger socio-economic context. The idea that there is a correct place to hold an event is debatable, but the way in which equitable support can be offered revolves in large part around how location is handled. For example, *Puentes de Poder* holds programs in Panama that combine Panamanians of African heritage as well as Africans and African Americans in order to highlight the history of how slaves were brought to the Americas and how the famous canal’s construction is tied to globalization via slavery. In this case, the content is in large part about Panama’s connection to the African aesthetics that the program explores. On the other hand, *PdP* is struggling to find funding to bring some of the pre-eminent artists of African descent to Los Angeles, which inadvertently cements its status as a more touristic venture than its founder would have preferred.

The issue is less about variety of location and more about how the location is treated and regarded. In discussions of global North and South, the question becomes who is playing the role of tourist and who of host, and then how each of these roles is supported (or not) institutionally. In INDAMI’s example, we see dozens of artists from the Caribbean and Central America traveling to an institution in the US that compensated, supported, and thanked these professionals for their expertise. The program was almost entirely uni-directional, with no claim on sending
US participants to the Caribbean save a few faculty who went independently. The point is that, regardless of where the action happens, claims about benefit must remain unreasonable and not over-reach. The question of whether multiple locations should be used is a far larger debate.

5. Who is traveling to where?

This consideration may sound identical to hosting location, but is actually about visas and border crossing. Otherwise put, this is a matter of baseline ability, from a political and policy standpoint, to travel from one area to another and then back again. Border crossing can pertain to restrictions and policies on the books, can relate to local attitudes that make an area safer or less safe for a particular demographic, or even to how an individual person feels being in an area, a sort of intangible sensation of belonging. For example, in the case of APPEX, UCLA was kind enough to host several dozen artists at a time, but telling someone they are welcome is different from attending to that person’s wellbeing; UCLA has been repeatedly called out by racial and ethnic minorities for its prolonged disequilibrium between rhetoric and action. In the case of APPEX, the concerns of participants around not belonging were not related to the institution, which speaks to the administration’s decision to host during the summer and apart from the usual student sessions.

In the case of MovementExchange, comparably affluent North Americans feel that they have the ability to show up at an institution in Panama, whereas Panamanians do not make that assumption. In this case, visas are less the issue than are attitudes and assumptions about who gets access, when, and why. As such, someone’s ability to go to a place is as, if not more important, than their presumption that they will be welcome and that their presence will add value. Nonetheless, the ability to cross borders—and to return—is an ultimate form of access and thus power, much as I have outlined in other portions of my work on Whiteness studies.
6. In what language(s) are the program materials and activities?

This consideration is fairly straightforward; the argument that written or verbal translation ameliorates the need for linguistic continuity is not entirely accurate, as its pace is too slow for the human mind. In scenarios set up with technology for concurrent translation this issue disappears, as the information can reach and then be disseminated from the human mind in real time. Standard translation, however, is only partially functional. For example, in APPEX’s case, even when translators were present for dance workshops, participants noted that considerable confusion arose not because of inaccuracy, but because they could not keep abreast of the deeper meaning behind the content of the workshop while the information came to them so slowly. In this instance, an additional form of communication—dance—was being utilized, and therefore there was no taboo in using the body, whereas in most social contexts only verbal or written words are acceptable.

Otherwise, the issue is related to speaking the language of dominant culture, or, in many cases, English. This caveat to access is huge, as it separates who is physically at the table versus who can participate. Language can be traversed through technology, yes, but tech does not account for nuance in meaning, such as colloquialisms and pronunciation on the more benign end, nor with insider knowledge on the more impactful end. Language is about who hears and who is listened to, and thus is about who creates immediate rules as well as longer term documentation. Language is more than linguistics, it is the creation of meaning in action.

7. How is the program documented?

This topic is invariably related to language, but spans technology, method, methodology, perspective, intent, and execution over time. Documentation via social media may be immediately accessible and popular but not have staying power within a formalized library
On the other hand, using an official library system may be seriously off-putting to many potential users, or even prohibitively challenging for anyone who cannot procure standardized proof of residency. Further, once the labor of documentation and storage is done, how is dissemination handled? Who knows the documents are usable, let alone exist?

Documentation also pertains to the story told. In some ways documentation is one of the more straightforward of social equity topics, yet is related entirely to narrative and the ways in which the legacy of what has occurred is catalogued emotionally and mentally. On the one hand, APPEX has a comprehensive archive in UCLA’s Young Research Library, and on the other hand, *Puentes de Poder* has almost no documentation whatsoever. In the middle, MovementExchange has an unofficial archive of sorts, built throughout their website. As the rest of my work outlines, I take serious issue with the Edutouristic approach the organization uses, yet because its materials are so readily available and packaged in such a lovely way, it has a strong archival presence. Given the prevalence of social media and the way in which non-vetted yet readily accessible information is designed and disseminated, MovementExchange’s website is a branded archive. Archives establish subsequent generations of thought formation and knowledge creation. Further, the way in which a project’s story is told creates the narrative surrounding that topic. Narratives, in turn, create outlook and resulting behavior and, over time, create culture.

8. How is the schedule set and whose timeframe does the program follow?

Deceptively simple and extremely complex, this pertains to the ways in which various individuals’ and entire populations’ daily needs are met. Beyond quotidian logistics, this refers to the ways in which needs are understood, considered, and acted upon which, in turn, relates to the ways in which humans are seen and regarded as human and not as pieces of a system. All
stakeholders are both, but the ability to be a sustainable system and not just one that functions on
some level, requires that humans are treated thusly. This is easy to say and challenging to do not
because those in dominant positions wish it to be; it is a challenge for humans to treat one
another humanistically because that skill set is not always reinforced or is relegated to a
peripheral nicety which we are not necessarily encouraged to practice.

Yet overlooking straightforward details would also be a mistake. For example, childcare
is not a portion of any of the programs I have looked at, essentially meaning that single parents
without larger support systems are not able to participate. Several of the host institutions have
been giant academic bodies, which begs the question, how does the schedule fit into the
calendars of the various sectors; otherwise put, is the program, in the case of APPEX, expecting
that all participants adhere to the University of California summer session parameters? Of course
scheduling is always a challenge and cannot accommodate everyone, but the overarching
question is, Whose time is respected or expected? Logistics are about much more than just
logistics.

9. Who and what is at the decision making and planning table?

This consideration is my least favorite, not because it is not important, but because it
upholds a multiculturalist narrative wherein demographically-inspired parity is the same as
incorporating an array of perspectives. Yet who is included cannot be abandoned in favor of what
is included because personhood relates to lived experience whereas topic relates to information.
In essence, the two must be combined for a comprehensive synthesis. And while the wording
emphasizes decision making and planning, I do not mean to over-emphasize the preceding steps;
the truer emphasis is on stewarding the weighty portions of a project, such as its methods and
emphases.
In the case of APPEX, for example, I found that Director Mitoma sought out the perspectives of dozens of artists, community leaders, and other movers and shakers within her industry, but that most were not invited to participate in actual decision making over time. A parallel model exists in MovementExchange wherein Pasternak invites collaborative leadership, but ultimately makes decisions without guidance. As such, the question I have presented here is less about who, and perhaps not even entirely about what, but more so about how those people and topics at the table are enabled to engage actions of consequence. I would also emphasize that the meta-method of how the decision making table is formed and upheld throughout a project is crucial. As with APPEX, which has morphed into the Cudamani Institute’s programming in Bali run by Mitoma and her daughter, it might be more socially equitable if the local community were engaged in substantive decision making rather than simply leadership roles by name. I propose that tight curation is not a bad thing, as all circumstances warrant varying forms of curation, but that exploring more varied forms of leadership is a requisite of social equity.

10. **What themes are supported and who do those themes interest?**

This question is one that academics and researchers should be veritably obsessed with. Another phrasing would be, “what are the research questions, what are the methods and methodologies of engagement, and to whom is the research valuable?” If the themes of a program are not relevant to the entire effected constituency, they inherently can only support some peoples’ agendas. I am uninterested in consensus-based themes, as pleasing everyone’s interests and ideas is not the point of a project; many worthy endeavors exist to offer balance within a lopsided system or opportunities within an unexplored realm. The question, then, is, under whose purview are themes formulated?
In the case of *Puentes de Poder*, Campbell purports that by offering programing that explores African diasporic identity, she is gathering a multitude of forms of aesthetic and communicative engagement. Truthfully, she has not had the resources to assess impact or to invite other leaders to collaborate. In this example, we can see that intentions to be highly inclusive and to facilitate leaders from a variety of African diasporic communities to engage together means that more hands-on guidance is needed from a centralized location. By juxtaposing APPEX and PdP we can see that many programs might benefit from something in the middle wherein more administration exists in order to bring in and allocate resources but that active co-leadership from across the field can create more accessible and widely applicable learning and innovation.

**The pre-requisite question: Shake on it?**

One key assessment factor remains, a Single Question to Rule Them All, if you will. Discussing equity is irrelevant if stakeholders are not “shaking on” their respective involvement. Even in the case of a verbal agreement, which is indeed legally binding, the participants have inclined themselves toward the work and thereby have created a human-to-human understanding that each will follow through. In the field of diplomacy, the manner of address for letters of inquiry is the formative element behind whether two entities can even come to the negotiation table. The formatting and how the brief letter is laid out indicates an awareness of expectation which no amount of knowledge can circumvent; the handshake is the initial indicator of agreeing to the rules of diplomatic engagement. Specifically, in international diplomacy, the inquiring party pens a document that follows specific outlining protocols wherein the ways in which words are laid out on the page indicate an understanding of established rules of engagement. Even in the case that all parties are in alignment with basic understandings and goals, without addressing
the letter with this particular formatting, the letter recipient may not listen. The formatting itself, then, constitutes a handshake of initial engagement. Subsequent and more meaningful diplomatic communications are not guaranteed, but will at least be considered. A properly compiled letter that adheres to particular formatting thus indicates an explicit invitation to a diplomatic process. For the purposes of this project, an initial agreement is needed, without which the ten other assessment questions outlined here become irrelevant.

Even the most diligently outlined goals are irrelevant without an established agreement ahead of time. In the diplomatic realm, equity begins with the “handshake,” or the way in which the introductory contact is established. Knowledge and expertise in the field of diplomacy becomes irrelevant if the manner of introduction does not adhere to the rules of engagement. In diplomatic terms, the handshake is a document produced in a very particular typographic formatting, not dissimilar to the particulars of academic formats, such as Chicago, MLA, or APA. While laypeople might fixate on the correct title with which to the address the dignitary to whom they write, in the instance of the handshake the font and manner of alignment is most weighty. The particulars of formatting are akin to signaling, “I am holding my hand out with the intention for you to extend yours, with more or less the same intent to work on this topic.” Without the handshake, in other words, no intent to cooperate is establish-able.

At first blush, the parameters of diplomatic engagement may seem hyper-stringent, but I assert the handshake offers the foundation necessary for fruitful work. In the case of text, email, DMing, and other forms of social media, communication sometimes becomes flippant, including little more than passing peasantries or the ubiquitous ego-quenching “ping.” As, in some ways, communication becomes more disposable, the need for extremely defined rules of engagement becomes not only an understandable craving for the efficiency-minded, but also a tangible way
to sort through those who are not ready to approach the bargaining table. What might at first appear an unnecessarily stringent means of indicating a serious intent to cooperate quickly becomes a welcome imperative for direct communication. Where social equity is concerned, the question is not *what is fair* but rather has the full degree of *intent to cooperate* been formally established?

In my research on cultural exchange programming, including APPEX, *Puentes de Poder,* and MovementExchange, the concept of Diplomacy or Ambassadorship is invoked as a way to signify benevolent intent and impact on the part of the organizations. Intent, however, is unidirectional, whereas the handshake is inherently bi-directional. Phenomenologically, extending one’s hand with a firm grip and having the other party respond with a limp and half-hearted hand shows that one’s fervor is not reciprocated. That information lets one know, should they continue to engage, they will be in a managerial or stewardship position rather than in one of diplomatic reciprocity; regardless of the desires of each party, clarity is virtually always the shortest path to healthy interpersonal relating. Where I see the handshake having serious shortcomings is in all of the complexity that comes after. Yet the agreement represented by the handshake is the prerequisite to the complexity having a viable chance. Thus, while the Master Question remains “who and what is being served” the Pre-requisite Question is, “shake on it?”

The topics I have outlined in this chapter thus far are a fantastic entry point that I encourage designers from all socially-engaged sectors to engage. An entry handshake, or professional agreement, ought not be overlooked as a necessary entre into working potential. That said, as much as I may prefer, social equity is not so easily encapsulated; nothing of significant human value is. Once handshakes occur all around, then the task of examining
whether operating procedures align with equitable intentions begins. Once the ten-part list has been thoroughly utilized, the culminating step requires circling back to the central query: who and what is being served? The ten-part list, plus these two book end questions, are intentionally simple on paper such that any professional can interface with them productively. Nonetheless, I do propose a specific, two-tier method for interfacing with the questions in order to retrieve their greatest potential. Ideally, I would enlist a team of designers and engineers to craft an interactive application that challenges users to approach the list through two distinct but related readings, as outlined below.

The temptation to make human dynamics tidy is understandable, but unfortunately masks the real work of comprehending how to maneuver through the messiness of human dynamics with grace. If one were to engage this list as only a yes/no or us/them binary, the underlying reasons and motivations behind each decision could seem irrelevant. The checklist is intended to be accessible not only for seasoned professionals, but also for busy administrators who have not necessarily studied the particulars of social equity. The checklist, in all of its linear simplicity, makes the notion of equity possible to engage relatively quickly, whether as a refresher or as an introduction. Before considering the two-tier method, the checklist might look like this in binary:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluating question</th>
<th>Binary choice 1</th>
<th>Binary choice 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-requisite: Shake on it?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who is paying?</td>
<td>Us: $___</td>
<td>Them: $___</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where is the program happening?</td>
<td>Here</td>
<td>There</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who is traveling to where?</td>
<td>Us</td>
<td>Them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In what language(s) are the program materials and activities?</td>
<td>Ours</td>
<td>Theirs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who is documenting the procedures?</td>
<td>Us</td>
<td>Them</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What schedule does the program follow? | Ours | Theirs |
---|---|---|
How is the support staff compensated? | Currency: $___ | Experience: ___ |
What kind of a resource expenditure is required? | Financial: $___ | Human: ___ |
Who is at the decision making and planning table? | Us | Them |
What themes are supported and who do those themes interest? | Ours | Theirs |
Master Question: Who and what is served? | Our goals | Their goals |

Figure 4: Social Equity Checklist, binary version

Such a linear version is representative of the *whats* but not the *whys*. Knowing the impetus behind any given decision is mandatory to understanding more than linear directionality of impact—who is the impacter and who the impacted—but also the rationale. For example, in the case of funding, the dollar amount only tells so much; *why* a funding body is paying and *why* the funded entity accepts is often more telling than numbers. The conceptualizations behind the data points are what make the information relevant and thus the system meaningful. The checklist for social equity should first be used to establish the comparatively simple *whats* (Tier 1). Then, once the first round has been completed, a second round should be undertaken to address the *whys* (Tier 2).

Tier 1: the data
1) Who is doing the resourcing? – a directional, immediately apparent *from*
2) Who is being resourced? – a directional, immediately apparent *to*

Tier 2: synthesizing the data
3) Why is that resourcing decision made? – the high level imperative *from*
4) Why is that beneficiary chosen? – the high level imperative *to*

By taking a layered approach to assessing social equity, Tier 2 incorporates socio-politics instead of relying solely on places, themes, organizations, and sums of money. Rather than
showcase power flows amidst elements of a linear list on paper, using the list serves as a heuristic for organizations and their leaders. A checklist for assessing social equity should absolutely be used to make in-the-moment decisions. However, just like the surgeons and airline stewards using checklists to save lives during time sensitive emergencies, a considerable amount of prior expertise and training equips that professional to act on the list. This list is hardly a cheat sheet that absolves leaders of holding themselves and their teams accountable and is predicated on expertly facilitated organizational culture. Assessing social equity is an ongoing endeavor; precisely because social equity does not cease to matter when it becomes inconvenient, revisiting how to enact equitable intentions is never irrelevant. A key marker of dedication to social equity is whether it is centered or pushed aside at crucial decision-making junctures.

I hold that true equity requires internal excavation that can never be encapsulated strictly in words on paper. My preceding chapters on social imaginaries, such as whiteness, argue the necessity of internal excavation to achieve enacted and institutional equity. That process, however, can take decades or even generations to make true headway and, in the meantime, socio-political inequity is perpetuating racism, ethnocentrism, sexism, and other seriously detrimental problems. The checklist model in this chapter is not a short cut; it is a systems-inspired, hierarchy-busting to-do list in the most literal sense.

This chapter does not start on a plane, in a dance studio, or in a hostel. This chapter starts at my desk, reviewing the case studies that made it into this dissertation alongside a few that did not. In formulating a model for the future of equitable exchange, I looked to my prior case studies alongside best practices in model creation and implementation. When I amalgamated chapters one through four, I saw much to celebrate where both effective implementation of
international programming exists, as well as many opportunities for bolstering future programming. Reviewing pre-existing case studies in order to note effective practices and room for growth, paired with reflection on and theorization around what, precisely, makes the programs equitable, set this chapter up for a concerted discussion on implementing equity. The materials here were designed for practical application and scalability, bearing in mind that forms of culture, whether organizational, aesthetic, or interpersonal might be the single most important part of how concepts should be applied for durability and efficacy.

Each program that I reviewed during my research has striven to be part of life-changing cultural dialogues that contribute to larger issues of equity. I have seen flashes of brilliance woven throughout the programs where that image has been realized. Yet I have also seen many examples of severely inequitable programming despite beautiful intentions. When I broaden my view, I am inclined to think that the sheer number of instances of equity versus inequity are irrelevant. The single most important marker of success is the degree to which the organization met or failed to meet its own intentions within the context of the cost of attempting to meet said intentions. A lack of equity, then, is an opportunity. By looking at the situation through an appreciative stance, we can attempt to course correct pre-existing programs or to build excellent initiatives from scratch. This chapter offers concrete and best practices for just that.

In the previous four chapters I have asked what relationship lies between program mission statements and the lived experiences of program participants. I have tried to keep myself cognizant of the lenses through which I formed my analyses. I have boarded planes, written at least 800 pages (and deleted some 600), given lectures, had at least 100 meetings, danced on stages and in studios, attended symposia, read books, annotated interviews, dissected websites, sifted through dozens of archival boxes, reached out to dozens of humans who barely knew me.
or to whom I am a complete stranger, and looked myself in the mirror to ask, “How can I best
translate academic labor into an accessible and helpful format?” I have also witnessed countless
(mostly white) people become defensive the moment that the word “race” leaves my mouth. At
the same time, I have witnessed countless Panamanian, Balinese, and in some cases, East Asian
and West African people tell me that race is “not a thing” for their cultures but that ethnicity and
legacy and diaspora resonate. I have ridden the wave of privilege afforded me by being a white,
straight, middle class woman performing whiteness studies in a white institution. I have felt a
deep resonance in my gut that despite how uncomfortable I make (some) others, my intent to
build more equitable programs outweighs the destruction of socio-political change. I have found
that interrupting the very ideological, kinship, and educational settings that raised me is
profoundly necessary. I have established a respectfully interruptive conversation by generating a
tangible approach to building practical equitability.

Methodologically speaking, I have forwarded theories from Critical Race Studies,
Whiteness Studies, Memory Studies, Performance Studies, Cultural Studies, Systems Thinking,
and even a bit of Psychology. Using bricolage and appreciative inquiry methodologies, I have
put an array of relevant discourses and available data into conversation with one another in order
to build a larger conversation that can inform the field of international educational and cultural
exchange. I have focused primarily on two case studies, one a larger program, the other a
comparison between two smaller programs. I have read, talked, listened, danced, eaten, seen, and
shared. I have attempted to hold myself accountable by asking crucial questions about the ways
in which education and cross cultural communications are designed and conducted and utilized
within a demonstrably inequitable world.
I have continued to ask, over and over, what is being served… who is being served… why are the same hierarchies and narratives uninterrupted and upheld despite some clearly beautiful intentions to be equitable? I have come to feel that pointing out the hypocrisies and rifts between intent and outcome can clarify the greater blind spots and inconsistencies that most need attending to. Put another way, particularly in the case of challenging topics, bravely addressing that which does not function is the work of leadership. Taking the courage to speak up is one thing; taking the courage to be disliked and shunned for speaking up, even if it does not immediately serve you personally, is another. I continually find myself at the fringes of my theoretical and practical fields, and am unwavering not out of obstinance, but because international education and cultural exchange appear, at best, stagnant.

The chief imperative of my project is to ask what and whom a project is serving. This question has become, while not exactly popular, a common enough refrain in the ISG realm, impact investing, and some triple-bottom-line business models. I celebrate these paradigmatic shifts in designing social systems and in implementing institutional imperatives, and am adamant that the existing impact would be strengthened exponentially if more collaboration and cross sectoral work were a priority. Even when inconvenient—especially when inconvenient—keeping intent married to outcome and desire married to enactment is what matters most. Rhetoric is so alluring; one of my first loves, contemplation of theory or chewing on a worldview is refreshing and invigorating at once. Yet talking about work is insufficient. Even though we might feel more comfortable with ruminating on options and testing hypotheses, achieving human equity through talk is not working. Equity requires activation.

I have argued repeatedly that social equity is about power flows, resource directionality, and who and what is being served. The truth is that human interactivity is extremely messy,
unpredictable, variable, and ill-suited to stagnant models. Its dynamism cannot be contained. Yet in this chapter I offer an on-paper method of measurement, a procedural of sorts. The decision to create concision where chaos often rules was not out of a desire to artificially neaten the process. I would even go so far as to argue that any international education, cultural exchange, consultation, or even area studies expert who claims to have the answers to equitability is simply trying to sell their services.

My research and fieldwork has shown me that blatant data only goes so far, and that I must read between the lines to determine the unarticulated meaning behind trends and preferences and actions. Indeed, my attempts at simplification have been so unsuccessful as to receive extremely lukewarm responses, not because the conclusions are seen as incorrect, but because audiences have found them to be some combination of obvious and terrifying. When I point out socio-political imbalance, I become feared or boring, depending on who is listening; fear seems to arise from institutionally secure leaders who are afraid of accusations, and boredom arises from (predominately) administrators who are extremely accustomed to the power imbalances imbedded within their respective institutions.

In Winter 2018, I voluntarily attempted to summarize my research in a three-minute talk for a graduate student event at UCLA. Although I hoped the delivery might be well received, I was chiefly focused on how to translate six years of academic work into a more accessible and consumable format. I am no stranger to stages or to public speaking, yet this preparation was a singularly anxiety-riddled process. At the event itself, I found myself awash in a sea of scientists who seemed to have a much easier time summarizing their work within the three minute window. A fellow humanities researcher and I agreed that encapsulating our wide ranging discussions felt virtually impossible. Nonetheless, here is my three-minute script:
Ladies and gentlemen, please prepare for yourselves for landing. You’re in that magical moment just before the plane hits the tarmac when you realize you’ve arrived. You’ve embarked on a cultural exchange program and you’ve ready to have your mind blown with new experiences. Countless top-ranked institutions offer programs like these, and testimonials suggest that participants have a blast. So… what’s the problem?

My research shows the vast majority of programs that call themselves cultural exchange are actually tourism by another name. The issue here is that individuals from relatively affluent areas, such as the United States, get on planes, go to places that are anew to them, and are essentially and inadvertently taught to see those cultures—and the people living in them—as being, at best, exotic, and at worst, in deficit. My model is quite different.

I work with cultural literacy. We stimulate the human senses to go beyond facts and information to engage together in meaningful shared experience. What does this look like? Well, we might come together in a workshop format to share our favorite forms of music and to teach one another. Or, together, we might walk the city streets, learning the history, smelling the smells, and trying the food. Or, we might come together to engage in critical pedagogy or cross cultural exchange where we talk about challenging topics such as home life, spirituality, and religion. The feeling of being in a place and the feeling of engaging humanistically with one another really drives the learning experience for everyone involved. Notably, this model also honors the hosts as well as the guests. Therefore, we’re coming together in a more equitable and socially sustainable way.

My work was stimulated in part by the United Nations. But it’s not about the institution, but the Sustainable development goals. Number 4 is Quality Education and number 4.7 is Education for Global Citizenship. These aren’t just fancy terms but are ways to combat xenophobia, or fear of others, fear of difference. In this way, this work has actually prompted people to share something important about their humanistic experience from their home countries and their daily lives. This work is shown to decrease violence and create a more socially equitable, sustainably, and just world.

My audience was primarily UCLA administrators and graduate students—a learned and relatively progressive group. I was given a fair amount of positive feedback, all unsolicited.

During the program break, several colleagues noted how impressed they were with my delivery and appreciated the passion I brought to the topic. The actual subject, however, was brushed aside, not as a misunderstood niche topic, but as a topic so ubiquitous as to feel almost obvious. Edu-tourism, poverty tourism, and other terms particular to the social science and education realms were mostly new to the audience, but the overarching conclusions about social inequity—and that more attention must be directed to actively building more equitable systems—was so obvious as to be, in that moment, underwhelming. There exists a certain fatigue in socially-
minded circles, including within leadership and well-educated and intentioned people. The topic of social equity seems to elicit a silent, collective groan: “Yes, we know the world is dis-equitable. I have my own progressive project, but beyond that, I’m not aware of precisely how I can contribute to equity. Am I really supposed to do something else, something uncomfortable, something inconvenient?” Certainly, we ought to celebrate that which we have achieved. But not attending to the inconvenient elements of equity is demonstrably ineffective.

In the end, the reason I write about equity in cultural exchange and cross cultural communication is that inequity in the 21st Century has become the proverbial emperor who wears no clothing. As an ideological shackle, turning a blind eye to inequity is one of the most potent mental gymnastics ever invented. The collective attitude is that if we decide not to see, it becomes completely invisible. The grandchild of colonialism, social inequity is woven into the fabric of everyday life. The realms of pedagogy and aesthetic formation—were vision, clarity, and critical consciousness are key—are particularly ripe for increasing equity. We will not have the opportunity to live in a truly post-colonial world until we have gained the ability to recognize and address inequity wherever it manifests.
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