



Kitchen Table Pedagogy: A Three-way Conversation on Animating Knowing and Becoming for Health Justice

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ABSTRACT *The three of us (be)come together, yes on Zoom calls and in Google docs, and in a way that re-imagines the sitting together at a well-worn kitchen table to animate our current shared preoccupations. The table has seen many conversations before us, so it's well-worn by feminist scholars who were also troubled, yearning, and adamant about leaving their marks. We have come to, become at, this type of table for centuries, sitting together preparing food, folding laundry, and washing up, all while also reckoning that our stories matter and can make a difference. In a context that is both practical and intellectual – centring fat liberation in public health nutrition – how do we remain good scholarly support to one another in and through challenging times?*

Times of dissent.

Times of tedium.

This chapter reveals the stories we need most now as we grapple with our places in the neoliberal university and public health pedagogy, specifically as a critique of policies that we read as non-liberatory. We grapple with how our complicity within these spaces might be considered from a place of mutual support and a shared commitment to unlearning and unsettling colonial ways of knowing, especially as we contemplate the problematics of public health imperatives regarding “intuitive eating” and health behaviour change. And we ask what this means for scholarship that is accountable to liberation, that is, personal survival and collective healing and learning.

KEYWORDS decolonial pedagogy; critical fat studies; academic activism; scholarly resistance; feminist storytelling; intuitive eating

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Introduction

We are three privileged white-bodied poets and scholars, one very fat, one fat, one thin. Two of us trained as dietitians, one as a sociologist. One ex-dietitian is now a tenured professor in a Sociology department. We belong to groups committed to countering dominance where knowledge-creation norms nevertheless capitulate to professional and ethical codes designed to protect and perpetuate elite privilege, aka the ideology of whiteness. But how to step out of our conditioning? Bodies are under fire differently and good scholarship must respond to this: can we be practical and purposeful in crisis times without being anti-intellectual? Yes, if we pay attention to praxis as analysis, action, affect, and agenda. Is our agenda to defend what is, the beliefs we staked our reputation and livelihood to, or to be curious about what could grow through the cracks? How far do grief and grievance, habituated survival skills, and a comparative lack of practice with praxis shape our actions and other's responses? How can we allow for an agentic, grieving world within the coercive presumption of liberal humanism?

These vignettes and commentaries illustrate some of what constitutes being a good scholar; stories that arise when we consider how to resist the neoliberal and the colonial, which are otherwise known as “business as usual.” We tell these stories as a sequence of individual speakers (we use our initials to indicate single authorship) and at times, like now (and the conclusion), also invoke an authorial “we” because it feels a better fit than the scholarly stylistic convention. The choice draws attention to the way hegemonic practices restrain choice by normalising a particular politics of knowledge creation such that alternative choices emerging from other politics are more prone to provoking a visceral unease that renders them lesser, Other, requiring authors to explain or justify their departure. Difference can of course also be received otherwise, with curiosity, gratitude, and engaged with as an invitation to experiment with finding more ways to expose and expansively disturb norms. We write in this way because:

Storytelling flies in the face of a Western, colonized mindset that says we must get the work done now or never. When we slow down and engage in the work of storytelling and story sharing, something sacred happens every single time. We are more fully prepared for wherever our own journeys take us, and along the way we are considerate of one another, holding kinship at the forefront of our minds and hearts. (Curtice, 2023, pp. 16-17)

In her collection *Midnight Salvage*, Adrienne Rich (1999, p. 64) reminds us of “that asthmatic young man - Che Guevara” who said, “a revolution starts with the single word - Love.” I (LA) carried this touchstone as it sunk in that dietetics didn't expect us to feel. I was taught models for public health that

eclipsed the affective and metabolic realities of violence. Lovelessness in how I was trained to meet fat people to ignore fat knowledge and fat pain in framings that cannot imagine fat joy, that imagine and organise around a future without fat people. Lovelessness in upholding the chicanery of health behaviour change, an act of Orwellian anti-intellectualism that reifies the individualism that mobilises racist, classist, ableist blame and shame and distracts from social change. Lovelessness in how we fashion students into a professional identity that rewards obedience to colonial values. As Rich (2016) also says, “I had no special training and my own training was against me” (p. 348).

But how to think dietetics differently? Surely the fact that none of my UK colleagues seemed similarly bothered by nonsensical models or the violence of the norms that boxed us in didn’t extrapolate to my being alone with these misgivings? I googled “feminist” and “dietitian” and my one hit was Canadian dietitian Jacqui Gingras.

Presence is resistance... (Curtice, 2023, p. 42)

At the time of Lucy’s search, I (JG) was a registered dietitian working on my doctorate. Shortly after finishing my doctorate, I accepted a position at a Toronto university where I attempted to “think dietetics differently.” Things did not proceed as I had expected and eventually, I was forced to leave nutrition, but found a new academic home in the Department of Sociology. And, as Curtice (2023) appeals, “refusing to be placed in a [disciplinary] box someone else creates for us is not to remain elusive but to simply acknowledge that who we are is not simple – it is an act of decolonization” (p. 32). Moving from nutrition to sociology, resigning as a dietitian, leaving the profession in which I had been trained, was an act of resistance since I was still present in the academy. Moving through that trauma and re-building the world led me to grapple with the question “How can we help each other be good scholars?” I identify as a scholar who is preoccupied with social justice in the academy so the question of “good” refers to doing social good or doing social justice – being just. So, I ask myself, as an act of resistance and renewal to being political in the academy: What does it mean to be a “good scholar?” Am I such a scholar? I ask these questions in response to a writing prompt that emerged between us in the early stages of writing this article. Like Sara Ahmed (2018), I seek to “leave scratches on the wall as testimony. We were here and we did not get used to it” (pp. 97-98). I contemplated how a good scholar would resist such complicity and these vignettes emerged:

The university custodians and maintenance workers at Toronto Metropolitan University went on strike today (April 18, 2023). The employer has been skimming from these workers’ pensions such that an eight-million-dollar fund has been created to which only the employer has access. I bake cookies to take

to striking workers, and I join the picket line. It is springtime in Toronto and bitterly cold. I encourage colleagues to cancel exams or invite students not to cross picket lines to take those exams. Sympathetic colleagues debate meaningful ways to engage and disrupt. We explore creative ways to use university academic consideration policies to support students through this disruption. I perform “ally” by singing “Solidarity Forever” and yelling “shame!” when the speakers at a solidarity rally describe the unconscionable actions of the employer. I am acutely aware that what I do is not enough, perceived as acts of “hobby resistance” (Curtice, 2023, p. 17) instead of something real, something material, something that will actually lead to liberatory change and social justice.

Am I a good scholar?

Two women were sexually assaulted on campus in the past year (that we know about). An intrepid colleague in Philosophy invites students, staff, and faculty to come together to talk about how to make our campus safer for women. We talk about what the university has done to keep us safe beyond hiring more security guards. Several at this meeting speak of the increased harassment experienced by racialized people from those same security guards patrolling the buildings where the assaults occurred. Several of my white colleagues state that such an inconvenience is worthwhile as long as not one more woman is assaulted. I inwardly cringe and raise my hand imploring us not to perpetuate a hierarchy of human value. This conversation could be happening in a cafe, on the bus, at a friend’s house. The killjoy feminist serves up kitchen table pedagogy anywhere.

Am I a good scholar?

I am going to teach a new course next term called Sociology of Bodies and I am already starting to think about the reading list and potential invited guests. I wonder what might push the boundaries of committing a sociology of bodies. Readings from trans, queer, anarchist, Palestinian, Indigenous, refugee authors about their bodies under attack and expressing joy come to mind and I think about whether that will get me in trouble. Specifically, I wonder how my Zionist Jewish colleague will react to me inviting the Palestinian activist to share her poetry. It will take a bit of self-cajoling to move my privileged, white, fat self out of my comfort zone to do justice to a course called Sociology of Bodies. Yet, I am seized by privilege, and I feel guilt at even worrying about any trouble I could encounter.

Am I a good scholar?

Reckoning. And, if I am a good scholar, what support do I need to tell these stories? Taking this wager that I am indeed a good scholar and that I am surrounded by an unrepentant community of good scholars, what support do we collectively need? What might we find in coming to the kitchen table in search of connection?

One of the crucial supports is the space to remain curious. Curtice (2023) describes what happens as curiosity gives way to security, which is “baked into

the *status quo* of society, of capitalism, which in reality is anything but secure for many of us” (p. 25). Repair. And this is hard work, this diversity work. Relentlessly exhausting. Ahmed (2014) describes diversity work as that which:

Requires world making; finding spaces to withdraw into, places that are less hard to inhabit. Fragments, those pieces that have shattered: we find each other. We find those who have been shattered; who recognise what we are up against. What and even who. This is hard, but who too. (p. 37)

What else is needed for these rambunctious altercations with the colonial, the impenetrable, the vile and violent?

These vignettes show the everyday-ness of injustice, the micro-experiences that, while often unremarkable, actually index the frequency of injustice all around us. These small little complaints reveal the colonial, and for the most part are so taken for granted that they really help to reinforce the status quo unless we delve into the question, unless we get still and quiet, and respond to that seemingly simple, mundane question, “What is a good scholar?”

Now is the time for an unrepentant resistance. It is the nodding head of a co-conspirator when one takes the audacious move to stand and speak. It is an explosion of micro-encouragements. It is the overwhelming feeling we are not alone as we scratch our testimonies even though we are perennially subject to the alienating force of neoliberal tactics. Is there some such pledge we can make that when one stands up in the face of dominant exclusion, there is something as quiet as a heartbeat, as solid as a steel, as tenacious as a whisper that tangles our invisible desires into a bolus of solidarity that chokes to a stop what we know as business as usual? Reworlding.

Kitchen Table Pedagogy – Connected Eating

It’s an audacious, desperate, move to try and build a theory from the raw material of story and affect as you choke on the dust of the old practice you are still dismantling. Back when reworlding meant I (LA) had just rejected the pole star of dietetic practice, “weight management” (sic), – and without knowledge of any alternative – the iterative play of inquiry, affect, and client/learner’s story was all I had to go on. Over time, research, reading, and dialogue enriched praxis, and I developed a philosophy and framework of practice called Well Now.

Well Now . . . do you hear hesitation, an injunction, something else?

In Well Now I hope to demonstrate and facilitate a way of relating to food, knowledge, flourishing through conversations that invite loosening the grip of belief systems behind disconnect, superiority, judgement that scaffold oppression and avoidable suffering.

I use a Freirean, interactive, story-based teaching style that I call “kitchen table pedagogy” (Aphramor, 2024). One Well Now teaching activity explores

eating theories designed to support people having a complicated time with food. My nutrition and dietetic professional participants have always advocated intuitive or mindful eating (henceforth intuitive eating for brevity), with varying degrees of conceptual clarity.

To give some context, the go-to text that expounds the theory of intuitive eating is Evelyn Tribole and Elyse Reich's (1995) *Intuitive Eating*. First published in 1995, and now on a fourth edition, the approach initially focused on teaching techniques around interoception (paying attention to internal body states) and over time has developed into an explicitly anti-diet (often used synonymously in community with non-diet) approach. A key point has always been that it offers a favourable alternative to the rules-based rigidity of cognitive restraint around which dieting is built. Cognitive restraint combines willpower and behavioural strategies to shape eating to meet public health goals and is a mainstay of dietetic education. In contrast, whether students will be introduced to critiques of, and alternatives to, this mainstream approach still comes down to educators' agenda with wide in-country and international variation. There is more awareness of the non-diet paradigm in dietetic associations and communities in Canada, Australia, and USA than the UK, for instance: the terms intuitive eating, health at every size, mindful eating, non-diet, anti-diet are not indexed in the current edition of the *UK Manual of Dietetic Practice* (Gandy, 2019) (though some have appeared in previous editions. Interesting huh?). In contrast with a non-diet and intuitive eating approach I use a health justice framing within which I teach connected eating.

Sharing visual prompts, I invite people to work in small groups and (1) name and discuss their approach to eating, (2) generate a list of words associated with their theory, and (3) use these to write a definition. So far, it's always been intuitive or mindful eating that are named; definitions include terms like taste, enjoyment, body signals, wellbeing, holistic and social justice. Then I share an image of three generations watching TV – a sports game judging by the gestures – with bowls of snacks on a low table by the sofa. The last question is: (4) One of the adults has high blood pressure, can you explain how your theory helps them navigate this?

Very occasionally someone wants to swap crisps (chips) for carrot and celery sticks and I let the group explain what's up with this. With that out of the way, we get to the “teachable moment.” Because it dawns on people that intuitive eating doesn't allow them to support the client/learner – or the seeker (of support, knowledge, connection) – in the manner they want to: its theory removes the eater from human relationship, disconnects them from culture, circumstance, occasion, and reverts to relying on metrics that reinscribe food and eating through the rules and values of biomedicine. In other words, people don't know how to reconcile the desire or duty to offer dietary advice for hypertension with the tenets of intuitive eating; they are “instinctively” reluctant to interrupt the conviviality of the occasion with personalised dietary

direction and flummoxed by the task of accommodating both group dynamics and nutrition advice within the model of intuitive eating.

Further questions about supporting people who want explicitly values-based eating (local food, religious observation, vegans) or incorporate bespoke requirements because they are disabled or neurodiverse add to confusion: people struggle to know how they would respond, which troubles their erstwhile certainty in intuitive eating as a rigorously grounded, largely universally appropriate theory that enacts social justice. After conversation, every group I have worked with so far has concluded that the theory of intuitive eating doesn't in fact deliver on its goals of social justice. People are shocked and surprised to newly understand the theory as ableist, and therefore unethical because it fails to meaningfully accommodate inter-connection. A really important point is that groups arrive at this learning through their own conversations: I guide the process through an emancipatory pedagogy, but I don't tell people anything directly. We could be chatting over a kitchen table.

What the exercise reveals is that, contrary to advocates' beliefs, intuitive eating uses the same deep logic of binary thinking as cognitive restraint. Binary thinking orders the world using hierarchical oppositional couplings recognisable as healthy/unhealthy; male/female; fit/unfit; thin/fat; white/Black and so on. This dichotomous taxonomy is the scaffold for colonial logic: disconnect and dominion create the Other(ed) and nurture the creeping mycelium of beliefs and impulses that forge the coloniser's urge to conquer.

People are stumped by the verbal scenarios I stage because, regardless of the extent to which they could articulate knowing in the moment (the gap between apprehension and comprehension), the teaching reveals the construct of the eater in intuitive eating as a separable, isolated, mechanical body dedicated to the pursuit of personal health/healing rather than as a relationally entangled complex person who may understand, and prioritise, health differently than the dictates of biomedicine. That's why it was hard to round out eaters as people with food values or familial ties. As with cognitive restraint, intuitive eating's non-relational, ahistoric, non-situated atomistic eater has the body of liberal humanism, an ideology firmly rooted in the disconnect and value judgements of binary thinking and white supremacy. The body of liberal humanism, Man, stands atop the binary ladder – he is a white bodied, elite, non-disabled, allistic, thin cis male. Meanwhile, without context, circumstance and history are rendered illegible. As a result, while intuitive eating's in-house scholars recognise practical limits, restrictions on food choice from poverty or availability for example, the attendant logic of individualism ignores systemic and discursive ramifications. The belief that “intuitive eating is just one set of tools for repair, and it may not work for everyone – but that's okay” (as quoted in Prasertong, 2023), made here by UK influencer Laura Thomas and widely echoed by other experts and advocates, illustrates this point, painting a sometimes-useful therapeutic practice that is implicitly always benign.

The same sentiment is encapsulated in the phrase, “it worked for me/ my clients,” a response to critique that disappointingly ricochets from the walls of

the echo chambers of online community groups. A collective body that believes there can be no such thing as valid critique reads all critique as attack: “it works for me” cements a defensive posture that stabilises the status quo by foreclosing learning. “Works” stops at the skin of the individual eater – divided from the world. This alienation from the body politic is a severing that frames autonomy through freedom-from-accountability and compartmentalizes healing as a hermetically sealed personal process. It sanctions healthism’s detached, rugged individualism and ignores any material, discursive, affective, or other “intra-action” (Barad, 2007, p. 141) with community and planet.¹ Citing benefit for some people (invariably elite) as sufficient justification for an intervention disregards non-elites. Second, it legitimises the use of elite experience to override and discredit dissenting voices. Third, it evaporates webs of relationships making it impossible to meaningfully engage intuitive eating theory with social justice, hollowing the term to a decorative decoy. Limiting critique of intuitive eating to its partial ineffectiveness obscures the ways that the ideology perpetuates whiteness and is thus implicated in a great deal of harm.

This doesn’t alter the fact that intuitive eating has been life-changing for many once-dieters. Learning how and why to engage body signals and reject dieting may have saved people from peril, which is huge. But using experience to whack-a-mole scholarship rather than bringing “it worked” to the conversation as useful information, makes for an impenetrable shield of rejoinders that protects the status quo by blocking (the threat of) different ways of ordering thought. This is despite the fact that critique occupies such a substantive role in intuitive eating community and influencers’ practice. Good scholarship requires respect for many ways of knowing and expectations of reciprocal vulnerability: a community that presumes its knowledge innocent, infallible and globally beneficent has designed out feminist praxis. The truth of intuitive eating working for some (often privileged) people doesn’t also mean the ideology isn’t causing harm and doesn’t tell us anything about collective healing or social change.

What I am exposing and repudiating is the liberal humanist rendition of embodiment as siloed individualism because it is enmeshed and co-constituted with binary thinking, coloniality, and white supremacy. I also want to make clear that the intuitive eating community itself vociferously condemns this entangled triad. They intend liberation. So, what’s going on?

It is scholarship, not eating theory, that is at the heart of this investigation. Intuitive eating is a useful case study because advocates intend liberation but, I suggest, rely on scholarship and norms that obstruct reckoning and repair, continuously foiling this future.

¹ “Intra-action” is a Baradian term that understands agency not as an inherent property of relating Beings that is exercised, but as a dynamism of forces.

My grappling with the topic is indebted to the work of Tema Okun (2023), Critical Race theorists (Jones, 2019), Fat Studies (Pausé & Taylor, 2021), decolonial scholars (Escobar, 2008; Wane & Todd, 2018) and Da'Shaun Harrison's (2021) transformative insights in their award-winning book *The Belly of the Beast*. Okun (2023) lists hallmarks of white supremacy, including Certainty, One Right Way, Power Hoarding and many more. I have capitalised these throughout this piece so that readers who are unfamiliar with the framing can get a sense of what the hallmarks are and how they function.

Certainty, for instance, acts as a firewall to good scholarship. It assures us of our rightness making all Other(ed)'s people and their positions contemptible, pitiable, mean-spirited, or well-intentioned but regrettably inadequate, with a moral and intellectual compass simply not as precise as ours. It enacts and confirms group feelings and beliefs of superiority making outcasts of indeterminacy, humility, critical scholars, and their scholarship. It makes it really hard to grapple with ideas that foundationally challenge what we believe in. It schools us to ignore body signals of doubt, shock, surprise, misgiving.

Let's return to the workshop: imagine yourself with peers having just newly understood intuitive eating as reproducing some of the hegemonic tropes you all believed it was uprooting. You came to learn but you weren't expecting such a dramatic shift in perspective and are still shaken and bewildered. There's a lot to grapple with and you're not sure you could immediately explain what just happened, but you definitely all noticed something very amiss. It's big because it concerns a theory that is personally and professionally precious to the group, because of its proven ability to ease eating distress and its promise of social justice. Now what?

"That's blown my mind. I had no idea. Thank you."

A few people have taken the learning to heart and rewoven their ideas using a different warp and weft. Very few. I have shared the intuitive eating/connected eating activity with large groups of Health at Every Size (HAES)-aligned nutrition and eating disorder practitioners in the UK and USA. With rare exception, peers would understand, or at least glimpse, the flawed promise of intuitive eating and then ignore, co-opt, or assimilate this learning. A lost *segué* into reckoning, a move that rendered repair redundant, and thwarted reworlding. I think this route was often taken unintentionally, that Certainty acted as a rudder, making disengagement the only course possible. But it has also been intentionally pursued. After one well-attended, memorable (to me) workshop, generously organised by an influencer dietitian in Australia, the influencer's Facebook page was festooned with admiration and appreciation for my cleverness tied up with a bow of "I'm taking time to digest the implications, watch this space." I have been watching the space for well, quite some time, and the influencer and her several thousand followers remain silent. What does this offer to our discussion on scholarship? The late physicist David Bohm (1996) writes:

There is a simple confusion that tends to arise whenever we are presented with a complex array of new facts and perceptions . . . However, when the mind is trying to escape the awareness of conflict, there is a very different kind of self-sustaining confusion, in which one's deep intention is really to avoid perceiving the fact, rather than to sort it out and make it clear. (p. 21)

Certainty cultivates self-sustaining confusion, and contrived innocence. It stops us from developing the wherewithal and inclination to engage with ideas that destabilise our world view. Developing capacity to grapple with deep logic (ontology) takes time and effort, especially for those of us with a reductive biomedical training. Ontological know-how can be elusive for a long time. But discomfort with uncertainty, feeling out of our depth, and the inability to imagine an alternative, doesn't make it ok to ignore the knowledge that our practice might be oppressive even if we only glimpsed this awareness as a fleeting truth before it diffused into formlessness. Deep knowing is not reached through exceptional intellect but by staying with the trouble (Haraway, 2016). It is cultivated by a group culture that values accountability, indeterminacy, generative conflict, and creates leaders who embody good scholarship. In contrast, this community decision to protect the status quo is an example of how intuitive eating functions as an ideology that perpetuates white supremacy. Choosing to repress the learning harnesses an unarticulated logic in which the value of group equanimity outweighs the value attached to people's suffering. Ostensibly the group's decision-making tools emerge at the nexus of an ethical framework, analysis of evidence, robust theory, respect, and compassion. For sure, members may intend to travel this path, I am not condemning them as Bad People (or making myself Good) but showing how Certainty insidiously rules out the possibility of foundational error by inoculating the group with characteristic emotions and beliefs. This is how, paying loud lip service to the power of radical teaching – and possibly sincerely believing in it – we so easily uphold the orthodoxy that is white supremacy by insisting ours is the One Right Way.

Letting go of Certainty as a biomedically trained, white-bodied elite is an ongoing process that has so far been arduous, scary, painfully thorny, disorienting, lonely and also a relief, joyful, liberating.

Thirty years of the ideology of intuitive eating have helped embed a behind-the-scenes infrastructure underwritten by coloniality. Under the auspices of whiteness' One Right Way, it has claimed and commodified interoception, fabricating a narrative where there are no other approaches to eating which value intuition/body signals. Which is absurd: Groger's (1983) *Eating Awareness Training* predated *Intuitive Eating* (Tribole & Reich, 1995) by 10 years. But there are much deeper issues. The conceit of One Right Way erodes and devalues Global Majority knowledge. It quashes reworlding by denying the very possibility of a third, fourth, tenth viable way of relating to eating. It trains us to presuppose that what we know (dieting and intuitive eating) is all there is to know, strengthening the strangle-hold of western knowledge and

repressing both Global Majority knowledge, and pluriversalism which (unlike Universalism) recognises many valid ways of knowing. There is no reckoning, reworlding, and repair. The necessary work of learning about and newly imagining food and flourishing in ways that exceed the binary's offerings of intuitive eating and cognitive restraint stays unbegun and white supremacy flourishes in the reckless passivity of "watch this space."

Intuitive eating's claim to own the nexus of eating and intuition within an instrumental individualism creates a monolithic story that marginalises all the other ways that eaters intuit: memory, ancestral wisdom, plant medicine, are some examples (see Stevenson (2024) on African heritage diet as medicine that asks, "how can we advance Black food as medicine as part of reparations?").

Within a belief system that awards intuitive eating a monopoly on body signals, critique risks being misconstrued as synonymous with saying "ignore body signals." Binary thinking projects a future without intuitive eating that is a replica of the world the eater knows with a gap once occupied by intuitive eating – likely generating feelings of confusion, outrage, terror, loss. Whereas critique received within a logic of pluriversalism invites curiosity, mutuality, perhaps a deep reckoning that permits reworlding. It doesn't conjure absence in a world ordered by individualism, disconnect, and dominion but is alive to new ideas for engaging with food and eating that emerge from reimagining human and nonhuman flourishing in a world ordered by inter-connection, collectivity, and reciprocity.

The politics of our affective responses to information, and especially conflict, are addressed by Resmaa Menakem (2021) in *My Grandmother's Hands*. Specifically, he explains how the culture of racism is carried in the body, how it forges different body responses in white bodied people, people of culture, and law enforcers. Understanding body responses as a social creation is pivotal to the book's liberatory teaching that centres on how to notice and metabolise the inter-generational anguish of white supremacy according to our positionality within its rankings. He demonstrates, with ideas for reckoning, repair and reworlding, how the failure to examine the genesis of body signals is the silent engine behind racism. It is when white bodied people trust body signals that interpret Blackness as dangerous and criminal that Black people are murdered. His book vividly highlights the harms of a narrative that presents body signals as "unpolluted" personal Truth – as with intuitive eating.

Intuitive eating glosses over the fact that body signals come into being co-constituted with racism (Aphramor, 2019). For sure, make space for body knowledge. But it's not helpful to insist on body signals as "valid" where valid is used to indicate an *a priori* incontestably trustworthy source of data. Because to do so teaches everyone in the "intuitive eating worked for me" group, a racialised, gendered, and classed elite, that their/our feelings, beliefs and sensibilities are accurate triangulation points against which they/we can make decisions to secure their/our own ease or Comfort without regard for any relational impact. Exalting decontextualised body signals also mobilises ableism and buries the ramifications of trauma – two important topics that

exceed the space available here (Castle & Aphramor, 2023; Hunani, n.d.). Trusting the body signals manufactured in the crucible of whiteness sanctions social murder and the legalized murder of Black, disabled, queer, homeless, and other marginalized people viscerally perceived as a menace. Who might still be alive if we had spent the last 30 years teaching an ideology that surfaced body signals as socially created? How might your locality or profession be different if we had been invested in stopping the repression of BIPOC knowledge? Can you imagine the new orderings of land ownership, farming practice, and public health that can thrive by scrapping ideologies locked into coloniality and building otherwise as part of an abolitionist agenda?

Don't reject intuitive eating because it doesn't work for everyone, reject it because it embeds coloniality. It has popularised a way of thinking about food that divides therapeutic work from the work of social change and centres elite vitality by dismissing concerns of harm and systemic impact. It relies on ableist, colonial notions of healing and recovery. It's an ideology that erases Global Majority knowledge, one that has accepted the bribe (Gilmore et al., 2023) and turned its back on trying to understand that liberatory work involves dismantling white supremacy as a key term of reference. For initiatives that approach human-nonhuman flourishing in ways that resist and redress whiteness see Gloria Lucas' work with Nalgona Positivity Pride to advance Global Majority knowledge and challenge white supremacy in the eating disorders field;² Sonya Renee Taylor's (2018) project *The Body Is Not an Apology* that holds the individual and social body in flux; and Healing Justice London.³ Activist stances on knowledge around eating and order are found in Mad Studies (Beresford & Russo, 2022) and the related emerging field of critical eating disorders (Schott et al., 2016).

I (KD) am considering my colleagues' comments on practicality versus intellectualism as I return to the classroom. Sometimes "things work" even when they're not a good idea. But who am I, are we, to say what's a good idea for others? My navigation of life as a fat person and a scholar covers all of this terrain. I can't help but dwell in the practical. Geneen Roth's writing on eating and dieting is highly problematic given its healthist imperatives (Chastain, 2018), but attending one of her workshops back in the 1990s helped me to give up dieting in favour of health. Roth is still promising that the pounds will slide from her followers if they can unlearn their conflicts with food. Absurd, and still, the unlearning is pragmatic. I'm grateful to have found those tools when I did. Also grateful for ideologies that transcend her work, and epistemologies that challenge my own. Reckoning with the categories of Good and Bad

² To access Nalgona Positivity Pride, see <https://www.nalgonapositivitypride.com/>

³ To access Healing Justice London, see <https://healingjusticeldn.org/>

practice enabled repair, led to reworlding. Here's another practical matter. How much weight does a tuk tuk safely hold? I googled "fat in Asia" and found articles on the rising incidence of obesity in Asian countries, rising risk factors, and increasing stigma. No. That's not it. I googled "experiences of being fat in Asia." In one article, the author commented on how people thought it was okay to call her fat to her face (James, 2018).

When I was last in Thailand, I assumed that if I could fit, I could ride. Rather than seating six in a tuk tuk as I've often seen, I could ride with three others. I crouched oddly, trying to keep most of my weight to the centre of the carriage. That made me feel better about the moving balancing trick that all Thai vehicles seem to accomplish with their passengers hovering just above the physical mode of transport. I don't know how to hover, or rest lightly with a placid expression. I watched and practised. We never fell over.

I'm older now. Fatter. More nervous about falling.

Not everything can be repaired.

"Why do you come here?" I (KD) ask, challenging a response.

"To learn?" One student responds, but with a slight hint of question in her statement.

"Is that really why you're here?" I ask, incredulous.

"To get a degree." Another student says, and about half of the class nods.

"But also to learn!" A young woman who is nodding adds, resolute.

"Which is more important?" I ask.

They are silent and some seem irritated, or perhaps a bit sad.

"I guess, honestly, the degree," one student offers.

"So, we're in an agreement where you give me conformity and I give you a grade. The grades pile up and you get a degree. If you fail to conform to my class standards, to the completion of assignments, to my desires for your behaviour, you lose. You lose your time and money. No degree."

I look around the room, accusingly. "You're adults!" I practically shout. "And yet here you are, paying to practise conformity. Is it true? Schooling has more to do with conformity than it has to do with learning. The learning is either incidental, or maybe even something you avoid if you feel you can get the grade without doing the work?"

"Is it true?" I shout.

Slowly they nod, dejected.

It's a practical matter. Homogeneity is not desirable in scholarship. We require the organizing force of peer review – which does to an extent homogenize. We also require diverse voices or we miss important things in analysis. When we elevate the mechanics of the pursuit over its aims, we can have education without learning. Hospitals without health. My students know it because I remind them, but I'm reminding myself too. The struggle for reworlding.

Sometimes I'm just tired, reading one more paper because it's my job. And I have other jobs to do tomorrow, so I have to get this one done now.

Sometimes their writing enters my body like a bullet, sometimes a balm. They connect what they're reading with their life experiences and then connect it further, to broader thinking still, through my gentle prompting.

Some professors use trigger warnings to let someone know what's coming so that they can prepare. It's a practical matter. If something's going to trigger trauma in your body when you read about it or hear about it, don't step off the platform with no net below.

But some people use trigger warnings as a way to stay out of the conversation. I shouldn't have to learn about this because it makes me uncomfortable (Dark, 2021).

"I shouldn't have to read a text with profanity in it. You should teach me without profanity. I'm a Christian." A student explained this to me once. We were discussing substitute teaching and as I digested her response, my first thought was, Good Gravy. How can one reliably give a first-person account of the horrors of substitute teaching without cursing?

In any case, the trigger warnings are not ever meant for me. I have to read all of the papers. I am practised, but still prone sometimes – flattened by their traumas entering my body. I metabolise it all and take strength and comfort by colleagues doing the same.

"So, what if I (KD) just come 30 minutes late and you start class without me? Would you actually do it? I mean, be honest with me. What would you feel when you walk in the room knowing I won't be here? Imagine it happening right now." They are blinking at me, after I have explained my situation with the upcoming car repair. They are imagining the scenario as I am requesting of them.

"I guess, first off, would you be here on time knowing that this is time you have paid for and set aside for this purpose? Or would you think you don't really have to be here until just before I arrive? And would you start the conversation? Or would it feel weird and awkward to think that people should talk about these readings in my absence? It's a simple start! Who would be comfortable saying the question..."

A student interrupts me to say it – "What was of interest to you in this week's readings!"

They laugh.

"There it is!" I say, triumphant. "Who would say it if I wasn't here? What would you feel if you said it?"

"I'd feel like a dick," says one student. "Like, who am I to lead the class?" Others nod.

"It would feel weird." They say. "Unless you assign the role of leader to someone and there's some way to report back to you about what we did, like..."

Another student interrupts that one to say, "But then, that's still us doing it for her. She's asking if we can do it for ourselves!"

They nod again in recognition.

I notice that a young woman who is a very good student looks like she's about to cry. Perhaps she is crying. "Are you alright?" I ask and call her by name.

"The thing is," she says, "I love the time we spend talking about the readings. These readings are interesting and really important. I would feel really sad to miss this time with you. But like you said, the first 30 minutes is mostly us..." Tears are falling, in her confusion. "So why don't I feel like I could do it? Why do I feel like it would be so different without you – that we really just literally wouldn't do something I think most of us genuinely look forward to?"

Other students are nodding and some are looking at their laps or away entirely. It's uncomfortable, what she's uncovering about herself that has moved her so. I am also uncomfortable and feel my face quiver. I am ready to cry with her. A few more students, I imagine, see this and they also turn away. "Well, I'm glad you're learning about yourselves in this conversation. Learning isn't supposed to be easy. Sometimes it's a surprise when and how it happens." I look around the room, my composure returning.

"So, it's a practical matter of whether we'll start class next week at 8 or 8:30. I guess we'll start at 8:30, but if you want to come at 8 as usual, I'll be happy to join your conversation-in-process."

They nod, happy to be done with that topic. One student says, "We just got half an hour off, but I also feel like we failed somehow."

"Totally," someone else replies with a laugh.

"I want you to know, that I know, that you know you have a fat professor."

They are extra silent.

"I am embodied in such a way that I know about fat stigma not only as a scholar but as a human being. My body has been harmed and my humanity has been diminished because of fat hatred, fat phobia. I am bringing you the sum of my experiences. As students, you don't have to bring all of your experiences to the classroom, but on this topic, as a professor, I choose to offer you more than just scholarship."

Some of them look at me with awe, others more blankly. Are they considering it? Is it confusion?

Well, now they know. I thought it was important for them to know.

(Although I choose to do this care work, epistemological work, pedagogical work, my body is pressed into service with or without my consent. So it is for any marginalised teacher, no matter the subject.)

My colleague says it's the "being with" that leads to collective healing.

I guess, as usual, it's practice that lets us do it.

Do we know when we've healed?

I know 35 is too many for a good classroom discussion. Something like 23 might work but 17 is better.

I'll prefer three in the tuk tuk from now on, and maybe even the front seat of a car as arthritis takes my knees.

It's been 50 years learning how to be quiet when I want to rebut a claim that pains me. I hope for future generations that it's possible to learn that one more quickly.

We need different things at different times.

Thirty minutes is too long to be alone, discussing, without a judge. Or maybe a mentor. A guide.

It's a practical matter.

Paying enough attention to know,

what will soothe,

what will heal and how

we prompt learning and

accountability.

How do we know? How can we be trustworthy?

We haven't mentioned intimacy or care in relation to kitchen table pedagogy, but of course they matter. Let's make these forces explicit and drop the squeamishness to use love, bare like this, without the depersonalising distance of citation. Which does not also mean dispensing with attribution where this is due or being careless about who we uplift. It means refusing to use citation as a device that puts the writer at one remove from transgressive ideas, exploiting but not wholly accountable for radical moves. Such as talking about Love.

fractal body of bracken fungi discourse parable ash and brass

body of myth and clay, elemental tidal blended

with reverence synapsed with chloroplasts

be thornily mortal bacterial syntactical mystical Mad here for the dense fray

stay body stay body stay

now and for always bleed with the pain but don't leave me again
 bleed with the pain but don't leave me again don't leave me again.
 (Aphramor, 2023)

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