

Disrupting colonialist language to find knowing in praxis. Cultural Foregrounding and Intra-face.

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Volume 6

Issue 2

Winter 2023

Keywords:

race, culture, intra-face, cultural foregrounding, decoloniality, decolonisation, systemic therapy, Other, Otherness

Abstract

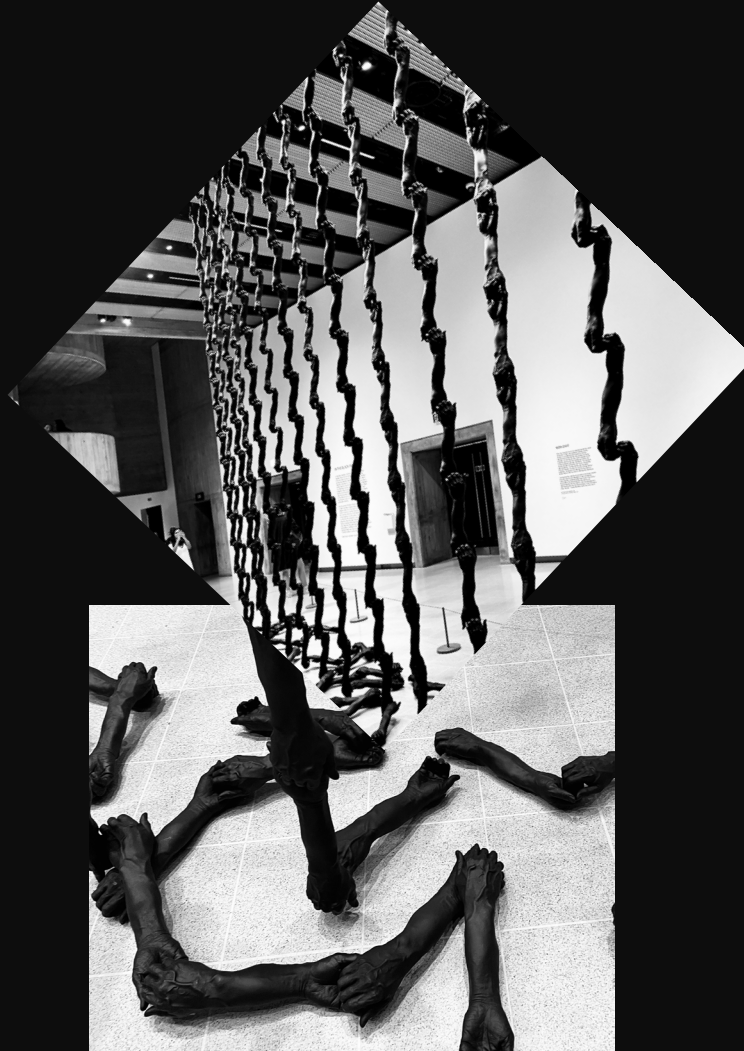
This paper offers a first-person, post-positivist qualitative study of what *race* means to me as an individual, professional and systemic practitioner attempting to inhabit decoloniality. I explore how systemic teaching methods fail to open up spaces for exploring cultures during training which leaves trainees, tutors and clients vulnerable to the cultural dominance of western societies and to the marginalisation of Other cultures. I present the conceptual terminology of i) “cultural foregrounding” and ii) “intra-face” to illustrate political and societal discourses about Otherness (colonised and marginalised) in a posthuman and, hopefully, a decolonised world. I show and discuss my internal struggles, cultural reflexivity in writing about my experiences as a colonised Other. This writing is part of a process of decolonising my many selves. On this journey, I travel with a range of scholars who connect with my research and enrich my writing journey.

Three sections make up the paper. The first section examines the language of *race* as a social and political construct. In the second section, I introduce and discuss cultural foregrounding and intra-face. In the final section, I discuss praxis and a working definition of culture. In each of these sections I thread connections to practice.

Citation Link

In this paper, I examine the inappropriate use of the term “race” which I re-present as *race*. I reintroduce and define “culture” as a way of situated, historical (I explain this choice of spelling later) and emergent being and belonging which is embodied and inhabited by us all. These necessitate forms of activism (Reynolds, 2012) which move away from *differences* to *similarities* in praxis. The power of privileging similarities draws us closer to the perpetual process of becoming. In this case, I am considering the self of the therapist, but more specifically, exploring the “before-the-fact” (Shotter, 2014, p. 531) of multiple becomings rather than the “after-the-fact” (Ibid, 2014, p. 526) difference in which the colonial grasp of “I” and “other” takes hold. To explore this in

this paper, I must first trace my personal and professional identity through the legacy of colonialism. This paper contains excerpts from my doctoral research with my co-researchers. There are pseudonyms used. The words have been preserved in their original form, as they were spoken and recorded.



Nick Cave, Chain Reaction, In the Black Fantastic at Hayward Gallery, 2022.



I'm going to take a moment here to address equity of the construction of categories, hierarchies, and boundaries. Colonialism has formed, and reformed ~~race~~ for centuries. Wynter's expansive body of work examines the origins of what it is to be human and traces the origins of the concept of ~~race~~ back to 1492 in the fifteenth century.

[...] the large-scale accumulation of unpaid land, unpaid labor, and overall wealth expropriated by Western Europe from non-European peoples, which was to lay the basis of its global expansion from the fifteenth century onwards [...]. It would be the Black population group whose discursive and institutional degradation as the new [...] ultra marker of barely human status [...].

(Wynter, 2003, pp. 291-309).

As a result of colonialism, cartographies were created for the benefit of those considered *equal to*, and not for the benefit of those categorised as *less than* who were the marginalised and colonised Others. Activists inside colonialism have fought for those Othered to be heard and to bring about social justice because difference does not pose a blockade if not premised on ~~race~~ as signified and signifier. In addition, within decoloniality activism would not constitute a patchwork of voices for social justice. However, activism continues to be a vital fight within colonialism and a mechanism leading to decolonialism. Even today, the defined *equal to*, cannot see the trials and tribulations and are ignorantly blind to exploited peoples' double-consciousness (Du Bois, [1903]2019).

Talking between my many selves

Decolonising language

European philosophers and scholars have been arguing over the meaning of the capitalised "O" in Other for at least three hundred years. I use 'o' in others to denote others in a general sense and capital 'O' in Others to denote colonised Others whose humanity is questioned by imperialism, colonialism, and science.

I write *hxstory* with "x" instead of "l" to denote *hxstory* as non-gendered and to account for all *hxstories*, relationships and inanimacy. The original meaning of the word *hxstory* is non-gender specific and tends towards narrative wisdom. In spite of this, *hxstory* is primarily told through gendered and colonial singularities.

I denote Truth with a capital (T) to distinguish Truth of experience within multiple spaces as felt and lived, and *truth* with an italicised (t) to represent political *truth*.

I write on Black paper using a white font, not as a reverse binary, but as a means and way of validating my presence in writing and the performativity of my Black skin in text, a nod to "an otherwise" (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018, p. 3) and my embodied "absent presence" (Derrida, 2016, p. xi).



This mark denotes pauses in writing, thinking and reflective moments when I find it difficult, I feel vulnerable or stuck.

Joanne: How do I begin a paper on colonialist language and creating a new language when the colonial *hxstory* told excludes the *hxstory* of marginalised communities? Do I need to perform? Conform? Re-form?

How do I denote my pauses, stuckness in writing moments that need performing to show and tell the stories within stories?

I have to begin somewhere, but where do I begin?

I put pen to paper, commit my fingers to my keyboard and type on Black paper using white text. I am already vulnerable.

- Liz¹:** Why?
- Joanne:** Because I battle innate “deutero-learning” (Bateson and Bateson, 1972/2008), portraying secrets of the *soul* that have kept my peoples safe.
- Liz:** What is meant by deutero-learning?
- Joanne:** Learning within learning, like when you learn a language you learn something about the culture as well. hooks (2006) gives an example...

[...] listening to adult conversations, was one of the primary ways many black folks learned about race politics [...] watching those few black folks who appeared on television screens, we talked about their performance, but we always talked about the way white folks were treating them.

(hooks, 2006, p. 3)

Race's meaning and affect

hooks (2006) speaks from an American context, but the experience was the same for my family growing up in the UK, where fewer shows featured Black actors, and when they did, they were encouraged to depict caricatures of blackness for white audiences. I was keen to see Black people on television who represented everyday existence, exceptional talent and hope. I worry they may have had to give up their *soul* to achieve their goal. Even though I was unsure what this meant as a young child, something existed unlanguage within me that was real, and an important part of the deutero-learning of my youth.

Therefore, to write *out of* and *into* cultures, I expose my *soul*, my inhabited secret places. I allow the fear to surface and surround me in what feels like the uncontained vulnerability of writing *into* the secret safety of blackness passed down through the twelve generations of slavery. Yet, I find this is the time to push on, break and write through, to stand firm in humanness, a decolonised humanness in which I have a voice, experiences, and ideas, hope and talent, and no one can deny me this, even if I risk death, denial, academic or professional critique and betrayal (physical and psychological) in my endeavour.

[...] extreme surveillance and silencing of slaves demand that we give attention to messages that are not spelled out [...] (Conquergood, 2016, p. 49 commenting on Gilroy, 1994, p. 77)

(Conquergood, 2016, p. 49).

Silence does not mean the absence of communication. Sounds, bodily movements, felt and sensed changes in surroundings all language some—thing. For colonised Others, the silence is familiar, it was and remains vital to survival. I learned as a child how to listen both inside and outside the home (around folks like me and those not). What I write is part of colonised Others secret safety, the risk of denial and betrayal, risks to my body - physical and mental.

The decision to become a family therapist was a natural progression for me, and with all learning, I

1 Liz (Elizabeth) is one of my middle names. Since the beginning of my doctoral studies, I have used it. Joanne is a writer and author, whereas Liz denotes and shows my internal self and relationship with different aspects of myself.

brought my whole self to the training process. It is common for us all to habituate multiple cultures. Systemic training is based on the social construction of language and its co-creation by different groups, and to explore purposes of narratives within and across the agenda and power relations of different socio-economic-cultural systems. My experience of inhabited silence can be described as a language, a way of knowing, based on feelings, body movements and noticing changes in the atmosphere. The feelings are varied but are understood, more than a gut reaction to danger, although danger is always present. It is not a language that can be taught, but rather one that must be felt and inhabited. As a result of the fact that it was never intended to be linguistically expressed, meanings and feelings have a collective understanding among those who are familiar with it.

"But we were never trained for the nuances in between [...] And that only came from me spending time actually listening to experiences from those who've been in the field longer, and intentionally listening to people from minoritised communities. Because what I found was the listening that we were doing in the training was the colonised kind of listening, because this is a white profession. But when we are thinking about listening to our people, you know, it's different, because that silence is, is, is talking."

Africa, co-researcher (storytelling cultural reflective group, 2022-23)

Africa implies that cultures and languages other than those that perform and reinforce white Eurocentrism have neither been acknowledged nor welcomed. Systemic praxis has contributed to Eurocentric dominant ideas about listening and hearing being viewed as the only valid method of listening. It reinforces negative stereotypes about our cultures, our bodies, and alternative ways of listening, hearing, and understanding silence when Others are required to conform to colonial practices.

Not so long ago I was standing in an airport retrieving a bag from the conveyor belt. I bumped into a young black man and said, "My bad." Without even looking up he said, "You straight". And in that exchange there was so much of the private rapport that can only exist between two particular strangers of this tribe that we call black [...] I knew that nothing so essentialist as race stood between us.

(Coates, 2015, pp. 119-120)

Before I discuss "cultural foregrounding" and "intra-face", it is vital I first expand on the importance of language using some of Derrida's concepts. Derrida's concept of "trace" comes before and opens up texts to the "absent presence" within texts which refers to the meanings inhabited by societal discourses, co-opted and used as if no "absent presence" is possible or present (Derrida, 2016, p. xi). The "absent presence" accounts for textual meanings of words, that are contextualised through discourse. "Trace" is closely allied with "différance", the always incomplete meaning "in the play of language" (Jackson and Mazzei, 2012, p. 18), and "what is permitted in the articulation" of language and meaning (Derrida, 2016, p. xi). In writing and acknowledging the "trace" and "différance" Derrida shows this in text - in this case, [~~race~~ race] as both signified and signifier, first written with a line through it followed by the same word without a line to indicate both the necessity and illegitimacy or inadequacy of the word. Barad (2007, p. 147) states "meaning is not a property of individual words or groups of words but an ongoing performance of the world in its differential dance of intelligibility and unintelligibility". My writing not only confronts what ~~race~~ has come to connote but ought to denote, that we are all human and (should be) equal to each other. The word ~~race~~ is only written once as if it

was already erased. It is an act of resistance, an act of hope.

Colonialism, has meant I have only learned English. I do not know my ancestors' languages. I acquired knowledge about racism, acceptance, and unfairness because of my skin during the deuterio-learning of my youth. Derrida (2016) provides a critique of how we read and the ways in which meaning is constructed through colonised and societal discourses. For people who are considered or consider themselves *equal to*, this is implicit. However, for those who are labelled *less than* by colonialism there remains a high level of incongruence in belonging and living within multiple cultural identities. Du Bois' words were written over a century ago, but they remain relevant in modern times and doubtless into the present future.

It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness, - an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.

(Du Bois, [1903] 2019, p. 3)

Du Bois describes double-consciousness as the less than human, a constant questioning of oneself, a yearning for recognition that infiltrates qualifications, education, status, opportunity, wealth, language, accents, gender, sexuality and poverty, but should not be necessary. It is obligatory for us to do so because we are Black. This yearning is doomed to remain unfulfilled due to what *racism* means.

Decolonialism and Decoloniality are necessary, long term global projects bridging geopolitics and geopolitical knowledges that question Western knowledges' epistemic and ontological hierarchy over those of Others (Césaire, Kelley and Pinkham, 2000; Dubois, ([1897]1970; Hall 2021; hooks, 2006; Mignolo, 2002; wa Thiong'o, 2011; Fanon, (2021); and Wynter, 1981). Decolonialism is not the binary opposite of colonialism. Instead, decolonialism seeks to show and inhabit knowledges and histories marginalised, erased and marked on people's bodies and lands - Others. My doctoral research is a decolonising project because I continue the legacy of writing into existence Black bodies and the bodies of Others (marginalised and colonised Others) alongside my systemic praxis. I use the word *existence* because I always have to search for Black authors, they are generally not listed on training courses, are more expensive and have to be searched out instead of being openly accessible. Mignolo (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018, pp. 100-101) makes a distinction between decoloniality and decolonisation, the former being the "proposition of thought, analysis, sensing, making, doing, feeling and being that is actional [...] continuing [...] the continuous work to plant and grow an otherwise". The latter, decolonialism, according to Mignolo, is the consequence of coloniality, when coloniality was forced to think about the politics of global economies, and not what colonisation had caused and meant for Others regarding land, education, rights, choice and dignity (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018, p. 112).

Decoloniality offers and creates a sense of belonging and validity turning my life's Dominant and Political stories into sand. Sand which still gets in-between my toes and is found in unexpected places. Colonialism is experienced differently and is dependent on how far each of us are, from the colonial ideal of white and male. Inherent in this ideal is *power*, language and voice entitlement in white-ness and male-ness. The further we are from the centre, single-axis problems become the "but for" (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 140) multi-axes barriers of individual, marginalised communities and groups.

Hidden within these multi-axes barriers are the stories of marginalised groups silenced through fear, of remaining unheard or fear of further marginalisation. We tell these stories within the political discourses of asylum, poverty, racism and discrimination where they take on distinct meaning and provoke particular actions. I would argue in systemic praxis we are silenced and Untold stories are hidden, just out of view, waiting to find an environment that can tolerate their telling. My systemic training did not include teachings on the principles of Indigenous Storytelling worldviews (Archibald et al., 2017; Chilisa, 2020; Kovach, 2010; Tuhiwai-Smith, 2012).

Despite focusing on Black bodies and colonialism's legacy, I do not negate the complex racialised hystories of the Jews, Arabs, Indians, Indigenous peoples, caste, religious communities and tribes, LGBTQI+ people, uniquely abled bodies, and all of those who have and continue to be viewed as *less than* against the European colonial ideal of white, male, able-bodied, “beautiful”, heteronormative, gender binaried etc. Race is both a signifier and signified and used as a signifier and code for culture, ethnicity, identity and nation. Hall (2021) problematises the terms associated with race and expands on its corresponding usage and meaning for marginalised groups in the UK and the similarities of experience in the USA, in the latter part of the twentieth century. In doing so, Hall (2021) moves to a sociohistorical concept of race and how under this trope marginalised communities (African, Asian, Afro-Caribbean, Sikhs, Muslims, Bangladeshi) found cultural unity within the political construct of race, coded as culture in their similarities contextualised by the term “Black”. The term “Black” was not wholly accepted by marginalised communities as Hall (2021) pointed out in his DuBois lectures where broader imperial constructs of race reinforced difference pushing against unity based on appearance. The signifier “Black” in some camps were seen as referring to African-Caribbean people whose “grosser physical differences of color, hair and bone” (Du Bois 1897; [1970]) reified the political construct of race in what it is to be human, and therefore, cartographies of belonging to the human race. Wilkerson, (2020) entangles the linguistic similarities of perceived differences at a global political level that creates possibilities for colonised Others to recognise similarities at a local level and the level of the body, language and emotions.

The word “Indigenous” has many meanings and connections with Other populations and marginalised communities across the globe, concerning their “struggles against invasion, political domination and oppression” (Chilisa, 2020, p. 10; Tuhiwai-Smith, 2012, pp. 6-7) in so-named “First” and “Third” worlds (Mohanty, 2003, p. 501). Nevertheless, the term “Indigenous” must be encouraged to carry more rich and diverse meaning. Tuhiwai Smith explains,

the world's indigenous populations belong to network of peoples [...] share experiences as peoples who have been subjected to colonization of their lands and cultures [...] by a colonizing society that has come to dominate and determine the shape and quality of their lives, even after it has formally pulled out.

(Tuhiwai Smith, 2012, p. 7)

As colonised peoples (*equal to* and *less than*), it can be challenging to acknowledge that we are all colonised to varying degrees and account for the servitude this entails. Nevertheless, the question remains, at what cost and to whom? The hystory of Black British is colonial, even the hystory telling is colonised by what can and cannot be shown or told. (There is controversy surrounding the term Black British. Because I sometimes refer to myself as Black British, I use it loosely here.) Yet our hystory dominates everything we experience: our health, employment, education, and especially the

marginalised Other's epistemologies and ontologies desecrated by colonialism. As long as colonialism exists, Others will continue to survive, sometimes as human beings and sometimes not. My body recognises what was unlanguage and understood as a child, I am able to assert this Truth (which is open to challenge within colonialism that requires unequivocal evidence). Even though I continue to carry the memories and legacy of slavery in my blood, renewed generationally (through the experiences of my daughter and her peer group and various genres of music) — we are still singing the same song (Listen, Hear, Understand beyond your experience). Entangled in the hystorical threads (errors and omissions of the past and present) bind the subaltern's life. Other, tangible and visible to Other, and intangible and invisible within the colonial institutions (law, education, and medicine) inherited from colonialism and more recently the allied professionals such as therapists, social workers and advocacy agencies.

In other words, to be recognized as speaking “the truth” is to rely on certain distinctions, boundaries and concepts that are assumed to be self-evident, a self-evidence that transforms social forms into worlds, as it becomes evidence of truth in those worlds. Hence truth is also dependent on how one inhabits particular social forms, which are themselves effects of norms, conventions, and values. Such forms might be institutions such as the family, schools or nations, or they may involve disciplines, such as philosophy, anthropology or science.

(Ahmed, 2003, p. 378)



During this moment, I pause to reflect on the complexity within and outside of colonialism. Ahmed, (2003) discerns how truth means some—thing and nothing to others. Inhabited Truths of the marginalised are Truths. Consequently, they become qualitative, subjective readings, the knowledge that builds and maintains different physical and mental existence, revealing different Truths and creating pictures and experiences that challenge dominant political realities. Against the colonising structures of Western societies, Truth proves problematic when set against political truth. Truth becomes entangled with truths. We create a language with new meanings and re-create forgotten and erased Truths. Mohanty (2003, pp. 508-509) invites curiosity about “the micro-politics of everyday life as well as the larger processes that recolonize the culture and identity of people across the globe”. Dillard (2000, p. 662) introduced “endarkened feminist epistemology” to reveal political discourses that construct cultural language, and Wynter (referenced by Mignolo, in Wynter and McKittrick, 2015, p. 119) questions a “history-for” to challenge dominant Western discourses about the idea of *man*, and therefore, what it is to be human. These and other scholars write and narrate *with* culture, injustice, labour, living, geopolitics, language, colonialism, racism, ethnicity, and so much more. They write in ways that chronicle living stories of the past, present and future, of erasures and omissions (Pillow, 2019).

I also reflect on the effort required to become whole within the multiple cultural identities that ~~are~~ prohibits. This paper examines how colonised languages enfold coloniality. Additionally, I have examined how systemic teaching contributes to this enfolding within colonialism. I have used some early excerpts of research material gathered during my study's material collection phase. It is effortful, but necessary. I share its complexity to show the decolonising process we must all encounter to delimit the power of colonialism. Foucault (2002 [1969]) considers how knowledge and hystory are “written” and “told” - and I would add, “re-told” across hystory. He makes an essential contribution to understanding epistemology across time and space regarding discourses, for example, medicine

and law, which he refers to as “sites” of power and knowledge. He examined the origins of knowledge, power and discourse, the tenuous links formed in society as justification for decision-making rules, and the professions (doctors and courts) entrusted to make these recommendations - cementing a Westernised sense of objectivity and certainty.

Thus any attempt to contest racism or to diminish its human and social effects depends on understanding how exactly this system of meaning works, and why the classificatory order it represents has so powerful a hold on the human imagination.

(Hall, 2021, p. 33)

It is my intention to disrupt systemic praxis and bring forth language that evolves and honours our multiple selves as cultural beings. If cultural foregrounding is loosely thought of as a bridge, then intra-face can be held in mind as a gravitational anchor. Intra-face does not dictate how peoples are anchored but assumes the rhizomatic possibilities of anchoring. Interface means meeting and interacting, for example, organisational departments working together, telephone calls between people. It carries a level of implicit objectivity. In therapeutic work we are required to do more than interact, all contacts with patients, clients, groups, organisations are purposeful to promote relationality— promote warmth, care and understanding. A word of caution, the interactions of systemic practitioners is *partial* intra-face, but within the fabric of colonialism. As a result of ~~face's~~ rigidity and singular meaning, I argue that we are less able to observe ourselves as cultural beings inhabiting multiple cultural identities with nuanced *différance*.



How I define culture and why is this vital?

Culture as a verb means culture as moving, in action, active, a state of being, a state of flux. Richardson and Reynolds (2012, p. 12) use the phrase “blood memory— a deeply embodied sense of belonging, of being ‘home’”. I see people on the street that look like family”, encapsulating culture as a verb. Culture, as a noun, grounds peoples in the *hystor*icity of tradition, survival, love, determination and living, and the simultaneous acceptance and rejection within colonialism. Therefore, I state that gone are the partially accepted glimpses of Others (marginalised groups) in texts by dominant groups as recognition and acceptance. Gone is the acknowledgement of ~~face~~ as a signifier and promoter of difference. Gone is the tolerance and appetite for foregrounding the positions of thinking about others without first thinking *with* Others. The embeddedness of colonialist cartographies of hierarchy, power and privilege is dead. They do not exist, cannot be justified, and maintain, enlarge and promote mythical differences. That reinforces conflictual dichotomies dominating human and non-human relationships. New foundations which embrace “rhizomatic” growth (Deleuze and Guattari, 2013) are needed to embrace change as it emerges, setting aside rules of objectivity and validation about knowing and being. Colonialism does not validate humanness.

My draft definition of culture and not ~~face~~, culminates and supersedes the following in and of itself:

I draw on similarities between peoples, relationships between and within the land, water, objects, a deep sense of connection to places, values and traditions, experiences such as parenthood, love, despair, hate and grief and the bridging of food stories and the use of spices across the globe. Memories of memories, stories and the *hystorical* content, context and meaning of stories across time and space. The identity connections and

disconnections, the labour and experience embodied both inside and outside time. Familiarity of experiences and the becoming processes of these encounters are drawn repeatedly. Culture is the rich textures and layers of rhizomatic and ever-evolving cultures. It allows assimilation and dissimulation in rich entanglements of meaning born of sense. Culture delimits power because it does not aim to own power. Instead, it either accepts, resists or questions. Culture is home, continuously inhabited and inhabiting. I language this as cultural foregrounding and *intra-face*.

(Hipplewith, 2021)

I will review the above draft definition but I hypothesise it will only ever be a draft because it cannot become known or inhabit certainty. My definition above was shared with my co-researchers in the storytelling cultural reflective groups I hosted as part of my research. Some excerpts of their expressions follow in what culture could be and potentially is becoming are shared below.

“you know, me my relationship with my culture, it's always on, I go back to think you know, what is my culture, always ask that to my own self, you know, what is my culture and always come to myself, you know, the culture is who I am, just makes me who I am.”

Azad, co-researcher (storytelling cultural reflective group, 2022-23)

“and think about how, in my job in my professional therapist, family therapist, how a people doesn't consider her own culture and the connection and the connection between their culture with their problems with how they see the problems and their beliefs is in there. And their value because in the I didn't I didn't I have not thought about this intra-face aspect before that they are immersion in multiple cultures and how they can see in one culture or cultural only, and I didn't thought about us I think this is just open a new perspective for me and it's a new a new idea for me to think about the multiple cultures [...]”

Mary, co-researcher (storytelling cultural reflective group, 2022-23)

“[it] came to my mind that it's I don't know if it's similar, dominant discourse, dominant culture, that maybe it depends, depending on the context we live, we are in and the people that are around maybe we inhabit certain, we select some cultural context or some combination of corporate culture. And some people maybe carry some, some dominant culture even when they are in different contexts is that they, they're not relevant to present or to be with that dominant culture. And of course, the dominant culture of the context of the let's say, hospital or some other cultures that also influence the interaction of people being in let's say, in therapy or in training, the culture of the university, there are some other complexities that are aware. So, that came to my mind that is something like maybe there is something like a dominant culture coming from dominant discourse.”

John, co-researcher (storytelling cultural reflective group, 2022-23)

My role as a doctoral researcher is not to re-present or interpret the meaning of the contributions of my co-researchers. I was honoured by the richness, generosity and thoughtfulness of the way they related to what cultures re-present from the perspective of a researcher. I am culturally connected with Azad in that he places culture first, rhizomatically strengthening my cultural Self stories and my intentionality, as discussed earlier. The experience was liberating and reinforced the importance of each co-researcher's storytelling. It has led me to contemplate more about the visibility of cultural foregrounding. This is finding language in my doctoral journey, and in my praxis. I was inspired by John to think differently about dominant cultures that are used in different contexts. I also thought differently about the negativity of the colonised Other, who might dare to do the same, if they are brave enough. However, there is no dominance attached to the colonised Other and therefore, no power to influence the spaces dominant cultures inhabit. It is either/or, and never both/and. Mary widened my discernment of global / local and local / global cultural politics and how easy it can be to become oblivious to these differences.

The evolving critique of Cultural Foregrounding

I first looked at the tools taught during my systemic training: the Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM) heuristic, the LUUUTT model (Pearce and Pearce, 1998). The acronym LUUUTT stands for stories Lived; Unknown stories; Untold stories; Unheard stories; stories Told; and storyTelling; the LUUUTT model is popular in systemic praxis to help students understand dialogues and *power* in therapeutic encounters. However, other disciplines such as social care interpret the model as a mechanistic binary. For example, stories of trauma Lived (a child tells a story of abuse), and stories Told (parents tell stories of no abuse). The context of this binary can have lasting consequences for families where there is limited evidence to meet the legal threshold of "*the balance of probabilities*". Likewise, for adults living with mental disorders, the Dominant stories Told in medical records foreground the Storytelling of those with lived experiences.

My inquiry extends the coordinated management of meaning (CMM) heuristic, the LUUUTT model (Pearce and Pearce, 1998), to include Political stories; Popular stories, storied Places; Dominant stories; Untellable stories; Oral and Self stories. In doing so, I transform the LUUUTT model into the D-PPPOLUUUUTTS template. I use a template instead of a model because models become fixed. A template carries movement and flexibility. The LUUUTT model and the D-PPPOLUUUUTTS template inherently carry past, present and future stories and inhabit contextual spaces where particular stories might be shared or withheld.

Burnham and Roper-Hall (1993) and Burnham (2012) introduced the systemic field to the mnemonic Social Graces (SG). The Social Graces stand for Gender; Geography; ~~Race~~; Religion; Age; Ability; Appearance; Culture; Class; Caste; Education; Employment; Ethnicity; Spirituality; Sexuality; and Sexual orientation. I have renamed the mnemonic the Cultural Graces removing culture as a difference to realign culture as inherent to all people inhabiting cultures and place ~~race~~ under erasure. The Social Graces are incorporated into the Association of Family Therapy (AFT) Code of Ethics, General Principles (7) "Members should adopt a culturally-sensitive stance to all clients" (2023). AFT then list the Social Graces. Although I am not sure if this was their intent, as I have already discussed language and meaning, I believe that members like myself would read and understand general principle (7) in this manner. The concept of culture is not defined, which invalidates the meaning of the term 'sensitive'. It is, in my opinion, colonised language that reinforces Othering.

"Cultural foregrounding" and "*intra-face*" emerged for me as useful concepts *within* the rhizomatic entanglement of finding coherence, validating my speech and status as human in the process of the disintegrating dichotomy between self as colonised Other and self as human, Joanne. The sensation is similar to stepping out of a door in a stuffy room. This simple act evokes memories, smells, and embodied *différance* (an incomplete feeling of some-thing). A sense of space, freedom, the ability to expand the boundaries of what it means to feel included and to communicate feelings and senses - a shared moment, an open invitation. A fluidity that contains and opens up all matter, a space between becoming and showing becoming everywhere in life.

First and foremost, the language I have outlined above allows me to bring myself into the world of knowing and being. This validates my humanity and the humanity of Other peoples and marginalised groups. It emphasises the importance of visibility in and of itself. Cultural foregrounding is not static; it is an always becoming, merging and moving towards decoloniality and decolonisation. We are cultural beings with similarities that can bind and *différance* we can learn about and embrace, diminishing colonial differences as false barriers. Inhabiting cultures is a more authentic reflection of humanness than ~~face~~. Attending to culture as something inhabited allows peoples to think through features of identity at a local level (Who am I? How do I choose the world to see, feel, hear and intra-act with me?) Instead of on a global level, first entrapping us in colonial politics, where ~~face~~ frames our language, and interprets our interactions. Culture as a verb is also in motion, and so are we as cultural beings. It becomes embodied language(s) that allows me to encounter familiar and unfamiliar experiences from the perspective that we are more alike than different, and who I say I am is valid, unquestioned and acknowledged.

It is a position I am habitually not permitted to occupy as a right from birth. Instead, family contexts protected and taught me that the lifelong battle I would face and the society I was born into was both a bind and a promise. I have no memory of being a baby. I can only imagine this from watching my daughter grow and what and how I equipped her to fight and be secure in her skin. But memory connects me to infancy, and my tacit understanding of skin, embodied before language came into my mind and out of my mouth, but understood within the familiarity of silent embodied language(s).

And so if we, if we're working from an, a starting point of understanding what our cultural connections are, like, you've just said about what kind of food we like, or, you know, what's our spirituality or anything like that, if we go into every new relationship understanding that we don't, you know [...] and it's like, okay, that's what brings us together is that we have this professional relationship, and we were not appreciating all the different other aspects of each person. And, and so if we began the whole relationship, understanding that we have to start at that point, before we start any other kind of therapy [...].

Alex, co-researcher (storytelling cultural reflective group, 2022-23)

Cultural foregrounding can be viewed as a bridge, perhaps a language bridge, for seeing people beyond accent, skin, appearance, religion, age, gender, sexuality, or class barriers. In other words, we must move beyond the void of colonial roadblocks that emphasise difference, as defined by the political and societal construct of ~~face~~. It is critical to acknowledge, as Alex narrates, there are many identities among peoples, some of which are dissimilar. This enables something new to emerge in language and being when "*self*" is accepted and acknowledged as a cultural rather than a racial being.

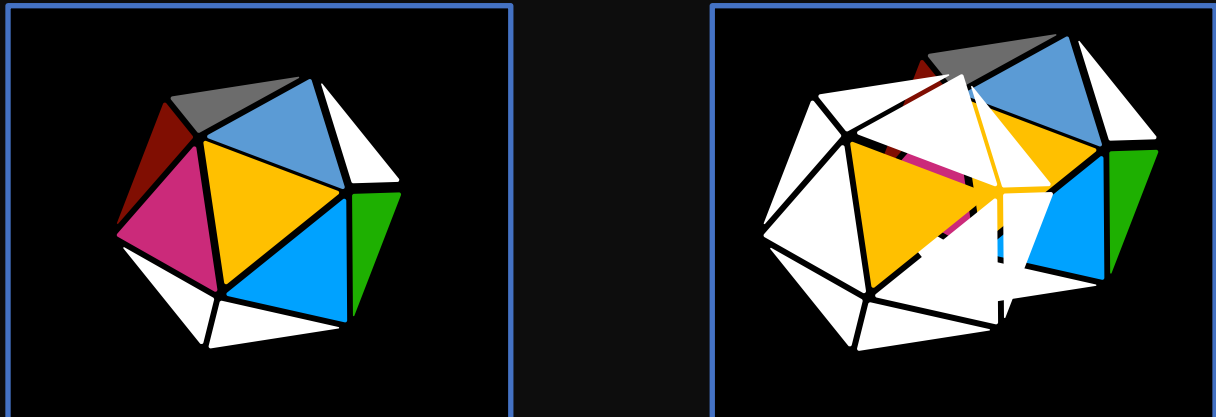
This is what happened in my Storytelling Cultural Reflective Groups as a part of my doctoral research study. Seven Storytelling Cultural Reflective Groups were arranged, monthly for six months, and the seventh, a one year follow up. Two groups ran concurrently, one cohort consisted of three clinicians some qualified therapist and some training (three co-researchers), and the second cohort consisted of qualified family therapists (two co-researchers). There is not space in this paper to discuss why contributors were defined as co-researchers, except to assert the methodological foundations of my study, which are guided by the principles of Indigenous Storytelling, (Archibald et al., 2017; Chilisa, 2020; Kovach, 2010; Tuhiwai-Smith, 2012). Chilisa (2020, pp. 10-11) describes how the researcher's location facilitates the position of her co-researchers in the research process, whilst Laenui (2010) looks at the process of decolonisation (in Chilisa, 2020, pp. 12-13).

In the first two Storytelling Cultural Reflective Groups, I presented my draft definition of Culture, Cultural foregrounding, and Intra-face to my co-researchers. As a result of the concepts, language and feeling connections were generated that extended relationality beyond colonial ~~rae~~ constructs. In the period between May 2022- May 2023 (the duration of my material collection), colonial language was disentangled and entangled within decoloniality, and power was questioned both within and without oneself. The theme of belonging, to whom and what, and in what contexts and locations, emerged. Furthermore, we explored the issue of authorship and ownership of our stories. We were able to establish storied bridges between us as our similarities and memories were intertwined in a way we had never anticipated. Culture is reaffirmed as a verb, and cultures are continually borne.

The evolving critique and use of intra-face

Barad (2007, p. 179) defines intra-action as “causal enactments through which matter-in-the-process-of-becoming is iteratively enfolded into its ongoing differential materialization”. “Intra” means between or within incorporating sensing, experience, across time and space. The therapist steps in-between and into the conversation and utterances by holding a social justice ethic and embracing the similarity of “cultural foregrounding” rather than difference as a starting point, by acknowledging the inherent *power* of the therapists’ position, including the environment, clinic, office, home or online. “Intra-face” is where systems engage in the process of engaging *within*, engaging from moment to moment “within and between”. As different from “interface”, which is the point of interaction, “intra-face” illustrates the power differential of the therapist and client. “Intra-face” is how this “in-the-process-of-becoming” is embodied in praxis within therapeutic moments, that enable therapist and client to validate and anchor these iterative and rhizomatic processes, which somehow transcend the moment and influence both client and therapist, trainee and teacher, supervisor and supervisees. “Intra-face” as a rhizomatic anchor ceaselessly anchors in the moment-by-moment stuff that goes-on-in-between. Intra-face has a sensing connected thingy-ness of both similarity and familiarity across time, that moves me to connections beyond the simplicity of interaction. I argue that this is impossible within first-order epistemologies because it limits recursive and discursive reflexivity and language availability through which these sensed and familiar moments can be articulated.

Figure 1



The image of the left polygon in Figure 1, represents a person carrying multiple cultural identities, including those who consider themselves implicitly *equal to*. However, where this is not explicitly acknowledged, because colonialism has not caused the *equal to*, to question themselves in the multiple spaces they inhabit, colonialism's certainty prevails. In the colonised Others - *less than* - everything they do, act, move, and go about is under constant surveillance. Thus, colonised Others are familiar with Crenshaw (1989)'s "but for" barriers. In other words, warmth, understanding and care in the context of intra-face carries more meaning (stories, memories, hxstory), and allows the implicit knowledge of those with *less than* status to be alert to what warmth, understanding and care means in language both verbal and otherwise.

An aesthetic representation in the right-hand polygon, shows how multiple cultural identities of the *less than* are shaped, masked, and wedged into colonial conformity in the process of becoming "self of the therapist" (Aponte et al., 2009, p. 396) which interrupts and alienates the cultural self of the therapist to emerge. The mainly white sphere at the front has several implications:

- There is no disruption of the implicit certainty of colonialism for those who are *equal to*.
- There are multifold disruptions of the implicit certainty of colonialism for those who are *less than*
- Rather than addressing trainees' cultural identities, systemic training maintains race as a fixed and dominant certainty.
- Silence and difference are continually perceived as Othering, reinforcing the powerlessness of those who are *less than*. Furthermore, it omits Other ways of expressing feelings, expressing experiences, and sharing knowledge.

"where patient and professional sees each other how they see each other, you know, there is there are other contexts how we see other people is mainly dominantly connected to the, to the power element, you know, there is either class, either colour of the people, or, you know, gender, and religion, you know, these, these elements are actually change the whole story, it just, it does, it affects, you know, not maybe hugely, but there is some, you know, you will find definitely how power is linked to those differences sometimes and, and

it shapes the way that we, you know, we operate the way that we live, basically, and sometimes I wish that I wasn't the clinician sitting in that chair. So, that young person could tell me really what the problem is, because they're not telling me just because I am, you know, a clinician who is coming from that service. And somebody who was not actually seen, you know, they don't even look at my face, because I am, you know, a profession that they don't trust. But I, you know, I can only get through this, if they know me who I am, you know, they accept me for who I am, which is my culture, you know, and the cultural elements, it just makes who I am, which is, you know, someone who's very compassionate, someone who's very caring, someone who's very respectful etc."

Azad, co-researcher (storytelling cultural reflective group, 2022-23)

In intra-face, the emphasis is on intentionality outside the confines of colonialism, as well as connection, respect, and responsibility within meaningful communication that demonstrates, acknowledges, and is responsive to cultural identities of self and others. It is our responsibility to become aware of how Others might perceive the world of colonialism, which calls for self-reflection as well as relational cultural reflexivity. It is more than having a Black, Asian, Jew, Arab, or LGBTQ+ trainee or lecturer who acts as a conduit for all the differences in the world, or reading a chapter of a book written by someone of African descent. Representation is not the purpose of decolonisation. By harnessing, respecting, and taking responsibility for showing beyond appearance or accent, intra-face sits inside of dialogue from the outside. "Intra-face" as intimacy contains visible and invisible cues and anchors that reach beyond dialogue. To affect, expression, sensing, and familiarity, which may be seeds and shoots or something else entirely - showing self in the present, the past, and the future. We often do not remember dialogue; we remember the feelings and emotions created, marginalised, dismissed, and unheard. It is the some—thing that comes "before-the-fact" (Shotter, 2014, p. 531). It is, therefore, the work of decolonisation to recognise and redress the nature of the colonised Other (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018, p. 112).

Despite Azad's cultural primacy over his professional context, he aims to make this authentic within his professional role. He imbues the colonial fence that inhibits the patient from trusting him due to his professional context, and desires to illustrate his multiple cultural identities within both his professional and personal contexts. In systemic praxis, this is the process of cultural foregrounding and intra-face.

The importance of praxis

Praxis is a contested term. Marx's dialectic of the "totalising process, [...] the ontology of humanity" (Marx, 1843, quoted in Kilminster, 2016, p. 9) includes human agency, experience and class. As an ongoing sense of equality between men (people, Others, inanimate materials) in an ongoing critique of Other and Other, always active, always moving, always entangled rhizomatically. He employed praxis to relate philosophy, theory, and practice and acknowledge "human practical sensed activity" (Kilminster, 2016, p. 16). This is to say, the labour and paradoxes of [hu]man throughout hxstory are a part of hxstory, practical, inclusive hxstory of [hu]man. The inclusion of subjectivity in philosophical, theoretical geopolitical, and geopolitical knowledges steered towards decolonisation discourses and decolonising practices.

Arguably, Marx's position is an ethical post-positivist site of disruption which takes account of colonial certainties within wider societal decolonising projects. To achieve sustainability in systemic praxis, colonial certainties must be decolonised. Systemic teaching, training, and supervision (praxis) must recognise, account for, and take responsibility for Other epistemologies and ontologies. Cultural self and cultural relational reflexivity must be included in critiques of training material, language and meaning making between patient-therapist, training student and lecturer/ supervisor and among peers. Subjective experiences should be validated and encouraged as integral to training, continuing professional development, ethics and beyond. In addition, the labour of marginalised Others should be recognised and embedded into a "before-the-fact" way of thinking (Shotter, 2014, p. 531).

The point of challenging traditional epistemologies is not merely to welcome females, slaves, children, animals and other dispossessed Others [...] into the role of knowers but to better account for the ontology of knowing.

(Barad, 2007, p. 378)

As a beginning, I draw a line, not an end, for this paper, since for me it encapsulates some of the "before-the-fact" (Shotter, 2014, p. 531) living and being that only offers a glimpse of what can occur in "an otherwise" (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018, p. 3).

The politics of skin is complicated and masks the complexity of cultural identities because it does not make sense to Others like me, and it is hard to make sense out of political perversity. Race is power and power-full, and within colonialism, it is inconceivable to escape its clutch. So I return to the question I asked at the beginning moving on from where do I begin? To performing, conforming or re-forming? If I perform, who is my audience? If I conform, I am staying with the familiar. Despite the fact that re-forming is the only option left, it comes with risks, for when marginalised bodies rise up as humans, the politics of our skin start to show. How does re-forming differ from colonialism? Decoloniality is, for me, what re-forming means; re-forming must involve decolonisation of praxis and language. Embracing uncertainty without judgement is possible with decoloniality. In this way, I can understand the conflicting dialogues surrounding my being and body.

Other, a little Black girl, born, has to learn the politic of her skin, learn that it makes no sense, but justified without meaning or rationale, and this is the learning and the sense she should make.

(Hipplewith, 2021)

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Citation

Hipplewith, Joanne (2023). Disrupting colonialist language to find knowing in praxis. Cultural Foregrounding and Intra-face. *Murmurations: Journal of Transformative Systemic Practice*, 6(2), 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.28963/6.2.1>