

11-22-2022

## Pandemic as Portal: Disrupting the Violence of Epistemicide in Teacher Education

Ramon Vasquez  
*University of Minnesota-Twin Cities*, rvasquez@uwalumni.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/nwjte>



Part of the [Curriculum and Instruction Commons](#), and the [Elementary Education and Teaching Commons](#)

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

---

### Recommended Citation

Vasquez, Ramon (2022) "Pandemic as Portal: Disrupting the Violence of Epistemicide in Teacher Education," *Northwest Journal of Teacher Education*: Vol. 17 : Iss. 3 , Article 30.  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15760/nwjte.2022.17.3.30>

This open access Article is distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License \(CC BY-NC-SA 4.0\)](#). All documents in PDXScholar should meet [accessibility standards](#). If we can make this document more accessible to you, [contact our team](#).

---

# Pandemic as Portal: Disrupting the Violence of Epistemicide in Teacher Education

## Abstract

Epistemicide involves more than just the accidental displacement of different knowledges. By its very nature, epistemicide involves the intentional silencing, devaluing, and violent destruction of knowledge systems (Mignolo, 2007). While much has been written about radically altering education by including other knowledge in schools, what this entails within the context of teacher education methods courses, particularly during the pandemic, has received less attention. This paper examines and discusses what creating another teacher education might involve by probing some of the spaces and openings for epistemic disobedience exposed and made visible during the pandemic. My conceptualization of another teacher education simultaneously theorizes what might be possible in terms of epistemic pluralism while also confronting the erasure and displacement of different knowledge systems in teacher education courses.

## Keywords

Teacher Education, Epistemicide, Testimonio, Pedagogy

## Creative Commons License



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-Share Alike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

As we move away from two years of pandemic protocols, much of the nation has already started rejoicing in the return to normal (Woolf, 2022). In this current moment of enthusiasm for all things pre-pandemic, the desire for what has been termed “normalcy” has become a principal preoccupation for educators (Grawe, 2022). For instance, in post-secondary education, reverting back to the normalcy of seated learning for all students has become a taken for granted goal. Not surprisingly, the demand for a return to normalcy has also garnered considerable attention from educators invested in returning to established social and political solutions to injustice in schools (Tarabini, 2021). Ironically, normalcy, as defined by schools, has become a social justice matter even though in normalcy in the classroom sometimes weaponizes dominant epistemologies against students from historically oppressed groups. Despite only limited understanding of what occurred in online learning spaces, especially student learning that circumvented entrenched patterns of epistemicide against “Other” knowledges, teacher education programs (TEPs) have also returned to celebrating seated learning as an unmitigated universal good (Kaffenberger, 2021).

### **What Counts as Learning?**

Contrary to conventional views, I argue that worthwhile learning and teaching, particularly counterhegemonic knowledge production by students from historically marginalized groups, did happen in some online spaces. Despite popular discourses describing the shift to online education as a complete catastrophe, I show that meaningful learning did happen in these spaces. For some college students, especially those from historically marginalized groups, online learning spaces made visible and accessible new vantage points from which to share critiques of normalcy. While still attached in some ways to the routines of the university classroom, these spaces also proved a little freer from the epistemological constraints of the traditional classroom that continue essentializing students as individual receivers of knowledge. The shift to online learning created a transgressive space for students and faculty to engage collectively in epistemic disobedience by delinking from what counts as official knowledge (Mignolo, 2011).

The mutual learning that occurred during the disruption from normal, however, has yet to be fully acknowledged by those insisting on a return to seated learning. In the case I discuss here, the disruption of normalcy was manifested in an unexpected practice of recognizing different communal ways of being and understanding the world. Although I examine what occurred in one specific online learning space at a university, I do not seek to glorify connectivity or technology as solutions to epistemicide. I also do not attempt to quantify learning or so-called “learning loss” using positivistic metrics. Instead, I highlight the experiences of one group of students who disobeyed “normal school” in an online course.

My concern in this discussion involves showing how the openings or fissures created by the pandemic, or portals to other worlds as Arundhati Roy (2020) calls them, made perceptible new and unexpected possibilities and pathways for confronting and ultimately disobeying the everyday violence of epistemicide at a public university. By examining this online learning space through my *testimonio* as a faculty member, I share knowledge that goes beyond the immediate neoliberal horizon by showing that another education is possible. My intent in this work also involves moving away from a reductive binary analysis that positions learning as either oppressive or emancipatory. Instead, I seek to enlarge and complicate the vocabulary for speaking about the banality of epistemicide in seated learning while also exploring the possibilities for disobeying normalcy. By moving away from the asphyxiating confines of the physical classroom with its attachment to Euro-centered individualism, online learning opened

new ways of being for students. Through a discussion of these ways, I develop a conceptual apparatus that might be useful for tracing the trajectory of other possibilities for confronting and disrupting epistemicide through reciprocal learning relations only possible in online spaces.

### **Limits of Conventional Classrooms**

For this discussion of the possibilities for disobedience opened by the pandemic, I argue that colonial education patterns in teacher education actively produce epistemicide (Santos, 2014). These patterns annihilate “Other” knowledge systems and ways of being under the guise of “practice-based” or rationalist commonsense instruction for future teachers. They also reproduce epistemicide by organizing traditional teacher education spaces of seated learning around adherence to a dominant Euro-centered conception of schooling that ignores everyday encounters with other ways of being. Traditionally, this constraint leaves little room for considering or even acknowledging other ways of knowing and being, even when discussing social justice in TEP classrooms.

Although teacher education physical classrooms can sometimes comprise collective spaces, including at times by embracing dimensions of student difference, the embedding of Euro-centered epistemologies in these settings, especially articulations of meritocracy, continues reproducing repressive dynamics of erasure, cognitive injustice, and epistemicide (Grande, 2015, Santos, 2014). While descriptions vary, I define colonial patterns of education as practices based on dominant Euro-centered epistemologies that produce epistemic violence by suppressing knowledge and ways of knowing and being that question the objectivity, universalism, and inevitableness of Euro-centered hegemony (Huber, 2009; Vasquez, 2021). Euro-centered hegemony, however, can be disrupted in TEPs. As Mignolo (2007) explains, however, strategies of disobedience led by subaltern communities, or in this case college students from historically marginalized groups, can create possible pathways toward community healing. The need to recognize what transpired in online spaces, and how these spaces made available different pathways for disobeying epistemicide, has hardly breached the general public discourse of returning to normalcy for the sake of normalcy.

### **Need to See the (Un)seen**

I use the concept of epistemicide (Santos, 2014) to link current educational disasters of colonialism in teacher education programs (TEPs) to longer histories of epistemic violence in schooling. This linking also involves framing the way online learning shaped and created conditions and desires for epistemic disobedience in new ways. The need to address epistemicide within the context of TEPs exists, but it remains mostly undertheorized (Andreotti, 2016). Given the overall lack of understanding of epistemicide in TEPs, much of the counterhegemonic learning that happened in online learning spaces requires nuanced theorizing. For instance, I argue that the sudden and unexpected shift to online learning made teacher education less instrumentalist. Instead, the communal space became more responsive to students and faculty from historically oppressed groups by blurring boundaries.

For students and faculty from marginalized groups who share a vulnerability as “Others” expected to conform, and who remain unseen in many ways in the seated classroom, the shift to online learning provided opportunities to engage with each other in substantive ways that promoted solidarity across differences. These ways included drawing from knowledges impossible to share in conventional classrooms given the logics of efficiency and merit that keep

discussions of lived experiences out of classrooms to a large extent (Andreotti, 2016). These other ways of knowing and making sense, such as conviviality, which provide meaning and grounding to student lives, also remain invisible in the traditional classroom (Santos, 2014).

Traditional procedures and discourses associated with seated learning, such as those delegitimizing of knowledge that critiques the hidden tensions of capitalism and patriarchy in schools, were less evident in online spaces. What I call traditional procedures also involve patterns of education that uphold the dominance of Euro-centered epistemologies by normalizing repressive discourses that regulate who can count as a knower by limiting or denying the subjectivities of students with knowledge from outside Euro-centered paradigms (Wynter, 2003; Zhao, 2020).

### Literature Review

Why the term violence? Boaventura de Sousa Santos uses the term epistemic violence to describe the silencing of people from marginalized groups (2014). In schools, epistemic violence operates by elevating the epistemic practices of the dominant group, while dismissing as inferior the knowledges of subjected groups (Domínguez, 2019). I use epistemic violence and epistemicide interchangeably as ways of describing the erasure of knowledge of students from marginalized groups (Santos, 2014). Epistemicide, however, involves more than just the accidental displacement of different knowledges in schools. By its very nature, epistemicide involves the intentional and strategic silencing, devaluing, and violent destruction of non-Euro-centered knowledge systems (Mignolo, 2007).

Santos maps out the violence committed by colonial powers against Indigenous knowledges by using the term epistemicide to denote the genocide against ideas (2014). Understanding the purpose of epistemicide, a genocide or annihilation of ideas, helps explain why Euro-centered epistemologies tend to glorify capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy (Mignolo, 2011). Teacher education classrooms, like most university spaces, normalize epistemicide through the elevating of Euro-centered-style individualism, capitalism, and patriarchy as commonsense subjects (Popkewitz, 2015). Rather than an aberration or an anomaly, the erasures of any alternative to Euro-centered thought constitute exactly the type of routines that schools have celebrated as normalcy. The term *other knowledge systems* also encompasses *absent subjects* (Mignolo, 2007). These absent subjects refer to difficult knowledge intentionally erased by Euro-centered conceptualizations of what counts as valid or legitimate school knowledge in order to maintain dominant narratives (Rodríguez & Salinas, 2019).

Although early into this new normal mode, much has already been written about the advantages of seated learning for students from historically marginalized backgrounds (Huck & Zhang, 2021). Most this new writing categorizes online learning as a disaster for these students (Teng & Wu, 2021). The hyperbolic and reductionist framing of online learning as a catastrophe is no accident. This framing seeks to solidify the conventional view that learning for the “disadvantaged” is always optimized in physical classroom spaces. In other words, spaces where Black and Brown bodies can be controlled more efficiently according to Euro-centered logics of surveillance (Utt, 2018). This might explain why so much has been written about the problem of “learning loss” for “disadvantaged” students resulting from pivoting to online learning (Engzell, et. al, 2021). Even many social justice approaches adhere to “commonsense” principles and practices that erase certain groups of people, specifically those who are intersectionally disadvantaged or burdened under the matrix of domination involving the intersection of White supremacist heteropatriarchy and capitalism.

## Methods and Data Sources

To articulate a new framework for disturbing the displacement of other knowledges in TEP methods courses, I offer my testimonio as a counternarrative process and product (Huber, 2009). By merging concepts that cut across approaches, and rupturing the veil of merit that regulates and disciplines in person teaching, this testimonio discusses the role of faculty of color in the transmission of other knowledge as a means of epistemic disobedience in online teaching. This testimonio of my online teaching experiences during the pandemic problematizes the dynamics between different types of knowledge by defamiliarizing the relationship between individual and collective forms of knowledge.

Testimonio involves making the self the subject of critical inquiry while creating a fragmentary narrative rather than a complete life story (Huber, 2009). In short, it disentangles personal experiences and reconfigures them to arrive at a historical, social, and political explanation for a particular event (Chavez, 2012). As such, testimonio attempts to upset the hegemonic logics of objective knowledge, as well as the Euro-centered privileging of disembodied research practice (Vasquez & Altshuler, 2017).

Importantly, testimonio also provides a space where the personal intersects with the political and cultural to critique the everyday power structures of White supremacy in a TEP (Huber, 2009). What distinguishes this specific type of writing from other forms is the inserting of the autobiographical past, in this case my personal narrative, into the present as a form of counter-storytelling to dominant narratives (Vasquez, 2019). While recognizing subaltern knowledge, however, testimonio cannot provide closure since stories take on a life of their own and remain open to new readings (Huber, 2009).

## Procedures

Data for this paper consists of notes taken during the online class meetings as well as fragments of memories. At the time, I took notes only to map the process and to find places where student perspectives might coalesce into opportunities for solidarity across differences. During the writing process for this paper, I examined my notes for recurring themes. These notes and memories became the beginning of this paper and reflect the language used by students.

## Testimonio of my Online Class

In the weeks before the trajectory of the pandemic became discernable to most, including to me, I accepted a tenure-track position at a comprehensive university on the East Coast. As a new faculty member during a time of institutional uncertainty and few provisions for teaching, I launched into online teaching that fall of 2020 with little to guide me other than a desire to engage compassionately with my students. In short, I moved forward with no roadmap. Having taught hybrid courses at another university previously, albeit pre-pandemic, I was primed for certain technical aspects of online teaching and to the use of synchronous learning platforms.

In the course I taught that fall pandemic semester, a social studies methods course, student conversations immediately took on a different tenor and direction than I had anticipated. To my surprise, most students articulated a desire to avoid returning to normal too quickly. Within the first three weeks of class, several students conjectured that TEP faculty would not succeed in reaching all students until we moved away from the established faculty and student binary. To do this, according to them, would require a new type of faculty connection with

students, a connection constructed on solidarity that centers the knowledge that students from marginalized groups bring to school. This idea extended an understanding that we all agreed with, namely that we must not base the value of education on the objective “teachable skills” necessary for the current political economy. Students spoke freely based on their own knowledge of the way taxonomies based on grades “filter” students into their prescribed roles as products of the school. Most of the students in the class self-identified as either working-class first-generation college students or students of color. Many were from a large urban center nearby and often referred to their experiences in the local city as problematic.

The uncertainties and potential problems faculty were warned about by the university in generic emails, such as student disengagement, never materialized in this course. Instead, new patterns and rhythms of life and work had developed for these students over the following weeks. Students slowly started to see these patterns as a new normal worth understanding rather than as a disaster. Many new pathways opened where none had existed before, especially since normal schooling, according to students themselves, often involved busy work. In a way, the shift to new patterns of shared learning helped create a space for students to name and articulate their estrangement from previous ways of “doing school,” as one student said. We discussed collectively how sitting passively in the classroom while the instructor reads from a slide presentation ignores the knowledge of real students with real bodies. Ironically, sitting in front of a computer proved liberating for most students. Normal schooling, we found, privileges an accepted performance of teaching that the institution values. Several students mentioned a lack of attention to their lived experiences and the way they make sense of their worlds as the main issue causing them to struggle in normal classes.

For example, one student mentioned that she appreciated the fact that she was no longer subject to the policies of one of her professors. As she explained, this professor had a policy whereby students were not allowed to ask questions about the “logical” assumptions underlying the course content. The example she shared left us all troubled. According to this student, Julia, her professor had asked students to explain why divorce rates are lower for Black people than for other groups (please note, the names of students in this work are all pseudonyms). After a few minutes of silence, the professor told the class that Black people have lower divorce rates because they are less likely to marry in the first place. The data speaks for itself was his answer to student questions, even to Black students who wanted to share their personal knowledge. We spent much time as a class unpacking this vignette and how it reinforces ideas of objectivity, limits whose knowledge has value, and excludes other knowledge deemed too subjective. The conversations we had also touched on the way mass schooling controls knowledge in the physical classroom by ignoring the multiplicities of human connections that complicate the Euro-centered binary of objective/subjective. Online teaching, which provided opportunities to connect to real lives outside of school to the classroom, made this policing much more difficult. Many student conversations were filled with memories of similar types of policing of knowledge and student subjectivities in “normal” classrooms.

As the semester progressed, more new paths slowly began to make themselves apparent to me in ways that were unexpected. Perhaps these pathways were always there hidden in plain sight, but they only became visible to us collectively during the shift. Unlike early in the pandemic, when we were all simply moving the “normal class” to an emergency online version, and trying to make sense of it all without a roadmap of any kind, something was different now. By fall 2020 students had found new ways to traverse unfamiliar terrains of learning and forging new ways of being in communion with each other and me. For example, students no longer felt

they had to sit in one place and face the camera without moving during an online class. In one case, a student—Jessica—seemed to be in multiple places at the same time. Every time she turned her camera on, she seemed to be in a completely new space framed by different surroundings. At the start of class, at 2:00 pm she appeared to be in a cafeteria or lunchroom of some sorts. We could all see the refrigerator and small microwave behind her, so it looked like a lunchroom in an office, at least that's the way the frame, chosen by Jessica, appeared to us. By the end of class, after briefly turning off her camera for a few minutes, we noticed that Jessica was talking to someone off camera and sitting at a table that resembled a kidney shaped table you might see in a school. She seemed a little nervous too and appeared to be looking around as if expecting someone to interrupt or reprimand her at any moment. I simply continued speaking and calling on students who raised their hands. I made it a point to not comment on the spaces students were inhabiting unless it seemed pertinent to our discussions, such as when a dog jumped on one student, and everyone started laughing.

This movement by Jessica went on for three weeks. I chose not to comment on this in keeping with my ethos of not making comments that might be perceived by students as disrespectful or condescending. One day, during the fourth week, we all noticed that Jessica was holding two small children in her arms while trying to talk to four other children. Jessica is White and all the children were Black. Jessica was visibly upset during all this and “confessed” that she was working at a daycare full time and was logged on from one corner of the classroom during her personal snack break. I told her that was not a problem. She was worried that this would be seen as unprofessional or that I would judge her. This concern with being judged would resurface multiple times throughout the year.

Of course, this opened the class to different discussions of what that term professional even means or who gets to decide what it means, especially in the context of teacher education. We also discussed how teaching can often become entangled with judging others rather than with learning. Students provided multiple examples of this in different conversations. One student shared a particularly disturbing story of an incident that occurred to her and had left her shaken and confused. She had emailed a professor at 6:30 am to let him know that she was going to be late to his online class. He immediately emailed her back and told her that emailing so early is “not professional.” He went one step further to chastise her for waking him up as his phone “pinged” when it received the email. This started conversations about regimes of truth, which I had briefly introduced earlier in class, and why we engage in certain practices. As more than one student noted, Jessica was probably learning more in her “real job” than she was in the methods courses, especially those courses in the normal time in which we were all disconnected from the reality of working in spaces with real children.

For the rest of the semester, students slowly began to share where they were logging in from. In one case, a student logged in from the parking lot of a Target before work. In another case, it was from a van parked in a public lot outside a hospital. This recognition that we “are all coming at this from different places” led to conversations about the purpose of teacher education and socialization to norms. We were able to unravel some of the underpinnings of “professional behavior” by pinpointing what that means, or might mean, and what it privileges within a new context. All this also led us to a place where we had the opportunity to engage in an analysis and discussion of past practices. The “new glasses” approach, which is what we ended up calling our new way of making sense of all this, helped students question and transgress dominant epistemologies in several ways.



For instance, by enabling students to abandon the conceptual structures and underpinnings upon which such Euro-centered thinking rests, including professional behavior for future teachers, they were able to think beyond and outside commonsense. These experiences enhanced student learning by providing students with the tools necessary for problematizing taken for granted assumptions about teacher education, including Euro-centered ideas about what counts as genuine teaching. These conversations enriched our “reading” of schools and indeed the very architecture and purpose of mass schooling. The space we created away from the confines of the school provided a screen where we were able to project our hopes and dreams for a different future for education. In short, students started articulating topics and themes that questioned everything about pre-COVID times. That included questioning the school policy of not being allowed by the university to engage in paid work during their senior year. In a way, all students became teachers in this class by teaching collectively about the ways they were living during the pandemic.

As for the student who was logged in from the hospital, I had been warned by the Chair of the department to “keep an eye on her.” This student, Brenda, had taken this class the previous semester and had failed it along with another required course. Brenda’s previous instructor had labeled her a problem during a department meeting. One of the main complaints was that she logged in late and always seemed distracted as if talking to someone off camera. Over the course of the semester, it became clear to me that Brenda was a brilliant and highly motivated student. As we journeyed together as a class, which is how students described our sessions, Brenda shared with us that she was living with relatives and dealing with serious family issues. The reason she was in a van outside a hospital was because she often accompanied her sister to her appointments for treatment. Brenda had been reluctant to share this in the beginning, but slowly the frame she chose to share with the class through her phone widened enough that we could all start assembling the pieces from the fragments she let us see. Were it not for the new normal, Brenda likely would have dropped out of school to deal with these issues. She also would have been subjected to the deficit-narratives hurled at students who have other obligations outside of school. Students learned so much just from talking about their lives and related issues that we often “forgot” to discuss the technical minutiae demanded by the university for administrative purposes. This shifting of needs and the new orientation toward ordering priorities was one of the most profound aspects of this class. Normal schooling, we agreed, disguises the true nature of the capitalist system, including the role of patriarchy and racism in its history. By decentering me as the instructor, we troubled the boundary between student and professor. As these examples show, students’ lived experiences comprise one of the most dynamic models we have for disrupting epistemicide.

## Discussion

While much has been written about radically altering teacher education or enacting justice in schooling, a key component remains missing from those conversations. For example, what might incorporating different epistemologies into courses entail? This question has received limited attention from scholars (Utt, 2018). The case I discuss in this testimonio suggests some possibilities for creating another teacher education across different spaces. By discussing and learning from some of the opportunities for epistemic disobedience unlocked and made perceptible by the global pandemic, we might be able to envision a different path for teacher education. Working toward another teacher education requires theorizing what might be possible in terms of an epistemic pluralism that recognizes knowledge produced by students typically

bypassed in the seated classroom (Medina, 2013). Recognizing knowledge produced by students such as Julia, who is typically silenced in the normal classroom, also involves confronting the erasure and displacement of different knowledge systems. The privileging of Euro-centered discourses and practices perpetuate relations of domination that obliterate knowledge emerging from students' lived experiences in TEPs.

Repositioning online learning as epistemic disobedience poses a radically different set of questions about learning and teaching. For example, how can we create sites that recognize and respect the knowledge of all students in teacher education, including those typically marginalized or rendered invisible even by current diversity and inclusion frameworks? How do our own marginalized knowledges as faculty of color amplify our commitments to epistemic pluralism? Considered from a place of radical dreaming created during the pandemic (Wynter, 2003), these questions invite teacher educators to go beyond conventional “diversity and equity” approaches. Epistemic disobedience requires confronting the violence of epistemicide by mapping the spaces in which new learning based on plurality has occurred. Asking these questions and mapping these spaces, especially during the portal or fissure opened by the pandemic, provides a starting point for fracturing the monopoly on knowledge held by Euro-centered systems that continue defining what counts as “truth” in teacher education. Reconsidering what descriptions of our lives we value may open even more spaces for questioning and confronting epistemicide across teacher education sites as they too return to normal. Writing from a place of hope and optimism, this paper invites faculty to imagine new ways of opposing epistemicide through an understanding of the learning that occurred through disobeying the normal protocols. Based on the interdisciplinary nature of teacher education, incorporating different epistemologies involves providing the opportunity for students to develop their autonomy while respecting those who have different knowledges.

## **Learning Happened**

As this testimonio shows, the perspectives of students working to humanize teacher education by sharing their knowledge and understanding of the world are vital for disrupting epistemicide. These perspectives, however, remain absent from most published accounts of the shift to remote learning (Soleas, & Coe-Nesbitt, 2022). Despite the outpouring of accounts of the negative experiences with online learning published in mainstream academic and journalistic sites mostly written from the perspective of non-educators, there remains an immense disparity between general descriptions of what transpired during the pandemic and faculty perceptions and narratives of the reality of actual learning in higher education.

Developing suitable theoretical frameworks for rethinking online learning as a form of “legitimate” learning remains one of the greatest challenges to confronting epistemicide in higher education. The urgency connected to celebrating seated learning requires much more theorizing. In short, the return to normal may obscure the way online learning provided a space for the creation of a different path. We need to unlearn the notion of normalcy and the way “normal school” flattens out the epistemological differences among students. For example, working class students who have multiple jobs and must commute to “normal” school bring a different way of making sense of the world to the classroom. Given these experiences, why have patterns that developed during the pandemic, attending class from a workplace for instance, been minimized and remain undertheorized? Also missing from accounts of the shift to online learning are the ways in which faculty who had previously recognized that higher education was never meant to

“work” for all people were able to use the moment to support students in the unlearning of the myths that sustain the illusion of meritocracy.

Although the phrase *return to normal* appears across different spaces in teacher education, mostly in celebratory terms, research problematizing the connection between normal and learning remains lacking. Given that learning loss, delay in learning, and Zoom teaching regularly emerge as topics of concern in TEPs, at least in the post-pandemic world, more research is needed. Although other critical or emancipatory approaches may provide useful models for thinking about teaching, I move beyond these approaches by showing how epistemicide operates as a form of power. As my testimonio shows, the shift to online learning can provide possibilities for confronting epistemicide through a shared sense of a communal space typically not possible in the “normal” classroom.

### **Significance for Teaching**

Disrupting epistemicide refers to confronting the suppression and invalidation of absent subjects in methods course such as the students described in my testimonio (Paraskeva, 2016). Taking the vision that *another teacher education is possible* (Vasquez, 2022), however, first requires naming and confronting our own complicity in epistemicide in the traditional classroom space (Wynter, 2003). Disobeying epistemicide through inclusion of different ways of knowing, which goes beyond traditional modes of critique of the status quo, does more than just disrupt the dislocation of other epistemologies in schools. Transgressing the dominance of “evidence-based” or “best practices” approaches in teacher education—which uphold and defend an assembled complex of Euro-centered epistemologies, racial hierarchies, and cultural imperialism—requires actively disobeying the process of epistemicide that erases “Other” knowledge systems (Mignolo, 2011; Vasquez, 2018).

By their very nature, mainstream or normal lessons and activities move along specific rules and standards of Euro-centered reasoning and epistemologies even when they are expressed through different ideological and paradigmatic lines. By assuming a need for particular “methods” to monitor strictly partitioned boundaries and binaries of “real” knowledge and “home” knowledge, teacher education methods reimpose inequality in the name of efficiency even when attempting to “enact” social justice. Thus, confronting epistemicide involves undoing the epistemological catastrophe of Euro-centered thought and practices attached to normalcy. This normalcy blunts attempts to move into unfamiliar terrains, such as those that seek to problematize the dominant epistemologies that continue to harm people from historically oppressed groups.

### **Final Words**

Radically different teaching and learning based on disobedience of the logics of Euro-centered traditions, such as what occurred in my online classroom, can help reconceptualize online teaching as a path for challenging dominant epistemologies. Through the practice of a different teacher education, we can envision teachers and students analyzing and questioning the reasons for their material realities of our lives through collective dialogue. When this goal is achieved, there is potential for the emergence of epistemological curiosity and the strengthening of students’ abilities to think critically (Utt, 2018). Dialogue by itself, however, is not always necessarily liberatory, especially when guided by rationalism and Euro-centered thought (Zembylas, 2018). For this reason, I argue that disobedience should encompass more than

dialogue. It should involve a practice that uncovers and honors the histories, voices, knowledges, that have been repressed through dominant Euro-centered epistemologies.

A collective space, even an online space, paradoxically, still focuses on one theme or purpose (Biesta, 2015). Like the physical classroom, the online space may provide a shared concentration or focus, but it can still remain oriented around one model of what it means to be a “good” or professional student. Online spaces can provide new pathways when freed from the logics of efficiency and driven by a shared desire and commitment to knowing and learning from each other. By being willing to embrace knowledge typically excluded from teacher education, such as students’ work and family life, our class transcended the limits of conventional classrooms (hooks, 2014). It is my hope that this paper encourages conversation about epistemicide in TEPs and inspires transgressing to address the limits of conventional classrooms.

### References

- Andreotti, V. (2016). (Re) imagining education as an un-coercive re-arrangement of desires. *Other Education*, 5(1), 79-88.
- Biesta, G. J. (2015). *Beyond learning: Democratic education for a human future*. Routledge.
- Chavez, M. S. (2012). Autoethnography, a Chicana's methodological research tool: The role of storytelling for those who have no choice but to do critical race theory. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 45(2), 334-348.
- Domínguez, M. (2019). Decolonial innovation in teacher development: Praxis beyond the colonial zero-point. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 45(1), 47-62.
- Engzell, P., Frey, A., & Verhagen, M. D. (2021). Learning loss due to school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 118(17).
- Grande, S. (2015). *Red pedagogy: Native American social and political thought*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Grawe, N. D. (2022). COVID-19: A developing crisis for quantitative reasoning. *Numeracy*, 15(1), 8.
- hooks, B. (2014). *Teaching to transgress*. Routledge.
- Huber, L. P. (2009). Disrupting apartheid of knowledge: Testimonio as methodology in Latina/o critical race research in education. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 22(6), 639-654.
- Huck, C., & Zhang, J. (2021). Effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on K-12 education: A systematic literature review. *New Waves-Educational Research and Development Journal*, 24(1), 53-84.
- Kaffenberger, M. (2021). Modelling the long-run learning impact of the Covid-19 learning shock: Actions to (more than) mitigate loss. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 81, 102326.
- Medina, (2013.) *The epistemology of resistance: Gender and racial oppression, epistemic injustice, and resistant imaginations*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Mignolo, W. D. (2007). Introduction: Coloniality of power and de-colonial thinking. *Cultural studies*, 21(2-3), 155-167.
- Mignolo, W. D. (2011). Epistemic disobedience and the decolonial option: A manifesto. *Transmodernity*, 1(2), 3-23.
- Paraskeva, J. M. (2016). *Curriculum epistemicide: Towards an itinerant curriculum theory*. Routledge.

- Popkewitz, T. (2015). The “reason” of schooling: Historicizing curriculum studies, pedagogy, and teacher education. Routledge.
- Rodríguez, N. N., & Salinas, C. S. (2019). “La lucha todavía no ha terminado”/The struggle has not yet ended: Teaching immigration through testimonio and difficult funds of knowledge. *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing*, 34(3).
- Roy, A. (2020). The pandemic is a portal. *Financial Times*. Accessed 4 April 2022: <https://www.ft.com/content/10d8f5e8-74eb-11ea-95fe-fcd274e920ca>.
- Santos, B. (2014). Epistemologies of the south: Justice against epistemicide. Paradigm Publishers.
- Soleas, E. K., & Coe-Nesbitt, H. A. (2022). Preservice teacher thriving amid the COVID-19 pandemic: Program lessons learned under siege. *CRISIS AND OPPORTUNITY*, 304.
- Tarabini, A. (2021). The role of schooling in times of global pandemic: A sociological approach. *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, 1-19.
- Teng, M. F., & Wu, J. G. (2021). Tea or tears: Online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of education for teaching*, 47(2), 290-292.
- Utt, J. (2018). A Case for decentering whiteness in education: How eurocentric social studies curriculum acts as a form of White/Euro-centered studies. *Ethnic Studies Review*, 41(1-2), 19-34.
- Vasquez, R., & Altshuler, D. (2017). A critical examination of K-12 ethnic studies: Transforming and liberating praxis. *Journal of Critical Thought and Praxis*, 6(2).
- Vasquez, R. (2018). “They can’t expect to be treated like normal Americans so soon”: Reconceptualizing Latinx immigrants in social studies education. *Journal of Critical Thought and Praxis*, 7(1).
- Vasquez, R. (2019). “Forget about justice:” Survivance and resistance in teacher education. *Journal of Critical Thought and Praxis*, 8(1), 2.
- Vasquez, R. (2021). (Re) inscribing white cultural hegemony: The paradox of culturally relevant pedagogy?. *Educational Studies: A Journal of the American Educational Studies Association*, 57(5), 509-523.
- Vasquez, R. (2022). Another social studies is possible: Challenging the violence of organized forgetting through counternarratives, in A. Vickery, and N. Rodriguez, (Eds.) *Critical Race Theory and Social Studies Futures: From the Nightmare of Racial Realism to Dreaming Out Loud*. Teachers College Press.
- Woolf, L. M. (2022). Time to return to normal? I sure hope not. *Teaching of Psychology*, 49(2), 105-107.
- Wynter, S. (2003). Unsettling the coloniality of being/power/truth/freedom: Towards the human, after man, its overrepresentation—An argument. *CR: The New Centennial Review*, 3(3), 257–337.
- Zembylas, M. (2018). Reinventing critical pedagogy as decolonizing pedagogy: The education of empathy. *Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies*, 40(5), 404-421.
- Zhao, W. (2020). Problematizing “epistemicide” in transnational curriculum knowledge production: China’s suyang curriculum reform as an example. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 50(2), 105-125.