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Public Intellectuals in the Era of Privatization:
An Examination of Academic Freedom and its Protection of Dissident Scholars at U.S. Public Universities

By

Nicole Marie Rangel

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

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in

Education

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in Charge:

Professor Zeus Leonardo, Chair
Professor Na'ilah Suad Nasir
Professor Christopher Newfield
Professor john a. powell

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Abstract

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Professor Zeus Leonardo, Chair

The university is often celebrated as a site for critique where intellectual laborers, protected by academic freedom, may address the pressing social issues of their time and thus contribute to public opinion and to the advancement of knowledge. As the public university increasingly adopts neoliberal practices, however, such as shifting its governing power to private funders and by emphasizing its marketable versus non-marketable benefits to wider society, critical university studies (CUS) argues that academic freedom—the bedrock of the U.S. university system—is under threat. This project contributes to CUS scholarship by examining how academics who are committed to advancing social justice and who actively engage with broad audiences, experience the protection of academic freedom while employed at U.S. public universities. Are faculty members who publicly critique systemic injustice protected by academic freedom? More specifically, using in-depth interviews, I inquire: 1) What are the motivations for, and experiences of scholars when exercising their academic freedom in politically controversial ways? 2) To what extent do economic, racial and gendered politics, as well as faculty members' institutional status impact public universities' commitment to academic freedom? I draw on 31 in-depth interviews with publicly-engaged scholars from three Research One public universities who reflect a diverse range of academic ranks and disciplines as well as racial and gender positionalities in order to better understand what it is like for those who consistently take stands on controversial political issues. This project reveals that, in general, academic

freedom is a stratified freedom drawn across academic-rank lines, reflecting the racial and gender hierarchies of larger society. This research argues that while the culture of the academy encourages conformity rather than ethical risk-taking, the university is still a space of edifying possibilities. By examining the effectiveness of academic freedom and the commendable dissidence of activist-scholars, this dissertation aims to contribute to higher education accountability efforts that seek to reinforce the academy's connection to, and responsibility for the public that it is tasked to serve.

Dedication

To My Trish and Armin, whose commitment to choosing love over fear inspires me constantly.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Background of the Study

This is an examination of academic freedom and its protection of activist-scholars at U.S. public universities when, after the 2016 presidential election, harassment of faculty led by an emboldened right-leaning base has increased significantly (AAUP, 2017). The timing of this study also intersects with the U.S. public university system receiving a fraction of the federal and state support it received in decades past. For example, at my institution, over the last 30 years, the contribution from the state of California to UC Berkeley's budget has fallen from 50 percent to 13 percent (Burawoy, 2016). Many argue that divestment in public universities shifts the priorities of these institutions from serving the greater good, to focus instead on finance and capital expansion (Brown, 2015; Newfield, 2016). Thus, it appears that scholars who speak publically about social justice and the social mission of the public university, are both currently under threat. My interest in bringing more scholarly attention to these issues is an extension of my commitment to liberatory education and reflects my investment in public education. It is also likely that my choice to research this topic has been influenced by the years I have spent at UC Berkeley (UCB), a public institution widely known for its free speech legacy.

In the late 1990's, Professor of Biology, Ignacio Chapela, found himself at the center of an academic freedom controversy involving a $25 million partnership between UC Berkeley and Novartis, a pharmaceutical giant and producer of genetically engineered crops. In 2015, while speaking at an environmental justice rally in front of UCB's California Hall, which houses the chancellor's office, Chapela shared a powerful story about the shifts that he perceives have occurred at UCB.[1] He explained that before he won his tenure denial appeal, right before his contract with the university was about to end, he set up his desk and some chairs in the center of UCB's campus directly outside of California Hall. He held office hours around the clock for five days and five nights. Chapela shared that students and others would gather to show support for his case. In his remarks at the rally, he recalled that one day, during his office hours marathon, around three a.m., he chatted with a janitor who told him a story that revolved around "a simple detail," and gestured to the entrance of

[1] Chapela's remarks from the 2015 Occupy the Farm rally were recorded and can be found here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EvGUDDrH2ls

California Hall. On the front door, one can see the traces of a door handle that is no longer. Chapela recounts,

> There used to be a handle that anybody and everybody could grab on to and pull open. The access to this building, which is actually the brains and point of command for the University of California, since this is the flagship of the University of California—which is the flagship of the intellectual program of the United States, which is the flagship of the intellectual program of Western civilization—the access to that… was open to everyone. That was back in the 60s and 70s.

The janitor in question told Chapela that one night, he witnessed people come to California Hall to remove the handle and replace it with the system that still exists today. Currently, the door only opens from the inside after a security guard looking from inside authorizes entrance to the building. Chapela argues "that was a really important moment of power change—a moment where the… university decided it's not time for people to ask questions anymore… and so the door was closed."

How does a study of dissident scholars illuminate the tensions between current notions of the neoliberal university, democratic citizenship, and struggles of social justice? When the role of students is fundamental in understanding the university as a democratic sphere, why focus on faculty? Mario Savio (2002, p. 68) reflecting on the Free Speech Movement points out,

> We almost lost. This is important to understand. To people today [the FSM seems] successful. [But] we were almost unsuccessful… we worked like crazy to mobilize the students and to educate the faculty. Above all we had to educate the faculty. Students come and go. Faculty had position there, they had jobs, they had tenure in many cases. And if we could educate them, we could win.

While faculty then and now face risks when challenging powerful interests, today, with more available venues to critique power (mainly the Internet), detractors who wish to attack the credibility of, and/or pressure an administration to sanction a faculty member, are able to do so more efficiently than ever before.

For example, the case of Steven Salaita was not only a catalyst for this project, it became a flashpoint in academia that brought to the forefront debates regarding the limits of academic freedom. During July and August of

2014, Israel's Operation Protective Edge killed at least 2,131 Palestinians in Gaza, at least 1,473 were civilians, including 495 children (United Nations [UN], 2015). Unlawful Israeli airstrikes destroyed 18,000 homes as well as public infrastructure, such as schools, markets, and clearly marked hospitals in Gaza (UN, 2015).[2] An Israeli soldier describes the operation saying, "By the time we got out of there, everything was like a sandbox" (Anonymous, 2014). In response, Steven Salaita, a scholar of Palestinian descent and recent hire for a tenure-track position in the American Indian Studies department at the University of Illinois-Urbana Champaign (UIUC), went to twitter to express his solidarity with Palestinians and his outrage at the Israeli government. In a series of tweets, Salaita called into question the morality of the Israeli government and its supporters. One of his more inflammatory tweets read: "At this point, if Netanyahu appeared on TV with a necklace made from the teeth of Palestinian children, would anybody be surprised? #Gaza"(Salaita, 2014). Because of Jewish precarity, vigilance regarding any possible gesture toward anti-Semitism is necessary. Yet, in spite of Salaita pointing out in the Twittersphere the rhetorical problems of conflating critique of Israel with anti-Semitism, pro-Israel students, faculty members, and donors of UIUC contended that Salaita's tweets were a form of anti-Semitic hate speech (Mackey, 2014). As this study's evidence suggests, this issue is complex and multifaceted.

After giving up a tenured position at Virginia Tech and preparing to move with his family across country, Salaita's job offer at UIUC was rescinded just two weeks before he was scheduled to begin teaching. Former UIUC Chancellor, Phyllis Wise, informed Salaita that the board of trustees voted to "block" his appointment (Mackey, 2014). Then Chancellor Wise insisted that her decision was not based on Salaita's criticism of Israel, rather it was due to his lack of civility and the disrespectful tone of his tweets (as cited in Jaschik, 2014). A Freedom of Information request shows, however, that the chancellor's decision was coincidentally made only *after* wealthy donors threatened to stop giving to the university if UIUC hired Salaita (Mackey, 2014).[3] While much controversy was

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[2] According to Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, the violations of laws of war that were committed were the following: 1) The reckless and disproportionate use of deadly force in densely populated urban areas, 2) Attacks on medical facilities and workers and UN schools sheltering displaced civilians, 3) Attacks on civilians and the targeting of civilian infrastructure and the homes of Palestinian political and military officials. (http://imeu.org/article/50-days-of-death-destruction-israels-operation-protective-edge)

[3] In the midst of receiving harsh backlash for firing Salaita, Phyllis Wise resigned from her position as UIUC Chancellor and Vice President.

stirred up regarding the blurred line between academic and private citizen (e.g., academics' use of social media), "civility," and one's "responsibility" as a university employee—ultimately, academic freedom protects not only a faculty member's political views expressed as a private citizen, but the tone with which they express them as well. In spite of an AAUP's investigative finding that UIUC violated Salaita's academic freedom, and Salaita's large settlement after suing UIUC, Salaita currently works as a school bus driver after years of unsuccessfully attempting to secure a tenure-track position. This case shows that much is at stake in academics' use of speech, particularly in matters that are politicized, such as the Israel/Palestine question. It also points out the blurred line between the academy and the public because, as with this case, intellectuals are also private citizens.

The Salaita case raises many questions that are germane to this study. Was his firing a rare instance of wealthy donors interfering and overriding university rules of conduct in order to silence a critical voice, or is it the tip of the iceberg concerning power and influence in higher education? Are certain political issues, such as the Israel/Palestine conflict, more risky to take up compared to others? How prevalent is self-censorship and the concern of "career suicide" amongst scholars with oppositional politics? How do activist-scholars decide when the stakes are too high to speak publically? To what extent do they feel responsible for their public commentary and who holds them accountable? Ultimately, this dissertation will not find or offer easy answers to social issues that are complex and when multiple forms of precarity are at stake.

A Brief Contextualization of U.S. Higher Education

While the foundation of the modern U.S. university is constituted by the dispossession of Indigenous peoples' land and the exploitation of enslaved Africans (Rodriguez, 2012; Wilder, 2014), during the mid-twentieth century, public universities began to serve people of color and the working class like never before. As national mobilizations around civil rights changed U.S. society, this evolution in democracy also impacted its universities, initiating more apertures for democratic knowledge production. Rather than a training ground solely for the elites, U.S. public colleges and universities vowed to: generate useful knowledge that would benefit the greater good, make education accessible to the masses, help prepare young people for responsible civic participation, and cultivate people's ability to live meaningful lives (Arum & Roksa, 2015; Calhoun, 2008; Morrison, 2001). Yet scholars have questioned these commitments. For example, Choi (2016) asks, why is it that public

universities in this country do not offer a curriculum on democracy, such as democracy 101, 350 and 440, if we value democracy so highly? While the university has contributed to making the U.S. a world leader in terms of technological advances and corporate wealth, its leadership in promoting what are considered to be basic human rights, such as free higher education and health care, is yet to be seen. Just as a more engaged national citizenry initiated some democratic changes in the university during the twentieth century, shifts in capitalism also have had significant effects on the financial operations, governance, and educational agendas of institutions of higher education, one of which is its neoliberalization.

To some scholars, in the 21st century, the discourse surrounding public education no longer rings so democratically. The premium placed on market metrics to measure the value and purpose of the university makes the public-centered educational objectives listed above incoherent ideas (Brown, 2015; Choi, 2016; Giroux, 2014). For example, the Obama administration put forth "new consumer information" for prospective college students that place a positive ROI—return on investment—as the leading metric for rating colleges. The discourse used in the administration's "higher education scorecard" did not factor in any noneconomic valuations (Brown, 2015; Stratford, 2015). Viewing education as a private, rather than social good has ratcheted up under the Trump administration's Secretary of Education, Betsy DeVos. DeVos, an avid promoter of the privatization of public schools, has called for deep cuts to federal funding and for rolling back protections for students (National Education Association, 2019). Brown (2015) argues that under neoliberal logic "knowledge, thought, and training are valued and desired almost exclusively for their contribution to capital enhancement… whether that capital is human, corporate, or financial" (p.177). When higher education is conceived in these terms, it becomes difficult to imagine education as a means for developing a self-actualizing citizenry that understands that the well-being of all life on the planet is under its stewardship.

Universities are neither the only institutions guilty of reducing people into market actors, nor can they be accused of being the sole culprit of mass mis-education (Brown, 2015; Comaroff & Comaroff, 2001; Smith, 2002). For example, in March 2016, CBS CEO, Les Moonves, admitted to giving Donald Trump and his racist, misogynistic and zenophobic rhetoric a disproportionate amount of coverage during the presidential election. Moonves stated, "Who would have thought that this circus would come to town? It may not be good for America, but it's damn good for CBS" (as cited in Collins, 2016). Trump now sits as the 45th president of the U.S. after a successful but controversial campaign for

the oval office. CBS and other corporate mainstream media showcase the atrocities of our time while offering little structural critique or suggestions for social redress. Similar to the business agendas of a neoliberal university, many journalistic decisions have also become profit-driven decisions, striving to titillate, rather than inform, an audience of consumers.

In all its manifestations, neoliberalism interpellates students as human capital and as consumers rather than as engaged, critical thinking citizens. Yet we find ourselves in a political moment that would benefit from the latter. How, for example, might the academy help people make sense of a U.S. president who tweets lies and insults that threaten members of our most vulnerable communities? How can the university help us understand why a U.S. Supreme Court Justice, just a few years ago, suggested Black students are better off not attending top-tier universities (powell, 2015)? In line with Leonardo (2013) and others, the term "critical," in this study connotes understanding the inner workings of a social issue in order to come up with just solutions. Leonardo (2016) explains:

> Critique is the commitment to understanding contradictions in the human condition and our mutual implication in them, which is not conditioned by their resolution but an intellectual vocation in the ongoing project of liberation (p. 3).

Thus, a critical understanding of race in the U.S., for example, involves a historical and political analysis of the ideological and structural factors that perpetuate global white dominance today. In other words, it necessitates an understanding of race as a central stratifying mechanism of our shared material reality, connected to a legacy of racialized state violence, colonialism and capitalism (Du Bois, 2008; Goldberg, 2009), as well as an understanding of how race shapes self-perception (Fanon, 2008; Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Nasir & Al-Amin, 2006). Moreover, a critical analysis of race stems from, and is informed by, a long history of resistance and collective healing (Avila & Parker, 2000; LaDuke, 2005; Taylor, 1998). Under neoliberalism, however, the cultivation of the mental faculties and ethical sensibilities that critical analysis requires is viewed as an unprofitable investment, which is reflected in the defunding of the humanities, and the divestment of public education, more broadly (Lye, Newfield & Vernon, 2011; Nussbaum, 2012).

Despite its contradictions and the substantial critiques one can make about the university, many still find it to be a place of possibility. As Edward Said (2004) asserts, "the American university remains the one public space available

to real alternative intellectual practices: no other institution like it on such a scale exists anywhere else in the world today" (p. 71). While the politics of the academy today is bundled tightly with the legacy of white supremacy and imperialism (Grosfoguel, 2013; Wilder, 2014) as well as modern day corporatization (Donoghue, 2008; Steck, 2013), Kelley (2016) reminds us that there is also a long history of activist-scholars and students who repurpose the university in ways that facilitates its radicalization. He admits, however, that institutional radicalization is an improbability. Nevertheless, examining scholars who utilize their access to broad audiences to stimulate intellectual-political-ethical developments in the larger community may help illuminate interventions, strategies and possibilities that further democracy. Scholars who act as public intellectuals address issues that not only inspire international and local liberation movements, but are themselves inspired by social struggles, serving as bridges that connect the academy with the larger community (Lipsitz, 2008).

Thankfully, coalitions from all sectors of society (e.g., education, criminal justice, the environment, public health) are diligently working to address the injustices of our time. In recent years, for example, mobilizations on nearly ninety campuses in the United States, led largely by students of color, have been organizing against racism taking place on their campuses as well as their universities' financial entanglements. These efforts have resulted in the resignation of highly ranked administrators as well as universities acknowledging for the first time, their legacy of racism (Turner, 2016). These protests, as well as the 2016 and 2020 presidential election process, were and are currently influenced by social movements demanding radical change. Indeed, an inclusive and just world will depend on the labor and solidarity of public intellectuals, inside and outside the academy, who offer critical perspectives and hopeful examples of alternative ways of co-existing.

Revolutionary breakthroughs often occur once contradictions are sufficiently exposed. As Patricia Hill Collins (2012) suggests, "We need to do a better job of analyzing how academia masks or hides its own political behavior" (p. 147). One analytical consideration is to examine any direct or implied attempts to depoliticize academics, their speech and scholarship, central to this dissertation's investigation. Kelley (2016) explains, "depoliticization involves construing inequality, subordination, marginalization, and social conflict, which all require political analysis and political solutions, as personal and individual… or as natural, religious, or cultural" (para. 30). If the university is to develop people's capacity to resolve the conflicts and injustices of our time, encouraging rigorous political inquiry becomes imperative. Jose Ortega (2014) suggests "not only the life of the university, but the whole new life must be fashioned by…

authenticity" (p. 121). Thus, striving for authenticity and free inquiry in a higher education context requires a close examination of the ostensible "bedrock" of the public university—academic freedom, which this project aims to investigate.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to closely examine how academic freedom is valued and practiced on an individual level by activist-scholars, as well as by the public institutions in which they are embedded. This examination pays keen attention to the social and institutional forces that influence the public higher education system in the United States today. No examination of this kind could ignore the profound impact of neoliberalism. Political Scientist, Wendy Brown (2015), describes neoliberalism as a "peculiar form of reason" that when applied to the public university, converts an institution intended to advance democracy, into a site that entrenches social inequalities (p. 17). She argues that when neoliberal rationality transcribes market values to education, knowledge is then construed almost exclusively in terms of capital enhancement rather than as a resource for developing critical thinking and compassionate citizenship capable of solving the social problems of our time. Historically, college campuses have been romanticized as spaces where thinkers can engage in inquiry and knowledge production that challenge conventional out-of-date ideas. Developed to protect the freedom of speech of the professoriate, academic freedom has contributed to scholars' participation in counter-hegemonic projects, which Gramsci (1971) famously describes as the defining feature of the "organic intellectual."[4] Indeed, interventions made by intellectuals have, and can continue to influence and inspire liberation struggles, such as the third world feminist movement (Mohanty, Russo, & Torres, 1991), the Black Panther Party (Jackson, 1994), the Irish Republican movement (Dangerfield, 1986), the Cuban revolution (Young, 2001), and the Black Lives Matter movement (Garza, 2014), just to name a few.

Many argue, however, that the university's adoption of neoliberal values and practices, such as colorblind racism and profit-driven agendas, creates an "anti-intellectual" culture (Cole, 2015; Ginsberg, 2011; Giroux, 2010; Said, 1996) where academic freedom acts as a "ruse" that covers up the "ongoingness of unfreedom" experienced by many (Chuh, 2018, p. 158). Rather than

[4] Invoking the same spirit of critique and solidarity, I chose to use "public intellectual" rather than "organic intellectual" to emphasis the centrality of the intellectual's relationship to the public.

encouraging ethical and political developments that challenge the status-quo, public intellectuals often find that the academy penalizes dissent in order to maintain a culture that is politically restrictive yet financially lucrative (Giroux S., 2010; Schrecker, 2010) and that "legitimize[s] the ravages of capitalism and colonialism" (Chuh, 2018, p. 159). The university, like all the individuals that participate within it, is not without its contradictions. It has been an institution that serves both democracy and empire. When faculty members threaten the interests of university elites, the stakes can be high, as evidenced by the Salaita case.

Extensive research addresses the threats to academic freedom due to the neoliberal shifts in academic culture, such as the erosion of tenure-track positions (Donoghue, 2008; Reichman, 2019), and the increased decision making power of board of trustees and university administrators (Ginsberg, 2011; Scott, 2019), however, scholars have not adequately assessed the qualitative experiences of activist-scholars in regards to exercising their academic freedom. This dissertation addresses this gap in the literature by investigating the economic, racial and gendered politics that impact how academic freedom is valued and negotiated by academics that engage with broad audiences regarding matters of social justice. More specifically, this research asks: 1) what are the motivations for, and experiences of scholars when exercising their academic freedom in politically controversial ways? 2) To what extent do economic, racial and gendered politics impact public universities' commitment to academic freedom?

Significance of the Study

The effectiveness of academic freedom is not merely a concern for academics bereft of tenure, but rather to all those interested in the university contributing to the advancement of democracy. Joan Scott (2019) describes academic freedom as a kind of "covenant with the public," which was created to protect the mission of serving the public good. However, Scott explains that the common conflation of academic freedom with free speech "rests in the eroded public mission for higher education" (as quoted in Brown, 2019, p. 1). This dissertation recenters the university's social mission and reflexively examines the effectiveness of academic freedom. The university can prepare students for informed civic participation if students are exposed to critical perspectives necessary for making sense of the world around them. This is facilitated by intellectuals within it who actively affirm our shared humanity, and who challenge politics of indifference and violence. As john a. powell (2012) reminds

us, “justice involves claiming a shared and mutual humanity” (p. xvii).

The world's greatest problems are not a result of people being unable to read and write. They result from diverse peoples being unable to understand one another and work together to interrogate and transform dominant systems of power (Banks, 2005). As the “higher education scorecard” mentioned above illustrates: the non-market benefits of higher education are being underestimated. Considering the persistence and normalization of violence threatening life and human dignity from Oakland to Gaza, keeping the public university accountable to producing alternative perspectives, policies, and practices is a matter of urgency. In other words, rather than framing higher education accountability in terms of market values and rankings, how might it serve society if universities adopted a reflexive praxis anchored in its social mission? Towards this end, this project highlights the praxis of this study’s participants who point out when there are inconsistencies and misalignments of values and actions, modeling what social accountability within the academy can look like.

Scholars have offered compelling empirical evidence and theoretical arguments that address the dangerous impact of the neoliberalization of the university for the future of democracy. While there are a few qualitative studies that examine the intersections between academic freedom and neoliberalism (Altbach, 2001; Thompson, 2016; Wildavsky & O'Connor, 2013), a qualitative multi-sited investigation into the effectiveness of academic freedom remains unexplored. This project aims to fill this gap and extend this literature through structural and behavioral levels of analysis. Through a qualitative approach incorporating in-depth interviews with activist-scholars from three institutions, this dissertation explores how and to what extend academic freedom is valued and practiced at U.S. public universities during this neoliberal era. In addition to advancing our understanding of how academic freedom is operating, this study aims to inform institutional polices and practices contributing to higher education accountability efforts, as well as by elucidating ways of reinforcing the academy’s connection to, and responsibility for the public it is tasked to serve.

Overview of Chapters

This chapter has been a brief introduction to the political and economic factors impacting U.S. public higher education today, in particular the safeguard of academic freedom. It also aims to recenter the university’s social mission and its potential to facilitate counter-hegemonic projects. Chapter Two provides a review of relevant literature, which further contextualizes this study. I first

provide a study of the history and social function of modern U.S. colleges and universities (beginning in the 19th century). While the public university is a site of multiple conflicting agendas, I give an in-depth overview of two: frameworks that understand the public university as functioning primarily as a democratizing agent in society vs. frameworks that underscore the university's role in generating economic advancements. Since racism emerged as a reoccurring theme in this study, literature examining the role of colorblind racism in the academy is also discussed. Finally, I review literature addressing the debate regarding what constitutes academic freedom, and I provide a brief history of academic freedom controversies in the United States. Chapter Three describes how my research methodologies, critical university studies (Brown, 2015; Newfield, 2008, 2016; Slaughter & Leslie, 1997) and intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991; Harris, & Leonardo, 2018, Moraga & Anzaldúa, 2015), informed my decision to conduct in-depth interviews with activist-scholars employed at U.S. public universities as the means for best addressing my research questions. This chapter also describes the criteria used for participant selection, and the processes of collecting and analyzing the data.

The next two chapters encompass the findings of this qualitative research project. Chapter Four explores my first research question by assessing the motivations for, and experiences of, dissident scholars when considering whether to exercise their academic freedom in politically controversial ways. Chapter Five explores my second research question by examining my participants' perceived protections of academic freedom according to their social identifications (race and gender) and institutional positions (academic rank and academic discipline). In Chapter Six, the conclusion, I review the major findings of this dissertation as well as summarize its limitations. I end with broader reflections on how this research is relevant to those interested in public higher education prioritizing its social mission, offering recommendations and possible directions for future research.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

The following literature review contextualizes the questions raised in this project. I first provide a study of the history and social function of modern U.S. colleges and universities (beginning in the 19th century) paying close attention to the tension that exists between democratic visions of the university versus neoliberal approaches to higher education. As the findings reveal, institutionalized racism was often entangled in the participants' experiences exercising academic freedom. Therefore, I explain and chart the presence of institutionalized racism in the academy, its relationship to neoliberalism, and its impact on faculty who engage in public critique of white supremacy, particularly faculty of color. Finally, I discuss the ambiguous yet ostensible bedrock of higher education—academic freedom.

Mission Creep of the Public University

While the university is often a space of in-depth study into the workings of the world, Toni Morrison (2001) argues that the innate feature of the university is not to examine, but rather to produce power-laden and value-ridden discourse. This discourse (de)legitimizes knowledge, shapes local to international policies, and influences the social imaginary. Therefore, I begin with the questions, for whom and for what purpose is the public university? I map engagements of these questions by describing two competing narratives about higher education, which inform my research questions. The first emerged in the early twentieth century and understands the raison d'être of the public university as serving the advancement of democracy. By mid-20th century, however, many argue that the public university experienced *mission creep*[5], pivoting away from serving as a democratizing institution, instead mimicking business culture and prioritizing first and foremost the bottom line (Carnoy & Levin, 1985; Donoghue, 2008; Duderstadt & Womack, 2004). This second narrative of neoliberalism, charged with "undoing the demos" (Brown, 2015), or what Sheila Slaughter and Larry Leslie (1997) have labeled "academic capitalism," reduces higher education to a lucrative investment in capital—human, economic and social.

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[5]Originating from military lexicon, *mission creep* describes a gradual shift in objective during the course of a military campaign, often resulting in an unplanned long-term commitment. This term is adopted by various scholars to describe shifts that have significantly altered the mission of universities (Brown, 2015; Carnoy & Levin, 1985; Donoghue, 2008; Duderstadt & Womack, 2004).

The modern public university. Modeled after those in Europe, the first colleges and universities in the United States, established in the 17th century, were elitist institutions that served as intellectual training grounds for those who would hold political and religious authority (Rüegg, 2003; Carlson, 2010). The focus of this historical overview, however, is the modern U.S. public higher education system, which initiated in the 19th century. The modern U.S. public university is ostensibly more accessible, and adopts a liberal arts curriculum intended to provide a well-rounded education to the masses. Jose Ortega (2008), in *The Mission of the University*, argues that the liberal arts facilitates the transmission and analysis of culture, which he defines as the "*vital* system of ideas of a period… is what saves human life from being a mere disaster; it is what enables man to live a life which is something above meaningless tragedy or inward disgrace" (p. 89, 107; italics in original). The humanities, for example, is a cornerstone of a liberal arts education, exploring subjectivity, ethics and culture, and helps students to understand how we make meaning of and relate to the world in which we live.

Even before the neoliberalization of the university, when the liberal arts were not experiencing downsizing, curricula within these disciplines varied greatly in terms of scope and critique. Nussbaum (2010) states that 50 years ago in the United States, under a liberal arts curriculum, "students knew little about the world outside Europe and North America. Nor did they learn much about minorities in their own nation" (p. 123). One could therefore argue that liberal arts today, where valued and supported, has evolved due to the incorporation of courses such as ethnic and gender studies, which are intended to foster critical awareness of diverse epistemological perspectives.

The institutionalization of the liberal arts and humanities, as well as the unprecedented accessibility to underrepresented populations during the mid-20th century, marked a historic democratic achievement in the United States (Brown, 2015; Donoghue, 2008; Newfield, 2008; Nussbaum, 2010). Brown (2015, p. 185) states:

> Regardless of the quantitative and qualitative limits on its realization, the radicalism of this event cannot be overstated: for the first time in human history, higher-educational policy and practice were oriented towards the many, tacitly destining [students] for intelligent engagement within the world, rather than economic servitude or mere survival.

In the midst of a vibrant civil rights movement, with an anchored liberal arts curriculum and strong federal support that increased its accessibility, the public

university became a hub for democratic knowledge production and organizing.

Consequently, in 1975, the Trilateral commission[6] conducted an international study entitled "The Crisis of Democracy," which gave special attention to U.S. public universities. This report argued that there is a direct relationship between higher education and increases in social mobility and civic participation. This report concluded that the "crisis" was due to people no longer feeling "the same compulsion to obey those whom they had previously considered superior to themselves… each [minority] group claimed its right to participate equally" (Crozier, Huntington & Watanuki, 1975, p. 74). The report (p. 110, 113) concluded that the university in the mid-twentieth century was the:

> single most important status variable affecting political participation and attitudes… the more educated a person is, the more likely he is to participate in politics, to have a more consistent and more ideological outlook on political issues, and to hold more 'enlightened' or 'liberal' or 'change oriented' views on social, cultural, and foreign policy issues… Al Smith once remarked that 'the only cure for the evils of democracy is more democracy.' Our analysis suggests that applying that cure at the present time could well be adding fuel to the flames. Instead, some of the problems of governance in the United States today stem from an excess of democracy—an 'excess of democracy' in much the same sense in which David Donald used the term to refer to the consequences of the Jacksonian revolution which helped to precipitate the Civil War. Needed, instead, is a greater degree of moderation in democracy.

The report's title "The Crisis of Democracy" and its findings, exemplify the ambiguity that envelops the concept of democracy.

The university as a democratic institution. Democracy is arguably one the most contested terms in our modern political vocabulary. Brown (2015, p. 20) explains that the term democracy has stood for:

> Everything from free elections to free markets, from protests against dictators to law and order, from the centrality of rights to the stability of

[6] The Commission was created in 1973 and brought together leaders within the private sector from Europe, North America, and Asia, to discuss "problems and threats" of "global concern" (See http://trilateral.org/).

> states, from the voice of the assembled multitude to the protection of individuality and the wrong of dicta imposed by crowns… for others it is what the West has never really had.

Despite the term's ambiguity, it is important to employ an open and productive definition of democracy that can guide the social imagination and serve as an ethical anchor. Therefore, in this study, democracy is defined as a process whereby people authorize the laws and major political decisions that impact social life, and co-create social conditions that facilitate the self-actualization of all peoples in a diverse plurality (Beane, 1990; Biesta, 2006; Brown, 2015). Democracy is a form of political power, and like all manifestations of power, it can be lost if it is not reasserted constantly. Therefore, democracy requires an engaged, informed, imaginative and responsible citizenry committed to protecting itself from economic, social and political forces that threaten its survival. Brown (2015) states that democracy "may not demand universal political participation, but it cannot survive the people's wholesale ignorance of the forces shaping their lives and limning their futures" (p. 179). In other words, citizens cannot rule themselves if they are not educated on the basic workings and social impact of the institutions that shape collective life.

More than the transfer of knowledge and skills that help students adapt to the prevailing social order, a democratic education presents learning and civic engagement as complementary and liberatory life-long processes (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 2010; Nasir, 2012). Democratic education requires challenging the status-quo in order to improve the quality of life for all citizens. Therefore, critical theorists and pedagogues believe that the public university, like all social institutions, must serve as a space where democracy is modeled and practiced (Biesta, 2006; Collins, 2012; Giroux, 2010). Morrison (2010) warns, "If the university does not take seriously and rigorously its role as guardian of wider civic freedoms, as interrogator of more and more complex ethical problems, as servant and preserver of deeper democratic practices, then some other regime… will do it for us, in spite of us, and without us" (p. 278). Henry Giroux (2014, para.1) concurs:

> Higher education must be widely understood as a democratic public sphere—a space in which education enables students to develop a keen sense of prophetic justice, claim their moral and political agency, utilize critical analytical skills, and cultivate an ethical sensibility through which they learn to respect the rights of others… higher education has a

> responsibility to… educate students to make authority and power politically and morally accountable.

Giroux and other scholars critical of the university attribute many of the shortcomings of higher education currently to the rise of neoliberalism (Harney & Moten, 2013; Kelly, 2016; Newfield, 2008).

The neoliberal university. While the public university is commonly understood as having a democratizing mission, many argue that since its beginnings, mass education in the United States has been construed mainly as a form of capital investment, intended to increase economic growth (mostly for the wealthy) and to ensure a passive citizenry (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Giroux, 1984; Freire, 1993; Jackson, 1990). If one claims that the public university had an ethos of democracy during its golden years (1950s-60s) when it enjoyed strong governmental support, it can be argued that by the 1970s and 1980s, this institution underwent a radical repurposing.

Wanting to change the ideological composition of U.S. higher education, Republican lawmakers like Ronald Reagan and economists like Milton Friedman, successfully advocated against subsidizing "intellectual curiosity" (Schrag, 2004; Schrecker, 2010). This view of education was reflective of the global economic trends at the time that promoted privatization, deregulation and free trade. The higher education policy changes from this era, as well as nation-wide divestment in higher education after the economic crisis of 2007, primed the way for what is often referred to as *the neoliberalization of the university* (Brown, 2015; Giroux, 2014). Scholars have described this as a process where a university adopts the following neoliberal policies and practices: a disregard and divestment in public goods, the selling off of resources to outside investors, suppressing human and labor rights, and glorification of free trade and deregulation (Brown, 2015; Choi, 2016; Smith, 2002).[7]

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[7] Neoliberalism is considered a transnational phenomenon that originated as an "experiment" imposed on Chile by Augusto Pinochet and Chilean economists after their 1973 overthrow of Salvador Allende. The International Monetary Fund played a fundamental role by imposing structural adjustments on the Global South over the next two decades (Choi, 2016; Harvey, 2007; Smith, 2002). Similarly, in the West, Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan sought free-market reforms, which also involved structural adjustment that forced borrowing countries to adopt a free-market-based economy, which eroded the rights of the workers and the poor (Choi, 2016; Green, 2003; Schmitz, 1999). Neoliberalism is at once a "global phenomenon, yet inconstant, differentiated, unsystemic, [and] impure" (Brown, 2015, p. 20).

Research has examined the many manifestations of neoliberal rationality in the university context, such as divestment in humanities departments and community-partnered projects (Donoghue, 2008; Nussbaum, 2010), the decline of both tenure and faculty representation in university governance (Ginsberg, 2011; Schrecker, 2010), increased partnerships with the private sector, resulting in corporate-controlled academic research (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997), as well as salary increases for top administrators and athletic coaches vis-à-vis increases in student fees, and therefore student debt (Choi, 2016; Ehrenberg, 2000). [8] In Newfield's (2008) *Unmaking the Public University*, he describes the increasing trend of privatized 'publics' that are beginning to resemble their for-profit college kin by adopting cost-effective strategies such an increase in online classes, the hiring of mostly part-time instructors, and increasing out-of-state admissions.

When economic growth becomes the measure of success for institutions of higher education, equal access plays second fiddle. As Nussbaum (2012) suggests, "a nation can grow very nicely while the… poor remain illiterate"(p. 20). By perpetuating the values of competition rather than critical citizenship, self-interest rather than concern for the greater good, and instilling in students the belief that the market can solve all personal and social problems, a society's political imagination becomes hamstrung. Under neoliberalism, democracy is conflated with profit-making and the ability to purchase and consume rather than a commitment to collective social emancipation (Choi, 2016; Harvey, 2007). Giroux (2014) laments, "the academy's retreat from public life leaves an ethical and intellectual void in higher education" (p. 10). Under the neoliberalization of the university, students feel neither the desire, nor do they have the intellectual or ethical sensibilities necessary for socially-responsible participation in a heterogeneous world.

The public university and the public. The idea of *public* in the United States is often bound with the ideas of democracy and heterogeneity, often positioned in a dichotomous relationship with the *private*. Jurgen Habermas (1962/1989) defined the public sphere as "made up of private people gathered together… and articulating the needs of society with the state" (p. 176). Habermas' notion of the public sphere has been rightly criticized for presuming that all participate as social equals (Fraser, 1990). powell & Mendendian (2011), for instance, complicate the public/private binary and

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[8] For example, over the past two decades, many public universities spent less than half of their total budget on academic programs. Funds are instead spent on non-academic investments, such as inter-collegiate athletics, marketing, and salaries for administrators (Brown, 2015; Donoghue, 2008; Duderstadt & Womack, 2004).

contend that it is more appropriate to understand society as composed of four, rather than two domains: public, private, non–public/non– private, and corporate. The authors (2011, p. 121) explain:

> We associate 'private' space with our home or other domains perceived to be free from government surveillance, where there is maximal freedom, privacy, and minimal governmental regulation… In contrast, we associate 'public' space with government activity or space where everyone is welcome. We think of public libraries, parks, roads and waterways, and public services, such as police, fire, and educational provisions, which are available to all citizens.

According to the authors, the "non–public/ non–private" domain is occupied by individuals from marginalized groups, such as "racial minorities living in concentrated poverty, undocumented immigrants, the incarcerated, and the formerly incarcerated" that enjoy neither the rights of the public sphere nor the individual liberties associated with the private sphere (2011, p. 86, p. 136). Others refer to this sphere as the "counterpublic" and argue that these spaces "can function both as spaces of withdrawal and as bases for… bring[ing] fore issues that might have been overlooked, purposely ignored, or suppressed by dominant publics" (Felski, 1989; Kampurakis, 2016, para. 4). Finally, powell & Mendendian (2011) describe the corporate sphere, which is the epicenter of neoliberal activity. The corporate sphere is also intrinsically linked to the history of the U.S. university system.

While many elite institutions, such as Harvard and Princeton are regarded as private, initially, they were not categorized that way (powell & Mendendian, 2011; Whitehead, 1973). They were founded by and intended to serve the specific needs of the colonies, in particular, to train and prepare future colonial leaders and clergy (Collins, 2019; Karabel, 2006). However, in 1819, the landmark decision of *Dartmouth College v. Woodward,* decided that Dartmouth was a private institution. This decision initiated the "emancipation" of the corporation from state control (powell & Mendendian, 2011, p. 90).[9] This decision not only laid the foundation for the "privatization" of most of the colonial (Ivy League) colleges during the nineteenth century, it also set

[9] powell & Mendendian (2011) explain that originally, corporations were created and controlled by the state, but gradually, through lobbying and legislation, gained rights, personhood, and eventually constitutional protections, which facilitated corporate intervention in politics and policy-making. "No longer a pawn, [corporations] were now a major player" (p. 102).

precedent for the modern university system and the rise of corporate America (Newmyer, 2006; powell & Mendendian, 2011).

Today, those invested in neoliberalism, frame deregulation and governmental non–interference as "a defense of individual liberty and personal freedom" making the case for increased privatization and corporate expansion in all spheres of society (Collins, 2012; powell & Mendendian, 2011, p. 133; Napolitano, 2006). However, a democratic society depends on public institutions, like the public university, for its services, making government interference important for ensuring a fair and just society. The devaluation and dwindling commitment to all things public in exchange for all things private, jeopardizes democratic accountability, civil rights, human rights, economic justice, environmental justice, and the nation's welfare (Brown, 2015; Giroux, 2015b; Newfield, 2010).

Collins (2012) explains that neoliberal discourse, which alleges that privatization begets freedom, "has covert yet powerful racial undertones" (p. 82). The adoption of neoliberal values, she claims, resulted in the abandonment of public institutions by racial minorities who began experiencing expanded rights. Collins (2012, p. 82) tells:

> Civil Rights activists had no way to anticipate how a new colorblind racism would effectively stonewall school integration initiatives. The early trickle away from public schools by middle-class white parents… opened the floodgates of white flight from public institutions of all sorts.

Collins continues that public institutions, such as public schools, public health and public transportation, become devalued spaces containing poor people of color and "anyone else who cannot afford to escape" (p. 82). Thus, privatization in all arenas of social life has become actively sought after, connoting safety and whiteness. The majority of the participants of this study publicly critique white supremacy (inside and outside the academy), many of whom are faculty members of color. Therefore, for contextualization, what follows is a discussion of white supremacy and the academy.

Colorblind Racism and the Academy

Colorblind racism is understood as a post-civil rights manifestation of white supremacy that downplays the material reality of racial oppression by severing that reality from its historical and structural roots (Bonilla-Silva, 2006;

Haney-Lopez, 2006).[10] By undermining, ignoring or denying the significance of racial inequality, colorblind rationale construes racism as a personal failing rather than institutionalized ideology and practices (Goldberg, 2009; Leonardo, 2009; Haney-Lopez, 2006). Thus, if one believes she is not a racist, colorblindness can serve as "ideological armor" for the psyche, protecting an individual from any sense of guilt or accountability vis-á-vis the existence of racial injustice (Bonilla-Silva, 2006, p. 3). As poet, Sy Stokes, comments, "no snowflake wants to take responsibility for the avalanche."[11] Scholars argue that a post-civil rights era has popularized a racial discourse coded in ways that covertly reproduce white supremacy (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Obasogie, 2013; powell, 2015). Thus, colorblindness and neoliberalism in the United States work in tandem, perpetuating shared ideological commitments, such as the renunciation of a legacy of structural oppression, as well as the opposition to government interventions that takes this history into account. Instead, both hail individualism, competition, and "equal opportunity" (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). For these reasons, it is important to understand these two phenomena jointly (Leonardo & Tran, 2013; Giroux, S. 2010).[12]

Goldberg (2009) refers to colorblindness or "racelessness" as a "neoliberal attempt to go beyond" race, without ever having to come to terms with structural racism (p. 221). The collusion of these phenomena is reflected in laws and market-based policies that detrimentally and disproportionately affect communities of color, e.g.—the erosion of the welfare state, the implementation of No Child Left Behind, and the booming industry of mass incarceration (Alexander, 2010; Kelley, 2016; Leonardo, 2007). Neoliberal-colorblind discourse makes invisible the racist ideology perpetuated in social practices like those just mentioned. Leonardo (2007, p. 267) offers key discursive maneuvers that characterize colorblind discourse:

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[10] While colorblindness has become the prevailing racial discourse, it predates the civil rights era and can be traced back to pre-Civil War debates (See Gotanda, 1991).

[11] Sy Stokes is a graduate from UCLA. This quote is from a spoken word poem Stokes wrote about the legacy of racism at UCLA. Retrieved from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BEO3H5BOlFk

[12] Neoliberalism and colorblindness are components of what Collin's (2002) calls the "matrix of domination." The Black feminist tradition reminds us that race and class inequality have historically reinforced hetero-patriarchy as well (Crenshaw, 1991; hooks, 1989). While critiques of patriarchy were not as central as critiques of racial injustice made by the participants of this study, gender is discussed more in-depth in chapter five.

1. Race and racism are declining in significance.
2. Racism is largely isolated, an exception to the rule.
3. Individualizes racism as irrational and pathological.
4. Individualizes success and failure.
5. Blames people of color for their limitations and behaviors.
6. Mainly a study of attitude and attitudinal changes, rather than actual behavior.
7. Downplays institutional relations or the racialized system.
8. Plays up racial progress.
9. Emphasizes class stratification as the explanation for racism.
10. Downplays the legacy of slavery and genocide (as long ago).

Bonilla-Silva (2006) adds that colorblind discourse also includes the avoidance of racial terminology altogether and leverages arguments for reverse racism. Thus, neoliberal-colorblind discourse covertly preserves white supremacy, uses a level-playing-field narrative, and cripples society's radical imagination (Gallagher, 2003; Giroux, 2015a; Kelley, 2002). This interplay between neoliberalism and white supremacy/colorblindness in U.S. institutions of higher education has become an integral topic of research to critical examinations of the university.

In a university context, neoliberal-colorblindness is reflected in many of its intellectual practices and institutional policies, such as the elimination of affirmative action and gaps in admission access among minority students (Nasir, 2012; Olivas, 2005), the Eurocentric canon (Banks, 1991; Said 1979), and the underrepresentation of faculty of color (Turner, González, & Wood, 2008), to name a few. While the representation of people of color within the academy has increased over the decades, academic institutions are often perceived as greatly inhospitable to those from communities that were previously excluded.[13] The increase of faculty of color is often framed as a reflection of an institution's commitment to diversity, yet some scholars argue that those who are rewarded in the academy, are those who conform to preconceived notions of what it means to be a successful academic (Matthew, 2016). Susan Giroux (2010) adds that, "colorblinding imperatives… chamelionically assume the form of a contemporary cult of professionalism… particularly prized by increasingly corporatized universities" (p. 7). Said (1996) describes professionalism as a set of institutional pressures that lead to depoliticized knowledge production, and a politically conservative university culture preoccupied with generating prestige

[13] The issue of unequal representation, and the discrimination and challenges that result from this, will be discussed at length in Chapter five.

and profit, more broadly. For instance, Kelley (2016) describes how cultural-competency training, a popular strategy for addressing campus racism, aims to increase tolerance and prevent triggers rather than reckoning with unconscious personal bias and the eradication of institutional racism. Also discussed in Chapter five, the rhetorical device of "civility" is often employed by university administrations to curtail free speech (often of scholars of color) that challenges systemic injustice. Salaita (2015) explains that the trope of "civility," which originates from the lexicon of conquest, is "profoundly racialized and has a long history of demanding conformity to the ethos of imperialism and colonization" (p. 42).[14] Debates regarding civility are often intertwined with the final theme to be discussed in this literature review: academic freedom.

Academic Freedom

While there is no universal consensus in terms of its definition, limits and implementation, academic freedom is nevertheless a hallmark of the U.S. university system. Historian Ellen Schrecker (2010, p. 10) explains:

> In its traditional formulation, [academic freedom] is, above all, a special protection for the faculty that shields professors from losing their jobs if they take politically unpopular positions in their writings, classes, and on-or-off-campus activities… but academic freedom is also a professional perquisite… that gives college teachers the autonomy they need to fulfill their professional responsibilities…and… it ensures that the academy's scholarship and teaching maintain the quality and level of innovation that have made the American system of higher education the envy of the world.

Whether or not the U.S. university system is deserving of envy is debatable, what cannot be disputed is the deep-rooted connection that exists between academic freedom, and the institutions of peer review, faculty governance, and in particular, tenure. As Hank Reichman (2019) explains "tenure… derives from the need to protect academic freedom" (p. xiv), hence the title of the American Association of University Professors' (AAUP) seminal text, *The 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure.* The AAUP's definition has

[14] The question of "civility" was central to the Salaita academic freedom case, Angela Davis' case in 1969, and several others.

become a standard formulation for academic freedom, adopted by all the universities involved in this study, along with a significant number of others.[15]

However, as neoliberal trends make their way into colleges and universities, the institution of tenure has increasingly come under threat. Not only are tenure lines decreasing, the expectations to earn tenure are becoming more demanding (Giroux, 2006; Scott, 2019). Wanting institutions of higher education to adopt business models of operations, some lawmakers have even attempted to eliminate tenure at public colleges and universities all together (Beazley, & Lobuts, 1996; Flaherty, 2017a). As tenure lines decrease, non-tenure track lines are growing at unprecedented rates. Today, nearly two-thirds of the nation's faculty consists of adjuncts (Brown, 2015; Ginsberg, 2011). Moreover, research shows that the majority of academic freedom violation cases involve contingent faculty members (Schrecker, 2010). Salaita (2015) and others (Canaan & Shumar, 2008) argue that this move to adjunctification was not only an economic strategy that addresses the growing financial crisis in higher education.

Since non-tenured faculty often are not entitled to the same academic freedom protections and to due process, this move to a contingent workforce is seen as also a political strategy to minimize radical thought and dissent, and to maintain ideological control. Without tenure, faculty may feel more inclined to teach only ideas that are noncontroversial. Similarly, researchers may feel pressured to study topics and present findings that please the needs of funding sources (Beazley & Lobuts, 1996) or students as consumers. Moreover, since obtaining tenure has become more difficult, rather than emboldening and reinforcing individuals' sense of security, tenure is at times viewed as an institutional mechanism that facilitates the depoliticization of intellectual inquiry rather than the search for truth, while concurrently encouraging antagonistic division within a campus community (Donoghue, 2008). These themes are explored further through the lens of my participants in the conclusion of this dissertation.

Various interpretations of academic freedom. The AAUP was formed by Arthur O. Lovejoy and John Dewey in 1915, because they, and many other academics, were deeply concerned with the overreach of college and university governing boards in hiring and firing decisions, which they felt

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[15] Academic freedom intersects with constitutional free speech, but the concepts are not analogous. Free speech is the right to articulate one's opinions and ideas without fear of government recrimination, but has little standing in the private workspace (See Meiklejohn, 1948).

undermined the expert knowledge of faculty that was necessary for judging the merits of colleagues' work (i.e., peer review and faculty governance). For over a century, the AAUP holds that academic freedom serves not only the individual professor, but also the entire society, since a free faculty will more effectively advance human knowledge and contribute to the greater good. Many claim that the ideal of academic freedom is crucial to our understanding of the university because as Louis Menand (1996) argues, it is "the legitimating concept of the entire enterprise" (p. 4). Furthermore, it is argued that the promise of democratic futures, more generally, depend of academic freedom, "an idea constantly in flux" (Bilgrami & Cole, 2015; Fish, 2014; Salaita, 2015, p. 91). Below are some interpretations of academic freedom that have gained traction in the literature.

Stanley Fish (2014) offers a taxonomy of academic freedom, outlining five schools of thought, moving from the most conservative to the most radical. Fish, who personally ascribes to the most conservative versions he outlines, views academic freedom as teaching and research that is in accordance strictly to one's discipline, thus furthering its body of knowledge. This school of thought insists that all topics in the classroom "should be academicized" and should not lead students to come down on one side of any issue (p. 32). According to Fish, scholars like Judith Butler, reflect the radical end of the academic freedom spectrum, understanding academic freedom as a vehicle for political solidarity that indoctrinates students with social justice agendas. Butler (2015), in fact, has a more complex interpretation, arguing that academic freedom is a *conditioned* freedom that can only exist if an institution commits to making education accessible and affordable. Butler is not alone.

For example, Joan Scott (2019) asks, "Can academic freedom be said to exist in Israel if it is denied to Palestinians? How universal does the application of academic freedom have to be to be considered a valid operational principle?" (p. 10). Perhaps the ideological variation of the concept of academic freedom hints at its inconsistency in delivering its promise of protecting free inquiry. In this dissertation, academic freedom is discussed by participants in practical terms, as a protection for faculty and students when expressing controversial political positions. However, the participants also discuss academic freedom similarly to Joan Scott's (2019) conceptualization, which views academic freedom as an ideal, an ethic that must constantly be practiced and strived after. To better understand academic freedom in this way requires a historical understanding of when academic freedom has failed in order to prevent future infractions.

Academic freedom controversies throughout U.S. history. During the 1850s, faculty members in the South did not have to attack slavery outright to lose their jobs. Merely displaying "insufficient zeal" in defense of slavery was often sufficient grounds for termination (Ginsberg, 2011, p. 138). In 1900, economist Edward Ross, advocated for municipal ownership of utilities and an end to Chinese immigration, on which railroads—especially the Stanfords' Southern Pacific—depended on for cheap labor. Ross was dismissed from Stanford University "for his antibusiness speeches and papers" (Ginsberg, 2011, p. 140). Jane Lathrop Stanford, widow of the university's founder and the sole member of the school's board of trustees, justified his termination saying "a man cannot entertain such rabid ideas without inculcating them in the minds of the students under his charge" (Ginsberg, 2011, p.140). The firing of professors who challenged capitalism was commonplace during the first Red Scare of 1919-1921. During the reign of McCarthyism, hundreds of educators were interrogated about their political beliefs and many were terminated from educational institutions due to their politics (Cole, 2015; Ginsberg, 2011; Scott, 2019).

Williamson-Lott (2018), in *Jim Crow Campus*, recounts that during the 1960s and 70s, attacks on faculty led them to file cases with the courts, which "built legal precedent and procedural safeguards for professors accused of improper speech and behavior" (p. 121). The United States saw another surge of academic freedom cases beginning in the 1990s with the culture wars and the raise in 'political correctness,' then another wave of controversies following 9/11. Giroux (2006, p. 7) explains that post 9/11, the nature and goal "of the conservative acrimony" was largely the same:

> [T]o remove from the university all vestiges of dissent and to reconstruct it as an increasingly privatized sphere for reproducing the interests of the corporations and the national security state—while assuming a front-line position in the war against terror. In short, criticisms of Israeli government policy were labeled as anti-Semitic; universities were castigated as hot-beds of left-wing radicalism; conservative students alleged that they were being humiliated and discriminated against in college and university classrooms all across the country.

Many argue that the most contested topic today, with concerns to academic freedom, is the Israel-Palestine conflict (Cole, 2015; Scott, 2019; Schrecker, 2010; Wilson, 2015). Considering how often this topic came up in my data, this dissertation would support this claim.

The Israel/Palestine conflict. Speaking out in opposition to Israeli policies proves to carry significant risks (professional and personal) for many who wield the power of the podium. Most recently, we have seen this with the attacks launched against freshman U.S. congresswomen Rashida Talib and Ilham Omar, as well as with Marc Lamont Hill, who was fired from CNN following his public comments on Israel.[16] The group, Palestine Legal, documents hundreds of cases of censorship concerning Palestine each year. [17] In 2016, 88 percent of those cases targeted students and scholars. The experience of academics in this study, who speak critically against Israel is elaborated in Chapter Four of this dissertation. Yet, the right for academic freedom is also consistently invoked by supporters of Israel who oppose the academic boycott outlined in the Boycott Divestment Sanctions (BDS) campaign.[18]

> Salaita (2015, p. 88-89) describes the debate:
> It is argued that a boycott would restrict the academic freedom of Israeli students and researchers and impinge on the exchange of ideas… [yet] there is scant evidence that academic boycott systemically limited an Israeli scholar's ability to travel and conduct research. On the other hand, engagement with Palestine has repeatedly proved deleterious to one's professional development.

Pro-Israel groups have successfully launched online campaigns to "monitor" anti-Semitism on college and university campuses, yet many argue that with respect to these campaigns, anti-Semitism is too often conflated with critiques of Israel (Ivie, 2005; Moskowitz, 2017). For example, Campus Watch and Canary Mission, specifically monitor and create online profiles of faculty members and students who critique Israel and U.S. relations in the Middle East. Other conservative groups, like Students for Academic Freedom (SAF), attempt to censor academic freedom by going under the banner of "seeking balance" in

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[16] While Lamont Hill is an academic, he is also a television personality and has been a spokesperson for various media outlets.

[17] Palestine Legal is an organization dedicated to protecting the civil and constitutional rights of people in the US who speak out for Palestinian freedom. See: http://palestinelegal.org/the-palestine-exception

[18] BDS is a rights-based campaign endorsed by more than 170 Palestinian organizations, which acts as a "nonviolent means to pursue the end of a regime of occupation, siege, dispossession, and discrimination that Israel has imposed with almost complete impunity for decades" (Lloyd & Schueller, 2015, p. 65). When public intellectuals oppose Israel, it is often done in solidarity with the BDS movement.

the classroom (Cole, 2015, p. 44). These groups seek to limit discussion of ideas with which they disagree and urge students to report on one-sided lectures and bias reading lists. Cole (2015) reminds us, however, "the proper goal of higher education is enlightenment—not some abstract ideal of 'balance'" (p. 53). Moreover, those who demand balance do not seek balance on all issues, such as ensuring all departments have equal representation of faculty with opposing points of view, or that all academic freedom cases be treated equally under the law.

Conclusion

While it is suggested that academic freedom in the U.S. is "the envy of the world" (Schrecker, 2010, p. 10), there are many who argue that the romanticized legacy of U.S. academic freedom must be problematized. Chuh (2018), for example, argues that, historically, the ways in which university leaders often speak about academic freedom "not only occludes the labor conditions that characterize the academy but also affirms the onto-epistemologies of liberalism that continue to rationalize and thereby legitimate the ravages of capitalism and colonialism" (p. 159). Chuh (2018, p. 158) continues:

> liberalism… develops freedom for a narrow portion of humanity under the sign of Western Man while subjugating all others as not-yet and perhaps never to be capable of its possession. Liberal freedom in this regard must be understood to belie its materiality.

As the examples in this literature review demonstrate, along with the findings of this study, academic freedom is threatened by labor conditions shaped by neoliberal trends, in particular, when an interlocutor challenges powerful private interests. These violations are often coded with colorblind rhetoric. Those bereft of tenure (i.e., the majority of those teaching college students) are particularly vulnerable to infringements of academic freedom. While this study focuses largely on the subjective experiences of activist-scholars in regards to how they exercise their academic freedom in controversial ways, those experiences are contextualized within an analysis of how one's social and institutional positionalities, as well as the labor conditions of today's academy, affect said experiences. However, this study is less interested in conceptualizing academic freedom as an individual right but rather as a common good.

In line with critical university studies, the findings of this research questions the turn towards privatization, and engages Scott's (2019) iteration of academic freedom as an "ethical practice" that reasserts intellectual autonomy in service of the greater good rather than private interests (p. 15). She reminds

us, "the future of the common good and of academic freedom are bound up together" (p. 14).

Academic freedom is considered the professoriate's safety mechanism yet it has not proven to fully accommodate dissent. Therefore, as Salaita (2015) points out, "we shouldn't trust 'academic freedom'… It must constantly be reinvigorated and reassessed" (p. 59, p. 91). While academics play a fundamental role in the production, dissemination, and evaluation of ideas, there is more at stake than their protection. The integrity of the university and a well-informed society depend on academic freedom to ensure counter-hegemonic knowledge production that helps to advance society for the greater good. Therefore, until academic freedom functions as a protection in all spaces of controversy, how it is valued and practiced must continue to be investigated.

Chapter Three: Methodology and Research Design

The overarching methodology that informed the way I went about answering my research questions is the interdisciplinary framework of *Critical University Studies (CUS)*. CUS is a genre of analysis that understands the current trends of the U.S. university system as structural and long-term (Brown, 2015; Newfield, 2008, 2016; Slaughter & Leslie, 1997). These trends, such as the divestment in the humanities (Nussbaum, 2010), the decline of tenure (Ginsberg, 2011), and increased partnerships with the private sector (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997), are often described as reflecting neoliberal policies and practices. CUS also asserts that the university's social potential has been largely misunderstood and undeveloped. For instance, when economic growth becomes the measure of success for institutions of higher education, advancing knowledge that challenges the status-quo becomes a moot point. CUS considerations informed my decision to conduct in-depth interviews in order to address my research questions. With a CUS methodological framework, I positioned my interview questions regarding academic freedom within the context of these neoliberal trends. Since the democratizing potential of the university is central to CUS, this methodological framing facilitated an inquiry into the participants' perceptions of university actors' role in contributing to advancement of the greater good. (See Appendix A: Interview protocol).

However, my second research question required a methodological frame in addition to CUS. In Chapter Five, which examines my participants' perceived protections of academic freedom according to their social identifications and institutional positioning, I adopted the framework of *intersectionality*. Intersectionality has roots in Black feminist thought and is an analytical framework that addresses the convergence of various marginal social identities such as race, class, gender, sexuality and physical mobility (Crenshaw, 1991; Harris & Leonardo, 2018, Moraga & Anzaldúa, 2015). It asserts that individuals affected by interlocking systems of oppression, such as racism and sexism, experience compounded challenges compared to individuals who do not belong to multiple marginal groups.

As Harris & Patton (2019) explain, intersectionality is a generative concept for advancing a social justice agenda in higher education research. This study contributes to this agenda by adopting an intersectional lens in the analysis of how academic freedom—the ostensible bedrock of the university system—is experienced by faculty members occupying a variety of social and institutional locations. In this study, over half of the participants occupy more than one marginal social identity. Over a third of the participants are women of color,

therefore, racism and sexism emerged as a salient intersection of forces analyzed in this project (Collins & Bilge, 2016). This intersectional study also takes into consideration the marginal positionality of being off the tenure-track when analyzing academic freedom.

Research Design

Interviews with public intellectuals. This exploration would be impossible without the perspectives of faculty who exercise academic freedom in ways that threaten neoliberal agendas and systems of oppression. Terry Eagleton (2005, p. 7) argues that, in general, "criticism today lacks all substantive social function. It is either part of the public relations branch of the literary industry, or a matter wholly internal to the academies" (2005, p. 7). Be that as it may, this is not the case for those academics showcased in this study. While the spillover value of their intellectual contributions is difficult to measure using a standard cost-benefit model, the participants' influence in informing public opinion cannot be underestimated (Newfield, 2016). This study draws from 31 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 29 academics who take political risks in the public realm by giving voice to on-the-ground struggles of social justice. While Frantz Fanon's (1963) native intellectual, Antonio Gramsci's (1971) organic intellectual, Michel Foucault's (1980) specific intellectual, Henry Giroux's (2010) transformative intellectual, and Patricia Hill Collins' (2012) activist-scholar, all reflect qualities shared by the participants of this study, I adopt Edward Said's (1996) representation of the public intellectual (see Leonardo, 2016). I often use the term "activist-scholar" interchangeably with "public intellectual" since both terms capture the participants' overt commitment to the greater public. However, Said's representation of the public intellectual is the most comprehensive and operationalizable for the purposes of my study based on my findings. The characteristics below exemplify Edward Said's (1996) public intellectual and constitute the basic criteria that all participants in this study meet. All academics interviewed:

1. Ensure that their political discourse is:
    - Intelligible to broad and diverse constituencies (i.e., the public—not merely other academics)
    - Accessible by using public rather than strictly academic mediums of communication (e.g., public talks, mainstream journalism, social media such as twitter, Facebook, blogs, etc.)
    - An expression of solidarity with current social movements

2. Use their platform(s) for the purpose of educating society on the theoretical bases underpinning current social problems/injustices, as well as the problems' material consequences
3. Offer the masses and leaders potential solutions to social problems
4. Makes visible and challenge nationalism and systems of domination, such as white supremacy, patriarchy, and capitalism

The literature has helped to identify possible variables that were accounted for in the participant selection process. While non-tenured faculty do the majority of undergraduate teaching, they do not share the same due process and academic freedom protections as ladder faculty (Schrecker, 2010). Scholars argue, however, that pressures to censor and depoliticize one's work are a concern for many, regardless of academic rank (Bell, 1994; Ginsberg, 2011; hooks, 2003). While 23 of the 29 participants are tenured and tenured-track faculty (13 full professors, six associate professors and four assistant professors), I also interviewed six non-tenure track faculty whose contracts state that they are entitled to academic freedom protections and due-process.

Since evidence suggests that disciplines in the humanities are the most vulnerable and devalued under neoliberalism (Cole, 2015; Donoghue, 2008; Nussbaum, 2012), I drew heavily from these disciplines for participant recruitment. 25 of the 29 participants are from the humanities, social sciences and law schools. However, ideological surveillance often occurs outside the humanities (Bourdieu, 1988; Schrecker, 2010), therefore the sample pool for this study also included four professors in STEM fields. In addition to representing a range of disciplines and academic ranks, the pool of respondents also reflect racial and gender diversity. 19 of the 29 identify as people of color. 14 of the 29 identify as woman, 10 identify as women of color.

Because the majority of the faculty members who agreed to participate in this study regularly share their politics in the public realm, I received IRB approval to use the real names of faculty who did not request anonymity. While I gave the option to all participants, only seven of the 29 requested to be anonymous (several selected their own pseudonym). As my study progressed however, after considering the wise counsel of my dissertation chair, the decision was made to anonymize *all* participants. I was reminded that even though someone might feel comfortable making a controversial statement today, they might not feel as comfortable about the statement in the future. Through this research I have learned that too many activist-scholars are harassed due to their public commentary, and that many delete their tweets over time out of fear of potential harassment. I do not want the testimonies in this soon to-be-

public dissertation to serve as fodder for those intent on harassing or misrepresenting academics who take stands on issues of public concern. Finally, I am sometimes asked why I did not do a "balanced" examination of intellectuals on both the right and the left. The truth is, it was a very intentional decision. More interesting to me than the debate between the left and the right in academia was the task of showcasing the perspectives of intellectuals who defend the dignity of all people and life on the planet.

Research sites. Critical theorists and pedagogues believe that the public university, like all public institutions, must serve as a space where democracy is modeled and practiced (Biesta, 2006; Collins, 2012; Giroux, 2010). Therefore, I choose to examine "public" rather than "private" universities in the United States because such institutions have been assigned a monumental role in sustaining democratic activity in modern societies. The three universities in this study share similar institutional profiles in terms of size, prestige and programs offered, and all happened to be Research One universities. The decision to anonymize all the participants of this study therefore required that I anonymize the sites. I am aware that a study that encompasses three sites will neither reflect the experiences of all public intellectuals nor the administrations of all public universities. Be that as it may, the three institutions under investigation do provide regionally diverse representations of how academic freedom is valued and practiced by public intellectuals as well as by prominent institutions in which they are embedded.

Data Collection and Analysis

In early spring 2017, after researching the public commentary of over 75 faculty members to ensure they met the criteria outlined above, I emailed potential participants an explanation of my project and as well as an invitation to participate in the study. As stated, 29 agreed to participate. After obtaining IRB approval in April 2017, I sent out official recruitment letters via email and began scheduling semi-structured interviews to be done in person (in a place of the participant's choosing), or via video communication. Most interviews took place during spring and fall of 2017. Each interview lasted one to two hours. I conducted follow-up interviews with two of the participants because all parties agreed they had more to discuss. I asked for participants' permission to audio record the interviews. The recordings, as well as interview transcripts were saved on my personal laptop in a password-protected folder. I transcribed the interviews myself in spring 2018 and began to conduct data analysis using the coding software, Max QDA.

During the interviews, I again explained that the purpose of my study and I gave the participants the opportunity to ask questions about the research project before asking them to give their consent orally. Interview questions attended to the professors' experiences and motivations pertaining to academic freedom, and their perspectives regarding the influence of neoliberalism and colorblindness at their respective institutions, specifically in regards to academic freedom (See Appendix A: Interview Protocol). Participants also had the freedom to not answer questions at their discretion. Interview data was coded with a hybrid coding method. This approach integrates data-driven codes with theory-driven ones based on my literature review (e.g., democratic and neoliberal education, colorblind racism, academic freedom, etc.) in order to identify overarching themes addressed by my participants that addressed my research questions (Boyatzis, 1998; Fereday, 2006; Saldaña, 2015). When analyzing the public intellectuals' experiences and motivations for exercising academic freedom, codes that reflected social and institutional positionality (race, gender, academic rank, disclipine) were used, as well as codes that signaled affect and ethical stance (e.g., emotions, integrity, social responsibility), amongst others (Ochs, 1996).

Chapter Four: Driven by Responsibility and Hope: The Why and How of Risk-Taking

Being a public intellectual involves risk, particularly today when the Internet serves to increase one's visibility to political detractors. Despite this, publicly critiquing power is an intervention that Edward Said (1982, 1996) strongly encourages for academics. Said (1982) contends that to make one's intellectual interpretations "*interference[s]*" (p. 24, italics in original) into the public realm demands "a crossing of borders and obstacles, a determined attempt to generalize exactly at those points where generalizations seem impossible" (p. 25). Said argues that the "crucial next step" is "connecting… politically vigilant forms of interpretation to an ongoing political and social praxis. Short of making that connection, even the best-intentioned and the cleverest interpretive activity is bound to sink back in the murmur of mere prose" (1982, pp. 25-26). The public intellectuals interviewed in this study hope to contribute to the liberation struggles of our time. Representing a broad spectrum of disciplines, research expertise, social identifications, and levels of institutional privilege and prestige, the activist-scholars highlighted here engage in public critique that speaks to the issues of: white supremacy, patriarchy, settler-colonialism and the neoliberalization of the university. While the participants' strategies vary in terms of deciding when, how, and about what they vocalize dissent, they routinely assert where they stand on sensitive social issues to audiences that reach beyond the academy. In this chapter, I map the *whys* and *hows* of the participants' risk-taking, as well as the process by which they determine their threshold of risk.

While surveillance of critical scholars is nothing new, the Internet has made it so political detractors can build campaigns online to either 1) directly try to intimidate an individual dissident scholar (Moskowitz, 2017), or 2) pressure a university administration to take action against a faculty member (Wilson, 2016). With *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Inside HigherEd*, as well as mainstream media regularly covering academic freedom scandals, why do scholars risk making oneself vulnerable to the increased emotional and material distress that often affects those in the center of said controversies? While the experienced consequences vary case-by-case, common ones include: anguish from having one's speech decontextualized and distorted, being denied professional opportunities, and having one's safety and the safety of one's family threatened. How do activist-scholars decide when the stakes are *too* high?

First, I focus on the participants' motivations. Mainly, I discuss how their *sense of responsibility* and their *hope* in a better world drive them to take risks.

The second part of this chapter is dedicated to analyzing how the participants decide whether or not to engage in risky public commentary and what considerations they weigh in that negotiation process.

"I'm called to act:" Responsibility, Integrity, the Other, and Hope[19]

Over three-fourths of the participants, either grew up with activist parents/guardians or have been politically engaged for decades. Others became radicalized later in their life and have since developed a practice of speaking truth to power. The participants share in common an interventionist praxis, yet the methodologies that inform their praxis reflect the diversity among them. All 29 participants, however, made reference to a sense of "responsibility" as their main motivator for engaging in public critique.

I interviewed humanities professor Karen Patel, for example, in her office on a cold fall morning in 2017. It was the first time we met; she was warm-spirited and generous with her perspectives and personal story. Patel shared that growing up as a budding intellectual/feminist/activist in a traditional Indian society marked her political formation, which only continued to evolve as a student activist in the United States. Holding her ceramic mug of coffee, she considered my question: *Why have you so often chosen to go public with your social critiques?* After a pause, she referenced Derrida's concept of aporia. Aporia, she described, is an impasse where one is faced with choices to either disrupt or reproduce the status quo. Derrida (2005) explains that without experiencing aporia, there can be no responsibility. For Patel, and many others in this study, a *sense of responsibility* is the primary motive for speaking out, which at times puts the guaranteed protections of academic freedom to the test.

In the literature, responsibility, in its most board understanding, is a state where one wills a response that addresses urgent matters and/or needs. Psychologist and humanistic philosopher, Erich Fromm (1956), maintains that "responsibility is often meant to denote duty, something imposed upon one from the outside. But responsibility, in its true sense, is an entirely voluntary act" (p. 26). Thus to be responsible is a matter of choice based on values, realized through personal acts. *It is an expression of freedom.*
The participants mentioned that undergirding their sense of responsibility is one, if not both, of the following:

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[19] This quote is credited to Assistant Professor Samantha Arlette and captures what the grand majority of the participants said regarding why they take political risks.

- A desire to maintain their integrity and/or
- A desire to maintain their solidarity with Others

Feeling a sense of responsibility to one's integrity and to being in solidarity with the Other, are mutually constitutive, yet each has distinct qualities that will be discussed below. First, I will give an overview of how the participants' sense of responsibility towards *maintaining their integrity* affects how they exercise their academic freedom. Then, I examine how the participants' sense of responsibility towards *the Other* motivates their intervention praxis. Lastly, *hope* and how it drives many of the participants to engage in risk will be discussed.

Responsibility for Integrity's Sake. Anthropologist and iconoclast, Lisa Haddan, struck me as having a palpably strong sense of self when I interviewed her in fall 2017. Haddan has been teaching at her institution since 1960 and was the first woman to receive tenure in her department. Her scholarship has made a valuable mark on her discipline, and her decades of engagement in campus politics have also engraved her in her university's historical memory. While aware of her outspokenness, I was still taken aback by her willingness to unabashedly name individuals at her institution she feels are ethically compromised. In our interview, Haddan recollected presenting a paper at a conference in the 1960s where she dared to suggest that researchers should study the colonizer as well as the colonized. "I got shunned by everybody." She recalled that immediately after the presentation she went to see her mother who was taking care of her baby, and told her what had just happened at the presentation. Her mother replied, "You can never please everybody, so please yourself." Haddan then told me proudly, "I have." The paper she presented was not received with a warm reception that day, but it resonated as true to Haddan and paved the way for a more critical approach to her discipline. Honoring one's truth habitually as Haddan has is at the heart of maintaining integrity.

Lata Mani (2009, p. 11) describes responsibility as "the ability to respond in congruence with spiritual truth." While "spiritual truth" is subjective and certainly not a term widely embraced in academia, it speaks to one's personal morality that shifts and evolves over time. The vast majority of the participants referenced responsibility as being part of their episteme, i.e., part of their way of knowing or truth. Thus, to stay anchored in one's truth is also to maintain one's sense of integrity. The root of the word integrity is to "integrate." Rabbi Harold Kushner (2001) defines integrity as, "being whole, unbroken, undivided. It describes a person who has united the different parts of his or her personality, so that there is no longer a split in the soul" (p. 87). In other words, to be in integrity is to align mind, body, and spirit and to integrate one's beliefs and

values with what one says and does. It is being with the wholeness of who we are and is accompanied by a sound sense of self.

Dissident scholar, Derrick Bell (1994, p. x), notes:

> Often… those of us who speak out are moved by a deep sense of the fragility of our self-worth. It is the determination to protect our sense of who we are that leads us to risk criticism, alienation, and serious loss while most others, similarly harmed, remain silent.

Most of the participants shared that their sense of self was strongly identified with their sense responsibility to speak out. Therefore, to feel true to themselves and satisfied with their choices, several of the participants note that they "have to do the right thing."

More than concerns of suffering reprisal, several participants mentioned concern with not doing the right thing. Will Peters, Professor of Law, explains "we have to live with ourselves and the people we love… and that causes us… in small ways and big ways to take risks." Professor Emeritus of History, Todd Elias, credits the "overactive conscience" he inherited from his father, which makes it so that he "couldn't live" with himself if he stayed silent. "Otherwise. I would have no self-respect. And if you have no self-respect, where are you?" Participants spoke of their integrity as a compass that helps to orient them to the right action. Lecturer Yosef Ahmad affirms, "no other human being has a lock on your mental as well as spiritual capacity in the world." Assistant Professor Samantha Arlette, reaffirms this idea:

> It's this one thing I know that I have that no one can take away. Only I can take that away from me. It's always a choice. I may not have the same amount of choices at the same time or the same kinds of choices. Or I may have some choices and none of them look good to me. But I still have a choice of how I can show up. You can take away my job and my paycheck. You can even physically take something away from me. You can take advantage of me… There's all these things that can be done to me that I don't have any control over, but the thing you can't take away from me is my ability to show up in my truth… even if I'm naked lying on the ground with nothing. I can still lay naked with my own truth intact… At the end of the day… I want to be able to look in the mirror and say, 'Okay, yeah, it's still you. You're holding on.' I'm not perfect. I make mistakes. It doesn't mean that I can't point to moments where, oh man, I

> shouldn't have said that thing, or I could have done that better. All of that's there. I'm working on it… it's the ongoing life challenge.

Here Arlette illustrates how maintaining integrity, while not easy, is one of the few things under one's control. A life of integrity depends on one's willingness to be rigorously self-vigilant, while also respecting the array of qualities and emotions that are part of the human experience—in particular, the fallibility of being human.

Obtaining a sound sense of self involves having a practice of introspection and reflexivity.[20] Gaining a sense of wholeness involves interrogating how one's values and sense of identity came to be. One's values are often informed by inherited cultural ideologies or cultural values, which were essential for my participants to scrutinize. I found it notable that three participants, Todd Goldberg, Todd Elias, and Michael Geller, when asked about their motivations for risk-taking, all spoke of integrity *and* mentioned how difficult, albeit necessary, it was for them to look critically at the politics surrounding their Jewish identity. I therefore include all three of their reflections here.

During our fall 2017 interview, referencing the Steven Salaita case, Goldberg admitted, "As a Jew, at first, I was a little peeved by some of what [Salaita] was saying." Yet the Salaita case became a significant moment in Goldberg's political education. Goldberg lifted the cuff of his sleeve to show me a rubber bracelet that he wears everyday given to him by his students that reads "FREE PALESTINE." He shared that in 2014, during the Salaita case, he was the associate director of his academic department, which like many departments around the country, wrote a letter to then-Chancellor Wise asking for Salaita to be reinstated. Goldberg recalls that the reinstatement campaign created a firestorm for the Jewish donors in Chicago, when he says,

> The more I read what the donors were saying… and the tactics of the anti-Palestinian campaign, which is the nicest way I can say it, the more I became disgusted with this obsession of a supposed threat to Israel that I could not see. This was not anti-Semitism … My father was twenty when Hitler came to power and lived in Germany for the next eight years, so I know what anti-Semitism is. I teach a course on the history of anti-Semitism. I know what it is and I know what it's not, and Steven Salaita is not an anti-Semite and it became more and more clear to me that something terrible was going on. I realized that what's going on is the

[20] Reflexivity will be discussed more in depth later in this chapter.

> perpetuation of a 50-year injustice, 50 years of occupation, and 70 years of an injustice that has never been recognized. So I became radicalized.

The Salaita controversy revealed to Goldberg that many with whom he identifies ethnically, he opposes politically. This event stimulated his sense of responsibility, which led him to publicly condemn the occupation, and support the movement for Palestinian sovereignty.

Speaking about reassessing the values with which he chooses to identify, Todd Elis shared:

> My mother was a real Jewish nationalist. She had grown up in a viciously anti-Semitic neighborhood. She and her brother had to fight constantly with their fists to defend themselves against anti-Semites. I had a series of experiences like that as well, which hardened me into a Zionist— I was a fanatical Zionist as a kid. And it wasn't until the 1973 war, by which time I was already a radical that I had to face the fact that my views on the Middle East were completely inconsistent with my views about the rest of the world. I had all these ideas about colonialism… but when it came to Israel … I just said this is preposterous, what am I doing?

The Yom Kippur War, also known as the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, was fought by a coalition of Arab states against Israel on land that Israel occupied. This event made Israel's presence as a colonial actor something that Elias could no longer overlook. The more self-reflexive Elias became, the more consistent he wanted to be with his critiques of colonialism. Here Elias demonstrates how examination of his contradictions resulted in letting go of a previous political position that was generations old in order to maintain his sense of integrity.

Finally, humanities professor Michael Geller, reflects:

> I thought of myself as a leftist Zionist, a progressive Zionist… But it was that moment of recognition that these are oxymorons really. Zionism itself, a priori, is regressive… Almost like a religious conversion where you just flip your whole world around… one day I sort of woke up, an enormous burden had been lifted from my shoulders. I no longer had to justify to myself, to others… or make excuses… the consequence was clearly to drop the [Zionist] project… I feel that my Jewishness is expressed through anti-Zionism.

Self-reflexivity here, allowed Geller to define for himself the terms of his identity. Before his "conversion," since Geller identified so strongly with being Jewish, he believed that to be a proud Jew meant that he had to prescribe to Zionism. However, it became clear to him that this project did not embody the moral or cultural values that he associates with "Jewishness" and that in fact, being anti-Zionist better reflects his understanding of what it means to be Jewish. Geller illustrates how the process of critically examining one's beliefs can lead to a sense of relief, integration of the soul, and to feeling wholeheartedly aligned with what feels true.

Feeling whole, or in integrity, requires an unflinching willingness to look honestly at oneself as these activist-scholars have, and the consequences are often unpleasant. For example, I asked Enesto Maya, associate professor in biology, why he takes on risky political projects that have clearly jeopardized his career. He laughed, "I don't want to… but you can't avoid it, that's the problem. If you're doing anything interesting… and you're not in some kind of trouble then you should really question yourself." Similarly, speaking about white supremacy, which these days can earn you the attention of Internet trolls and conservative news pundits, Andrew Koffman, lecturer in the humanities asserts:

> Someone's gotta do it and White people in particular have to do this... it's kind of up to us. Black folks do it out of necessity, survival… and have for centuries. It's become a cliché but it's worth repeating, *ally is a verb not a noun*. It's something you have to do and be… It's not a status you attain and wear like a crown.

Here Koffman brings up an important point regarding responsibility with respect to race.[21] While participants who identify as people of color expressed a sense of responsibility to speak out about racial injustice, Koffman explains that as a White man, the responsibility he feels as an ally is not connected to the survival of his own race, as it has historically been understood by people of color. By virtue of being White in a white supremacist society, Whites can feel that due to their lack of experience as racialized subjects, it is not within their purview and therefore not their responsibility to participate in racial justice discourse (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Frankenberg, 1997; Leonardo, 2009). However, Whites can choose to turn towards the uncomforable and *feel* unpleasant emotions in order to be in integrity as racial justice allies (Matias, 2016).

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[21] The participants' racial identities in relation to their experiences exercising their academic freedom will be examined in depth in the next chapter.

The importance of consistent and honest self-vigilance cannot be understated because clarity of mind and heart is a process that often arises over time. For example, Samantha Arlette confessed that when she was younger, her biggest motivation was not to be responsible, as it is now, but to be "perfect." However, once she realized that no one can attain perfection and that she would have to "give that one up," she knew that she did not have to give up being honest. She shares that being truthful "sometimes means saying things that other people won't like … but I just want people to be able to say, 'Well, you know, at least she was honest and she told the truth. We can trust her for that even if we don't agree with her.'" Being honest means sitting with our fallibility and scrutinizing our contradictions. Idris Hakim, a lecturer in multiple departments often expresses his political stances passionately. In our interview, he acknowledged with a hint of lamentation that at times his actions do not align with his beliefs, but he never loses sight of his ethical convictions. At times, he admits, "I'm worried about conserving my own position in this institution—that's a dangerous ethical place to be in." He continues:

> I haven't always been honest…I'm setting a higher bar than a lot of the people around me. We need to have a high bar. Prophets, saints, whatever—that's the bar. And we need to be gentle with ourselves, but we can't lose sight of the bar… This is the way we should be in the world. I'm not that way, I'm going to own that I'm not that way, but I'm not going to lower that bar… We are not meant to be perfect, we aren't going to be perfect, but when you play this game of 'let me turn this thing that's not ok into this thing that is ok' and come up with a justification mechanism, that's way worse… It's a constant struggle to hold ourselves upright… it's hard to do, that's why there aren't many who can.

Hakim speaks to the laboriousness of maintaining integrity. While Geller described regaining his sense of integrity almost effortlessly as if from one day to the next,[22] the praxis of maintaining integrity was described by other participants as an arduous and never-ending process.

[22]It is important to note that Geller had the political awakening described above once he had already secured tenure. He admitted in our interview that he does not know what his process would have been like had he not yet gotten tenure. Hakim, on the other hand, who expressed feeling fear often in respect to risk-taking, lacks job security as a part-time instructor. The relationship between fear and faculty rank will be discussed at length in the next chapter.

For instance, Patel made clear that for her to be responsible means "you can't be selective in taking up causes in certain venues but not in others… the critique of power has to be consistent. It has to function at all levels." She continues:

> I think many academics are unafraid of criticizing the system. And they're quite bold in their criticisms of the system. But they're far more cautious when it comes to a criticism of a particular person who holds a lot of power... Someone can talk about the corporate university and go full frontal on that, but is far more careful and withdrawn around the department head no matter what the department head is doing… It's really important to fight the small battles so that you're well equipped and strong to take on the big ones when they come. Because they will come and they often come with little notice. It will just suddenly happen and the response time is crucial.

Patel argues that critiquing power and responsibility often go hand in hand; they are forms of praxis that involve cyclical and consistent engagement in reflection and action. Patel's commentary likens responsibility to a muscle in the body. One's sense of responsibility becomes more responsive to life's happenings when exercised continually.

Common challenges for maintaining integrity. Participants mentioned two distinct challenges for maintaining their integrity: 1) feeling like there is too much at stake, and 2) the larger culture in which they are embedded does not encourage ethical risk-taking. An example that illustrates both challenges involves Idris Hakim. He recalled a time when he was presented a prestigious teaching award (rarely given to non-tenure track faculty) and was expected to give a speech to a packed audience attended by many of his superiors as well as many of his students. "I wanted to go to the realm of respectability politics,[23] but I felt held accountable because my students— like I would have just been an asshole. It would have been like: *you tell us all this shit in class and then you turn around and get on stage and you're like oh thanks to my parents and whatever*." Hakim ended up giving remarks that drew attention to the devaluation of teaching at research universities through which students ultimately experience the gravest disservice. As a result of his speech, he received a personal email

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[23] Respectability politics is a term first articulated by Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham (1993). It refers to the attempts of people from marginalized groups to distance themselves from the disparaging stereotypes attributed to their communities by assimilating to the dominate values and standards of what is deemed respectable.

from his chancellor stating her objection to his remarks saying that while R1s prioritize research, quality teaching is of the upmost importance. He was told later by a colleague, "You have a reputation with the higher ups, and they have long memories." During the awards ceremony as well as after the comment from his colleague, Hakim's integrity was challenged from feeling both the depth of his job insecurity and by the belief that the university did not support his critical perspective. He felt this was confirmed in the chancellor's email. On the other hand, Hakim also received many emails from his students expressing how grateful they were for his words.

Several participants spoke to the tension (at times the direct opposition) that exists between professional expectations and one's personal ethics. Lecturer Gloria Sullivan shared, "I'm thinking about leaving [the academy] because it's hard to be a good person here. You start giving up on acting in integrity… when people around you aren't really trying… you let yourself off the hook. I need to be with people that push me in a healthy way and it's hard to find because the bar for people here is low." Sullivan points to a significant finding in the research: that the academy values conformity higher than ethical risk-taking. Similarly, speaking about her capacity to impact institutional change, Samantha Arlette asks, "If I try to do it from within, I'm going to continually be corrupted... If I'm in the thing, getting paid by the thing, in order to do the thing and perpetuate the thing, how can I clearly change the thing?"

While she feels she can have an impact on individuals, Arlette doubts she will have institutional impact since the academy's values and norms, which encourage conformity, appear reified. In a similar vein, Assistant Professor of Education, John Brun, admits, "That's why I'll never be nobody's dean." Brun wants to be able to critique whomever and whatever he feels needs critiquing and believes that his academic freedom would be compromised by being part of the administrative class. He further believes that his outspokenness (which his dean has already addressed with him) would prevent him from ever being considered for an administrative post. It was a reoccurring sentiment amongst the participants that the more invested one is in the institution, the more one internalizes its norms and feels they must meet the demands of institutional power. Yet maintaining integrity requires investing in one's own truth.

Being in solidarity with the Other. Since one cannot be if not in relationship to the Other, to feel the wholeness that integrity offers depends not only on investing in one's own truth, but also in attempting to understand the truths of Others. The Other is a fundamental concept in many disciplines such as philosophy (De Beauvoir, 1949/1972; Hegel, 1979; Sartre, 1943/2012) and psychology (Freud, 1921/1975; Lacan, 1988), and the interpretations of this

concept vary significantly. Often it denotes someone different from oneself (Fanon, 1952/2008), or an individual who is sub-human or subordinate to the dominant class (Dussel, 1988; powell, 2012; Said, 1979a). This last process is often referred to as "othering." However, in this dissertation, *the Other* refers broadly to all life-forms that benefit from our respect, compassion, and advocacy. In line with Native epistemologies (LaDuke, 2017; Lake-Thom, 1997; Maathai, 2010; Silko, 1996) that consider all life on earth as interrelated, human stewards advocate on behalf of the Other—not through patronization, but rather in the spirit of interconnectivity. As conceptualized here, the Other reflects the sentiment conveyed in In Lak'ech, the Mayan precept of oneness that understands that *the Other* is in fact "my other me."[24] Feeling a sense of responsibility towards the Other is at the heart of solidarity.

In this dissertation's findings, being in solidarity is to advocate on behalf of and/or demonstrate genuine compassion towards the Other and is in direct opposition to the act of "othering." Solidarity, therefore, has various manifestations. A person's level of engagement in solidarity tactics varies greatly depending on the individual and the individual's capacity in any given moment, as well as the constraints and specificities present in their environment. Being in integrity leads to acting in solidarity because integrity offers with it a sense of interconnection with the whole; the suffering of another is understood as connected to one's own. Expressing solidarity allows a person to practice what they believe since, according to Dussel (1988), "morality and ethics are… corporeal, carnal fleshy" and occur "in real relationships among persons" (p. 79). The expression of solidarity I document in this dissertation is the exercise of academic freedom that is aligned with struggles for social justice, which is considered politically controversial in the universities under study. These acts of solidarity often are considered upsetting to people of different political inclinations and thus at times, the interlocutor's academic freedom protections are tested. The public expressions of solidarity made by my participants bring visibility to injustices that they may or may not be immediately affected by, but that Others are most certainly experiencing.

Solidarity through speech acts. Daniel Boyarin (2004, p. xiv), in his book *Border lines: The partition of Judaeo-Christianity,* gets at the heart of two major themes that emerged from my data: feeling responsibility towards one's integrity and feeling responsibility towards the Other: *"If we are not for ourselves, other Jews say to me, who will be for us? And I answer, but if we are*

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[24] This quote is the poem *In Lak'ech*, written by playwright, writer, film director and founder of El Teatro Campesino, Luís Valdez.

for ourselves alone, what are we?" In our interview, Michael Geller, spoke to this sentiment:

> It's a paradox… I care deeply about the fate of Jews and the Jewish people. I'm not indifferent to that. I've devoted my life through my teaching and scholarship to being part of the making of a viable future for Jewishness and the Jewish people, but I do think that the idea that we should only care about ourselves is counter to so much of the Jewish tradition.

Geller addresses the fundamental idea the no one lives within an ethical vacuum, as if hermetically sealed from others. Therefore, to be an ethical human being in our global society, solidarity with the suffering of others, regardless of their ethnicity or nationality, becomes necessary (Said, 1994). Boyarin's quote not only touches on the relationship between oneself and the Other, it returns to the essential role of reflexivity if one's actions are to be congruent with one's values.

When I asked Ernesto Maya about the motivations underpinning his political risks, he reformulated my question after a reflexive pause. "What you are really asking me is: *who do you work for and why*?" Ever since Maya was a young boy, he has felt a "commitment to biology… to the Other that is not like you." His lifelong desire to understand "the language of nonhuman things" he says can help to "open minds, open hearts, open your life to a conversation with that who is not like you." Several participants, like Maya, explicitly referenced a solidarity that extends beyond humans while concurrently condemning the ubiquitous and unnecessary suffering experienced by human beings around the world. Geller, for instance, referenced the words of Israel Salanter one of the leaders of the anti-Hasidic movement. Geller referenced Salanter as saying "most of us are concerned with our own bodies and other people's souls and we have to reverse that—concern ourselves with our soul and other people's bodies."

The activist-scholars in this study have vocalized publicly and passionately their solidarity with a range of populations and communities inflicted with various forms of suffering, exploitation, and oppression and at varying degrees. In other words, they feel a responsibility to address injustices. At times, participants' expressions of solidarity were rooted in their ethnic identity. Geller, for example, said that he has been asked on multiple occasions why he focuses so much on Israel and not on other repressive governments around the globe. "I say because anti-Zionism is my Zionism. In other words, I'm

not free to *not* take a position on Israel. I'm free, in a sense, not to take a position on Tibet… but I'm not free to not take a position on Israel… it's intrinsically bound up with my being Jewish." Geller feels first and foremost responsible to the communities with which he feels directly a part of.

At other times, participants take on causes that best exemplify class solidarity. For example, professors, like Susan Long and Robert Gram, who are actively involved with campus politics, expressed their wish for more of their colleagues to recognize that the deteriorating labor conditions in the academy does not most severely affect tenured and tenure-track professors, but rather the less protected classes of workers such as students, staff and lecturers. Long and Gram have been attempting to build more solidarity between tenured/tenure-track and non-tenured faculty for years. Other participants express solidarity with even broader issues that cross racial and class lines. In line with critiques of the "public" discussed in the literature review, John Brun argues that the dominant framing of "public" connotes "a white space… an elite space." He explained, "Often what that means is that some people are worth engaging… this idea of public is something that Black and Indigenous folks are situated outside of. The beginning of the public is actually the end of the native." Brun continues:

> Most of the people I'm interested talking to and hearing from, exist in what some people call the counter-public… So it's not that, you know, I don't engage in the public… I'm just interested much more in being a counter-public intellectual than a public one… they're not a clean, clear cut divide, but the aims and tensions and where you put your energy is different.

This aspiration of addressing those outside of the "public," is not typically learned or encouraged when one is on the trajectory to tenure. Long states, "We're trained to be independent and autonomous." Yet Said (1982) advises "one of the first interferences to be ventured…is a crossing…into…parallel realms… opening the culture to experiences of the Other which have remained 'outside'… the norms manufactured by 'insiders' " (pp. 24-25). Thus, while the subject(s) of solidarity vary amongst participants, all those interviewed stressed the importance of solidarity because they feel it was their responsibility to do so.

Like maintaining one's integrity, participants said that maintaining solidarity with marginalized communities can also be tremendously challenging particularly when the norms of one's profession do not encourage it. But in the face of the suffering, Will Peters believes, "it's harder to be sad." Peters

acknowledges there are "people who are afraid to go to school because of being deported, people who are being harassed or killed… it's harder to be sad, that's all the more reason to put a stick in the ground and stand with people." Salaita (2015, p. 184), however, shares how sadness and solidarity are at times inseparable:

> During Israel's recent bombing campaign in Gaza… the ice cream freezers weren't stacked with popsicles and sorbet. Instead, they stored the bodies of dead children.
>
> The symbolism is endless. Ice cream and children's bodies. They usually intermingle in messy harmony. This time, though, the bodies had replaced the treats. The children had nothing to imbibe. Their corpses were on display for a much different sort of rummaging.
>
> They were in ice cream freezers because morgues had run out of space, a problem not only of warfare but of overcrowded neighborhoods and geographic entrapment. Gaza's lack of electricity threatened rapid decomposition. The children rested atop one another in containers that likely provided some of their happiest moments when they were alive.
>
> There is nothing poetic about this juxtaposition. It is a terrible algorithm of combustion and confinement.
>
> Thus I tweeted.

Salaita tweeted because as Edward Said (1996) argues, the public intellectual has a duty to make visible the grave injustices of the world, regardless of how uncomfortable it may make people. Being "sad" is indeed uncomfortable and it can become completely demoralizing and politically paralyzing if one does not feel or find hope. Hope, in addition to responsibility, is the second most referenced form of motivation fueling these activist-scholars to speak out politically. Like responsibility, hope is fueled by knowledge (whether intuitive knowing or collective knowledge). This knowledge then enables an individual to *respond* in a way that is congruent with what they would like to see realized in the world.

Motivating hope. Hope has long inspired individuals who seek to influence social change.[25] Hope was also mentioned as a motivating force by about half of the participants in this study. Like many of the ideas in this project, hope has various interpretations. In accordance with how the participants used the notion, hope is defined here as a state of being that centers the openness of the future where transformation is possible. Much more generative than despair and grief, hope serves as a motivator for human agency. According to Freire (1992), hope "is an ontological need" that helps one bear the injustices of the world, to act knowing that those injustices are not fixed (p. 2). Duncan-Andrade (2009) explains "audacious hope stares down the painful path; and despite the overwhelming odds against us making it down that path to change, we make the journey again and again. There is no other choice" (pp. 190-191). Hope could be considered an ontological need not only because it allows us to endure collective suffering, it also serves to preserve "qualities in one's own heart and spirit that would be destroyed by acquiescence" (Berry, 1990, p. 62). Thus, hope is considered necessary for individual and collective survival and well-being.

Idris Hakim shared that for him, hope is not only essential for staying engaged in social justice work, staying hopeful is "the goal." He made clear that his hope was not faith that he was changing anything per say, but rather he is motivated "by a hope that light will overcome darkness." Hakim states, "I'm motivated by a hope that I will not be overcome by darkness, cynicism, or despair." He continues:

> The devil's name, according to Muslims, is "Iblis"... the name comes from the root letters "ba la sa," which literally translates to "he despaired" or "he stayed in a state of grief." This, according to our cosmology, is precisely what the darkness is all about—It's about despair and grief. That is the root of what the devil seeks to do, to lead us to give up on hope. It's about giving up, and forgetting or covering up, or even denying or running away from, God's grace and mercy. So, at some deep level, hope **is** success. The goal is not the material change, but the goal is to maintain the spiritual state of hope in the face of the darkness we see around us (his emphasis).

[25] The notion of hope was foundational to the Frankfurt School's notion of critique, it was vital to the civil rights movement in the U.S., and it is still central to liberation theology, just to name a few examples (Giroux, 2018).

For Hakim, underpinning the political risks he takes as a non-tenure track faculty member is his ability not to despair vis-à-vis the world's injustices and the potential consequences that his speech might bring. While he does his best to make effective intellectual/ethical interventions through his work, for him, staying hopeful—not giving up on qualities of the heart and spirit such as "grace and mercy"—is much more important than whether or not he is creating "material change."

Like responsibility, which draws on one's intellect for appropriate responses, hope also may derive from previous knowledge. Often, being responsible and hopeful involve learning from the lessons of history that can in turn inform one's sense of what is possible and thus informs one's actions (Bonhoeffer, 1953; Freire, 1992). Deeply devoted to his faith, Lecturer Yosef Ahmad referenced the motivating role of hope more than any other participant. Our conversation about hope began when we discussed the enormous amount of backlash he has experienced due to his political engagement in the public realm. He has received countless death threats and a quick google search of his (real) name proves that many people are quick to vilify his character (Yosef Ahmad is his pseudonym). I asked him what it is like to be on the receiving end of this negative attention. Ahmad responded that it is necessary to have thick skin. I asked "How does one development thick skin?" He responded:

> I think having a broad lens of history and constantly looking at other individuals in history and how they confront it. I tend to listen constantly to MLK's speeches… I look at Gandhi's work, I look at Angela Davis' work, I look at Malcolm X's work. I tend to read a lot of history, even going back to Aristotle and Plato. You have to have a longer historical lens in essence… I believe that if you're speaking truth, you're on the right side of history no matter what the consequences or the circumstances so that gives you the confidence to continue to speak.

He concluded, "There is long history that shows change is the only constant in the world and change comes from people believing in ideas and transforming the ideas into reality. I think anyone that looks at history knows that hope is the only thing that is permanent." Indeed, giving attention to reoccurring examples of social change helps to normalize the possibility of change. As mentioned earlier, focusing too much on the negative aspects of social reality can easily leave one feeling demoralized whereas normalizing hope, weaving it into one's ethical praxis, can fuel and sustain courageous action and civic engagement.

Hope alone, however, is not enough. Brazilian critical educator Paulo Freire (1992) admits, "my hope is necessary, but… alone, it does not win. But without it, my struggle will be weak and wobbly. We need critical hope the way a fish needs unpolluted water" (p. 2). The participants in this study mentioned feeling hope in regards to the following: the power of human agency to create necessary change, that dignity and well-being for all is worth fighting for, that others will "have their back" if the day comes when its needed—and of particular pertinence to this study—that courageous speech in the academy can increase and impact larger society. For example, Patel feels a responsibility to contribute to the kind of culture she would like to see—one that is brave, promotes solidarity, and at the root of which is hope. She explains:

> A part of academia that I have found quite disheartening… is a way in which people are rewarded for their silence… if more and more people speak out, then it makes it easier for others to do so… we're not going to get to 100% freedom of expression because of careerism, the desire for advancement, for institutional power… it might be easy to think 'well why do this?'… But it's really important … because by doing so, it becomes less hard for others.

For many of the participants, hope is an integral part of their interventionist praxis. Along with the other main motivators described by the participants (their sense of responsibility to maintain integrity and to be in solidarity), hope plays an important role in their processes for negotiating risk.

The price of the ticket: Negotiating risk

In James Baldwin's (1985) *The Price of the Ticket*, he argues that the price the Irish American paid for becoming white—a "limited… and dimwitted ambition," reified racial inequality in the United States (p. xx). Baldwin's White American evades critical reflexivity and refuses to endure an assessment—"a long look backwards" (p. 328) at how human decisions become the foundation of a society's ethical architecture. The price one pays when choosing to forgo individual upward advancement in order to align one's ethics with one's actions, Baldwin (1985) argues "make[s] freedom real" (p. 318). Or as Fanon (1952/2008, p. 192) quotes Hegel (1949, p. 233) "it is solely by risking life that freedom is obtained." Existentially, these assertions are profoundly important. For some critical scholars, making "freedom real" however, can feel impossible when one is both dependent on financial income and aware of the sophisticated

surveillance networks that will go to extreme and violent measures in order to silence intellectuals on the left. In this section, I will examine more closely how the participants engage in critical reflexivity when negotiating risk.

While the subsequent chapters of this dissertation will address participants' fears and experiences in regards to institutional retribution, particularly as they relate to their social locations (e.g., academic rank and discipline, race and gender), the remainder of this chapter is dedicated to more generalized considerations the participants mentioned having while determining their threshold of risk. Here, I will address specifically how potential backlash from *outside* the academy is weighed in the process of negotiating risk from *inside* the academy. First, I will examine the participants' reflexive considerations for evaluating what is at stake—for themselves personally and professionally, and for the larger community vis-à-vis their ethical convictions. Second, I will explore the concerns that arise with increased visibility in the age of cyber-harassment. Third, I discuss how the contentiousness of a given political issue, particularly the issue of Israel/Palestine, affects the participants' deliberations. Finally, this chapter examines a common consideration amongst the participants: determining the *tone* of their discourse.

The stakes. This chapter began with Patel's invocation of Derrida's notion of aporia, the impasse where decisions are made and where reflexivity, responsibility and risks are initiated or abdicated. Moreover, Patel explains that in regards to risk, whatever decision is made—"it will come at a cost." Here is a list of what was mentioned as potentially at stake by the academics interviewed:

- Mental and physical wellbeing
- Having one's statements misinterpreted
- Character assassination
- Having one's words used to delegitimize the social cause for which one intended to advocate
- Harassment, intimidation, and/or being doxxed,[26] including threats to one's physical safety and/or to the safety of one's family members
- Jeopardizing one's professional opportunities—from being labeled uncollegial, to being denied a promotion, to being shunned from the academy and thus denied the ability to earn

[26] Doxxing will be discussed more in depth below as well as in subsequent chapters of this dissertation.

a livelihood in the only profession in which one has been trained

When negotiating risk, these potential costs are appraised against one's moral/political values and hopes. Thus, not surprisingly, *reflexivity* emerged as a salient theme in the interviews. Reflexivity has long been considered a cornerstone practice of the intellectual (Archer, 2009; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Dewey, 1932/2008; Freire, 1970). Requiring more than mere self-analysis and the mulling over of hypotheticals, reflexivity (like maintaining integrity) necessitates genuine and disciplined assessment of how one's actions and behaviors respond to the world, and whether one is living out one's values.[27] In short, reflexivity integrates personal imperatives with social and collective imperatives. In the context of this study, the tension between personal and social imperatives is crucial to understanding how in fact public intellectuals negotiate risk-taking vis-à-vis the everyday and acute pressures of working in the academy. Multiple participants admitted to undergoing psychic drain simply as a consequence of their many personal and professional responsibilities. Or in the words of English Professor Cynthia Clark, with all the stresses of life, one "can only fight so many fights." Reflexivity is therefore essential for assessing the stakes and deciding whether one is willing to pay a price for speaking out.

When activist-scholars find the energy, they engage in public (and at times harsh) critique not simply to be provocative, but rather, as Salaita (2015) contends, because "we think deeply and often about what it means to be kind and emphatic" (p. 183). When connecting explicitly and publicly with issues of contention, power, and personhood, reflexive intellectuals ask themselves questions, such as the one mentioned earlier: "*Whom do I work for and why?*" Similarly, Professor of Gender and Women's Studies, Carolina Santos, cognizant of her light skin privilege, asks "What kind of Hispanic am I going to be?" For the participants in this study, the price of the ticket is hiked or discounted according to race and gender (Gutierrez y Muhs, Niemann, Gonzalez & Harris, 2012) as well as academic rank and discipline (Ginsberg, 2011; Williams, 2016).[28] Other factors that influence the felt costs of risk include whether or not an

[27] Many thinkers have called into question the (im)possibility of total self-understanding (Archer, 2009; Gibson-Graham, 1994; Rose, 1997). As Archer (2003) argues, "agents can only know themselves and their circumstances under their own descriptions, which are fallible, as is all our knowledge" (p. 15). In spite of the limitations and incompleteness of human knowledge, reflexivity's role in fostering more understanding of self and one's place in the world is not refuted.

[28] These factors will be discussed in depth in the next chapter.

individual has experienced crossing a similar threshold of risk before. Several participants contended that the experience of having already crossed a similar threshold makes the potential costs of future risks seem more manageable. Also, several participants shared that having strong community ties and/or other career options to fall back on "just in case," also makes exercising their academic freedom in controversial ways feel less risky. In the midst of so much uncertainty, reflexivity is a fundamental praxis the participants use to reflect upon inevitable new circumstances that demand responses.

Cyber harassment. *Freedom of extramural utterance* is a constitutive part of the U.S. American conception of academic freedom.[29] Yet given the omnipresence of the Internet, about one third of the participants in this study mentioned a concern that public intellectuals of the past did not have to deal with: being the target of cyber harassment. While their extent of engagement in social media varies, for many of the participants social media serves as a platform that allows them to connect and dialogue with broader audiences including the underrepresented communities that often inspires their scholarship. Yet increasingly, we hear of critical scholars from across the country who have been attacked with physical threats due to their social media presence, such as Syracuse professor Dana Cloud, Princeton professor Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, and University of Iowa professor Sarah Bond (Flaherty, 2017c).

A noteworthy example of such cyber harassment can be seen in the case of John Eric Williams, Associate Professor of Sociology at Trinity College. He was targeted in June 2017 for posting comments critical of white supremacy on Facebook. The harassment was so severe, Williams and his family had to leave the state and the campus was temporarily forced to close (Flaherty, 2017c; Megan, 2017). A 2017 report by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) confirms that harassment of faculty has indeed increased since the 2016 presidential election. We are witnessing a "resurgence of politically motivated witch hunts" led by an emboldened right-leaning base (AAUP, 2017, para. 1). Williams' comments were not only fodder for internet trolls. Two Republican legislators called on Trinity "to immediately, and permanently, remove Mr. Williams from the ranks of the school's faculty," which resulted in Trinity swiftly placing Williams on involuntary leave (Reichman, 2017, para. 7). Reichman (2019) reports that it was not until Trinity felt the pressure from the AAUP that it acknowledged that Williams' expression was protected by academic freedom.

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[29] https://www.aaup.org/issues/civility

For decades, staunch neoconservatives figures like David Horowitz have been campaigning to end the leftist indoctrination that they believe runs rampant in the U.S. university system (Horowitz, 2009; Ivie, 2006). Recently, Horowitz's cause has gained traction not only from state officials sponsoring legislation that reflects his views of the university system (AAUP, 2018), but also through social media and the creation of websites such as his project, *Discover The Networks*, an online database "of the left" and its "sinister" agendas.[30] There are now a number of websites that monitor, surveil and report on left-leaning scholars. For example, *Professor Watchlist* creates profiles that list professors' names, institutional affiliations and photographs, and encourage website visitors to submit additional names of professors who "discriminate against conservative students, promote anti-American values and advance leftist propaganda in the classroom."[31] These websites have made it easier for cyber bullies to target faculty members (and their families) with threats of physical violence and sexual assault, and bombard them with harassing emails, phone calls and social media posts. Amongst those who have not been targeted, several participants expressed concern about one day appearing on these sites and being harassed by trolls. Trolls who target academics do not search the Internet for "anti-American" professors in order to "inform" the public about potential bias in the academy, but rather with the intent of digitally attacking, discrediting, intimidating, and even terrorizing scholars they see as threatening to their sociopolitical worldview (Massanari, 2018).

Foucault's work on biopolitics (2008) and regimes of visibility (1995) sensitizes us to how technology is used as a tool of discipline and surveillance. Today, when academics are more accessible than ever to the public, knowing that one is potentially being surveilled may have a chilling effect that results in self-censorship (Massanari, 2018). "Doxxing," originally a slang term used in the hacker community, has become something of a mainstream phenomenon in recent years. Doxxing refers to an internet-based revenge tactic where one broadcasts an individual's private or identifiable information with the aim of harassing and intimidating. In some cases, it can leave a permanent mark on a person's digital footprint. Increasingly, public intellectuals have less protection from being targeted. Thus, with no guarantees or formula to follow, many participants in this study mentioned that they hypothesize the potential stakes by assessing the contentiousness of the political issues that matter to them.

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[30] https://www.discoverthenetworks.org/, https://www.davidhorowitzfreedomcenter.org/

[31] https://www.professorwatchlist.org/about-us/

While they are often coupled, social critique and contention are not mutually inclusive. As Patel mentioned earlier, critiquing "the system" will likely not ruffle feathers, whereas calling out one's superiors or individuals with political and financial power may. This research shows that when deciding whether or not to speak out or self-censor, participants weigh heavily what they perceive to be an issue's contentious nature. Intellectuals of all races and gender identifications who have taken overtly controversial positions, particularly against white supremacy, capitalism and U.S. foreign policy, have experienced backlash. However, the issue considered most contentious by the vast majority of the participants in this study was often described by them as an offspring of the projects of white supremacy and capitalism: the Israel/Palestine conflict.

Israel/Palestine. This dissertation is about academic freedom in U.S. public universities in broad terms. Since the Israel/Palestine conflict is arguably the most internationally contested political issue across the higher education landscape (Abraham, 2014; Brand, 2007; Butler, 2006; Doumani, 2006; Salaita, 2015), it is no surprise that it emerged as a reoccurring theme in this research project. Due to its contentious nature, this lightening rod issue was brought up repeatedly by the participants in discussions regarding how they negotiate risk. Participants referred to the well-financed, politically influential sector of Zionists who have organized sophisticated efforts to silence, delegitimize and punish critics of Israel.[32] There are several examples in academia that illustrate overt attempts to stifle criticism of Israel: external interventions into shared governance and faculty hires (Flaherty, 2017b; Palumbo-Liu, 2015), efforts to connect anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism in official university discourse, [33] and attempts to shut down academic talks and events that discuss Israel critically (Power, 2017).

A silencing tactic brought up by many of the participants was the use of online surveillance. For example, the media outlets *Campus Watch* and *Canary*

[32] While Jewishness and Zionism have overlap and are often conflated, Zionism as a movement and identity has been largely contested historically and in contemporary Jewish cultures across the world (Kolsky, 2010). Even among Jews who identify as Zionists, they are not homogenous as a group.

[33] California Assembly Resolution, HR 35, which was modeled to reflect the U.S. State Department's definition of anti-Semitism, argues that discourse on campuses that describes Israel as racist or as an apartheid state are examples of anti-Semitism. (see http://usacbi.org/2012/09/an-open-letter-from-california-scholars-on-hr-35/ and https://www.state.gov/s/rga/resources/267538.htm). While the California State Assembly approved the resolution unanimously in 2012, the University of California Regents due to first amendment concerns then rejected it.

Mission specifically monitor and create online profiles of faculty members and students who critique Israel and U.S. relations in the Middle East (Ivie, 2005; Moskowitz, 2017). Participants' referenced extreme cases such as those of Steven Salaita and Norman Finkelstein, two scholars who, despite their strong academic records, have been unable to secure professorships after political detractors successfully tainted their reputations due to their public criticisms of Israel. It is impossible to know for certain why for Salaita and Finkelstein, criticizing Israel cost them professorships when other not-yet-tenured critics are still employed. However, inferences can be made. For whatever reason, both Finkelstein and Salaita have large social media followings, which made them more visible on the Internet to detractors. Both cases also involved significant outsider intervention, which pressured their respective administrations to overrule faculty committee decisions to grant Finkelstein tenure at DePaul University, and to hire Salaita at UIUC (Palumbo-Liu, 2015; Schrecker, 2010).

From across the academic ladder, many of this study's participants have chosen to publicly condemn Israel's policies and have experienced a range of backlash in cyberspace, but also within the academy. For example, Lisa Haddan has reason to believe that a number of students enrolled Pass/No Pass in a course she taught on the Middle East in order to give her poor evaluations at the end of the semester due to her "Pro-Palestinian bias." She stated in our interview that "the Israel/Palestine conflict is not a pro/con issue" and that she never presented it as such. Assistant Professor, Cardi Habibi, is not surprised by Haddan's inference regarding her Pass/No pass students. Habibi stated:

> Today, racist students have a lot of immediate resources, which include strategies taught by white supremacist and Zionist groups that parade as legitimate civil rights institutions, even when they have explicitly sexist… anti-immigrant, or otherwise racist agendas. Campus Watch, the Anti-Defamation League, Canary Mission, the Hellen Diller Foundation, and many others provide… students with tools via workshops, website content, names of professors… and other information to intimidate faculty, with powerhouse legal infrastructures, such as the Lawfare Project, backing them up.

In addition to resistance from students, Habibi shared that her work on Palestine has led to the following forms of backlash:

> I received death threats. I had my office door vandalized… I was cc'd to emails with all the professors of the department telling me to condemn

> terrorism. I was typecast as an angry ethnic woman, and received discipline in many humiliating forms such as being called "rude" by a white, male professor when I asked a… speaker to clarify his positions on white supremacy. I have had colleagues, including women and men of color, attack my credibility and professionalism… Not to mention, much, much worse that I'd rather not go into here.

Habibi and three other participants expressed strong suspicions that they have been passed up for job opportunities because of their stance on this issue.

Participants' experiences when critiquing Israel are nuanced, as are the critiques themselves. Associate Professor of Native Studies, Rose LaDuke, explains that while she does not condone the occupation of Palestine, she agrees with Zionists who object to anti-Zionists' "obsession" with Israel. Some Zionists make the case that there are governments around the world who are arguable more "repressive" than Israel's and therefore object to Israel's government being scrutinized more harshly. LaDuke concurs. In our interview she recalled participating in an academic association meeting that was deciding whether or not to support the Boycott Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement on their ballot. Deserving to be quoted at length, she says,

> I was tweeting about it and the… [association's Twitter group] picked up some of my tweets, but it's interesting the ones they picked up. They picked up the supportive ones. They didn't pick up the ones where I said I'm sitting here with tears streaming down my face because while everybody's talking about boycotting Israel and their settler colonialism, there is a complete erasure of Indigenous sovereignty here … [the U.S.] is the most powerful settler-colonialist in the world and everything Israel does is because of the U.S. They learned it from the U.S., they get funded by the U.S. and so there is no high horse to stand on here. But nobody wants to hear that in this progressive community… there's all these progressive academics who are really comfortable—it's deeply ingrained in them—to erase the fact that they are sitting on settler-colonial land, that they are part of an invading state and they want to point fingers at Israel all the time… I was like 'Wow, you guys are such hypocrites.' Zionists … they're not wrong about that. They're not wrong that a lot of lefties in the U.S. are hypocrites… I don't support Zionists though, that's violent terrible stuff that they're doing over there… I've never been to Israel, I've never been to Palestine… and usually I wouldn't make a judgment … but the reason I can is because when I read the press I'm like

> 'Oh, the U.S. did that in 1876, they did that in 1890, everything Israel does has happened.' They are in their Wild West period right now that's why it looks so violent and horrible, because it's like the period from 1850 to 1890 in the U.S. So I know what's gonna happen in 115 years, you're gonna have Israelis saying 'Oh my great great grandmother was Palestinian' … they're going to be doing the same thing that Americans do trying to claim Indigeneity now and disowning their culpability in that settler state… And Salaita's good, he makes those comparisons.

While the repercussions have been drastically different for the two of them,[34] LaDuke and Salaita share some commonalities. Central to both LaDuke and Salaita's positions on the Israel/Palestine conflict is their lens of Indigeneity and settler-colonialism. They also share in common that the particular connections they make between settler-colonialism and the Israel/Palestine conflict is often ignored.

Other participants admitted that even though they have strong critiques of Israel, the contentiousness of this issue makes it where they only feel comfortable speaking about it in environments that feel "safe." For example, while Koffman has spoken about the issue at Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP)[35] events, he admits the Israel/Palestine conflict is "one of the things I'm very cagey around." Similarly Hakim, who has also spoken at SJP events, recalls teaching a political economy class with over 100 students in attendance. A student who identified herself as Jewish asked him where he stood on Israel/Palestine. Even though he condemns the occupation, he felt the stakes at that moment were too high to admit that. I asked how he responded to his student. He says,

> I defended Zionists. I wanted to be gracious and I said something about how their politics are no doubt a reflection of their own insecurities and

[34] Perhaps the repercussions were so different for these two scholars due to their "tone" as well as the frequency of their tweets. Salaita tweets about the Israel/Palestine conflict much more frequently than LaDuke and his commentary is arguably much more inflammatory. LaDuke, however, has over a thousand more Twitter followers than Salaita. (Again, Rose LaDuke is a pseudonym)

[35] SJP is a pro-Palestinian student activism organization with hundreds of chapters on college campuses across the United States, Canada and New Zealand.

> fears… it might be that I'm playing the long game[36] and it might also be that I'm protecting my own ass. I'm aware that both of those things are happening and I can't tell you which is driving me. Maybe I'm only supporting the status quo by deceiving myself that I'm being strategic…

He continues:

> I have always been pretty open about speaking out on politics in terms of general New York Times-ish type politics. Those kinds of things aren't too controversial. I've kept silent on Palestine… I'm contributing to the silencing of that issue and why? Because I want to keep my job... I'm worried about conserving my own position in this institution—that's a dangerous ethical place to be in… maybe I've constructed my guiding principles in a way to keep me safe… No even worse, not only do I want to keep my job, I also want to keep it from being more difficult.

As a lecturer, Hakim is hyper-aware of his job precarity and admits "I'm smart enough to know why I'm not speaking about Israel/Palestine in classes, but that doesn't make it ok."

Dr. Ahmad, like Hakim, is a lecturer and wants a decolonized Palestine, yet Ahmad is unapologetic in his critique—consistently articulated in tweets, essays and public talks—regarding the Israeli occupation of Palestine. Ahmad is a scholar of Islam, Islamic Law and Middle Eastern Studies, to name a few fields, and has organized around a myriad of social issues. When asked about when and how he became politically involved, he says:

> As a Palestinian, you are always confronting political circumstances… it comes with your background because as a Palestinian you are confronting walls and structures of exclusion from the get-go. Visiting your ancestral home you have to go through check points… my immediate experience would be at age six seeing my mother being strip searched… at the crossing of the bridge from Jordan to Palestine… you don't need to be an activist to recognize what is taking place.

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[36] Hakim used the expression "the long game" in reference to building trust with students over the course of the semester, allowing him to introduce critical perspectives to sensitive social issues with his students as time progresses.

Interestingly, Ahmad, who has no reservation critiquing Israel publically, said in his interview that he would advise untenured faculty to be prudent when it comes to this issue:

> We live in world where there are consequences. And I can rail against the unfairness of those consequences… It shouldn't be that way… there shouldn't be homeless people on the street, there shouldn't be Palestinians without a homeland, and there shouldn't be a pipeline in North Dakota… the other side is tenacious, mean, vicious. So they come after you. They want to come after us… If there's a junior faculty member that does not yet have their tenure and they say 'I would like to do X, Y, and Z in relations to Palestine,' I would say 'wait, don't do that. Wait until you get your tenure'… I'd rather for them to gain their tenure and then be a solid ally for the long term rather than signing a statement and then six months or one year down the line their tenure is rejected and their out of a job… go through Maslow's hierarchy of needs… it's very difficult for you to give overarching moral statements when you are hungry.

In regards to speaking out about this issue, its contentious nature and the severe consequences that lurk in its shadows (Alexander, 2019; Chuh, 2018) appeared in the data to reflect a chilling effect.

Several participants brought up the term "PEP: Progressive Except for Palestine" (Elia, 2017; Harris & Shichtman, 2018) when describing the chilling effect created by this particular social issue. As Salaita (2015) explains, this acronym "applies to people who profess to opposed racism, sexism, imperialism, war, segregation, dogma, meanness, and incivility, but who suddenly become quite less enlightened vis-à-vis Israel" (p. 93). Participants explained that not all PEP's are advocates of Israeli policies. Rather, as Professor Habibi notes, the fear of retribution is so severe that even for those who are sincerely concerned for Palestinians, academic freedom does not do enough to provide them a sense of security. For example, Patel believes that to support Palestine in academe automatically entails an act of incivility, no matter how measured one's tone.[37] Professor Susan Long (who has earned tenure) brought up the Israel/Palestine conflict in our interview admitting she "has not been a leader" on the issue. I asked her if she was nervous speaking out about it. She replied: "Yes, yes, yes." Long explained that her partner who is a journalist, after

[37] *Tone* emerged as a significant theme in this study and will be discussed below.

writing an op-ed that was critical of Israeli policy, received a number of death threats that effectively functioned to silence her on this issue.

Similar to Long, Hakim fears the personal and professional repercussions that could ensue from speaking out about this issue. He wants to push further about the Israel/Palestine issue because he feels that "if you're not doing decolonial work" and you consider yourself "critical… you're wasting your time." Yet he is afraid for multiple reasons: 1) potential trolling, 2) because he is a non-tenure track faculty member, and pushback from students, if expressed in his teaching evaluations or if brought to his supervisors, could put him out of a job, and 3) he is also worried about being misrepresented and what effect that could have for the Palestinian struggle for sovereignty. Hakim explains,

> When I talk about gender in my classes, I try to be super careful because it's a particularly sensitive issue. It's hard to communicate about this topic because people are sensitive about every word. The Israel/Palestine topic is more sensitive than gender and that's kind of amazing… the stakes in this shit are deeply emotional and personal … we can't talk about stuff if we don't feel a certain level of safety talking about it.

Hakim does not feel comfortable speaking out about this issue and while he is certainly not alone, there are reasons to believe that times are changing. Not to suggest that it is now easier for people to talk about the issue, polls are showing that U.S. Americans are increasingly critical of Israel, particularly on college and university campuses (Telhami, 2018). During the course of this research, for the first time in history, state representatives that openly support the BDS movement were elected to the U.S. Congress. Reaffirming the sentiment made in Michelle Alexander's groundbreaking (2019) New York Times op-ed entitled "Time to break the Silence on Palestine," Professor Patel notes that when academics demonstrate courage by speaking out, "it becomes less hard for others" to do so, which may contribute to shifting public opinion.

Being Strategic…or Not

Risk is assessed consciously and unconsciously. That assessment is shaped by emotions, values, needs and habits. Derrick Bell (2002) points out that taking risks can at times result in "moments of self-definition that set the standard for an ethical life. Sometimes, however, we are not in a position to take that sort of principled stand—at least in the moment—without it amounting to self-sabotage" (p. 63). One of the many challenges of the human condition is

that we often have no way of knowing which risk could result in self-sabotage. Salaita (2015) reflects, "Would I have written the tweets knowing I would get fired? Of course not… Hypotheticals inform decisions, but moral signification exists most pertinently at the moment of deciding." He explains, "I tweeted without any meaningful sense that I would be targeted by political opponents who might misread meaning and then undermine my livelihood" (pp. 47-48). At times, risk is taken with little deliberation, at other times it is measured. Clark shares that oftentimes, "I can't help voice controversial opinions… it's difficult for me to restrain myself." Some opportunities lend themselves for more thoughtful, even strategic planning. Peters contends, "We have to be willing to live life with risks… be vulnerable, but not stupid." When one decides to take on an issue publically, there are always the standard free speech elements of *time, place* and *manner* with which one has to contend. The latter is the consideration that participants referenced as most important when we discussed their strategic thinking. As Samantha Arlette put it, "They don't remember so much what you said. They remember how they felt about what you said."

Tone. The tone that one uses to engage the public sphere can lead to unpredictable and unquantifiable consequences that impact one's personal life as well as the larger causes one is aiming to advance. Patel believes:

> The difficulty, ethically, is 1) to be willing to pay the price for what you are taking on; and 2) to speak in a way that advances the cause… You want to speak in such a way that moves it forward… that draws people to what you're saying— it's really about identifying the stakes of the problem and addressing it in a way that makes it an appeal that resonates to a broad constituency of people… that's very hard because it means you have to say very difficult things. You have to be able to say things that nobody wants to hear. But you have to be able to say it in a way that doesn't compromise the cause.

In addition to being a prolific writer and tweeter, Ahmad often speaks in person to large audiences, academic and non-academic alike. He explains:

> You have to constantly calibrate your message and assess your audience… sometimes… an audience needs more preparation before you actually provide the critique. Some have already had the critique and therefore what you need is to show them a different direction… Is it an old audience? Is it a hostile audience? Is it a… supportive audience? Is it an uninvolved audience?

He warns, however, "You need to also be careful… you don't want that calibration to end up being self-censorship." This underlines an internal challenge experienced by many of the participants and thus emerged as a common theme in the research—*how to engage in public critique that communicates authentically one's position while minimizing possibilities of retribution.* Due to the unpredictability of one's audience in the age of cyber harassment, participants expressed that in the recent years, they have become more cautious with the delivery of their social media critiques. About half of the participants that use social media admitted to deleting past tweets that with hindsight, they thought might be interpreted as offensive or polarizing.

If one has the misfortune of being targeted, then having one's words decontextualized is a given. "Of course that's what they're gonna do, right?" Rose LaDuke stated as we spoke of life in the Twitterverse. During our Skype conversation, LaDuke struck me as impressively sharp-minded, courageous, intentional, and committed to her people. She shared that having been trolled in the past, she tries to avoid it from reoccurring and is therefore very thoughtful of her tone. In fact, she always has been:[38]

> In Indian Country everybody knows everybody… my mom had been a powwow dancer as a teenager and my sister is one… people knew who our family was and we had to represent our grandparents and great-grandparents… I still think about that … I reflect on my extended family… my mom… I reflect on the LaDuke name… I reflect on my tribe. And not that I don't do things that my family and tribe would necessarily disagree with, but I feel that if I say things in a sophisticated, well thought-out, defensible way without resorting to swearing—and I would never insult anybody or name call… I don't know, that's my particular standard and so far it's worked.

LaDuke admits that while her approach has worked fairly well so far, there is no guarantee. When a detractor wants to discredit their opposition, they will. Besides decontextualizing content, an all too common silencing tactic brought up by the participants is to police intellectuals, particularly women and people of color, for their tone, deeming it as uncivil.

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[38] LaDuke also mentioned that she is also deliberate about her venue. She explains, "Facebook is public too, but I'll swear and be more sarcastic on Facebook." While she is aware that people can screen capture posts, she feels less cautious because it can be more "private" compared to twitter.

(In)Civility. The literature emphasizes the importance for faculty (particularly faculty of color) to be seen as civil and collegial, especially in regards to their tenure and promotion processes (Stockdill & Danico, 2012; Haag, 2005; Squire, 2015). These terms (civil/uncivil) are not neutral and as Salaita (2015) argues, "people often deploy the terms to disparage or exalt without having to explain" (p. 42). In fact, for Salaita, being uncivil *was* the justification UIUC gave him for his firing. The current iterations of these terms have long histories of demanding conformity to the ethos of white supremacy and colonization (Bonilla-Silva, 2009; Davetian, 2009: Salaita, 2015). Today, the rhetoric of civility and collegiality is considered by some as a technology of domination that silences speech that seeks to undermine systems of inequality (Dutt-Ballerstadt, 2018; Gutierrez y Muhs et al., 2012; Jones & Squire 2018). Moreover, there is an increasing reliance and insistence on civility codes at institutions of higher education across the country (Chuh, 2018; Lieberwitz, 2015). As Chuh (2018, p. 166) argues:

> We can readily acknowledge the historic and ongoing usefulness of the mandate to civility in the service of dispossession, subjugation, and devastation of people and planet. The civilizing and Christianizing mission of early higher education in the United States resonates strongly today. Perhaps especially in the aftermath of 9/11.

Today, the trope "civility" is increasingly invoked to adjudicate free speech on college campuses.

Several participants referenced how "incivility" is often deployed by university administrators to describe intellectuals who go against those in power, but it is never used to describe war crimes initiated by Western governments or academics who have contributed to those war crimes (such as UCB Professor John Yoo).[39] One participant noted that UCB administrators regularly remember Mario Savio and his Free Speech Movement comrades for the positive change they created, yet they fail to emphasize that it was achieved through their civil disobedience, i.e., their incivility. Several participants (from multiple institutions) brought up the historical inconsistencies in the rhetoric used by UCB's administration regarding civility. Specifically, several mentioned the irony of UCB's former chancellor, Nicholas Dirks', "Message on Civility," which was sent

[39] Nor was the trope incivility used by university administrations in their public denouncements of provocateur Milo Yiannopoulos during his college tours of 2016-2017.

out to the UCB campus community only a month after the Salaita firing.[40] Dirks stated:

> We can only exercise our right to free speech insofar as we feel safe and respected in doing so, and this in turn requires that people treat each other with civility. Simply put, courteousness and respect in words and deeds are basic preconditions to any meaningful exchange of ideas. In this sense, free speech and civility are two sides of the single coin—the coin of open, democratic society.[41]

Dirks' statement sparked fury, and not just at Berkeley.

Academics and journalists from across the country responded to his statement (Flaherty, 2014; Kruth, 2014; Lukianoff, 2014).[42] His expectations of civility were seen as an attempt to regulate speech and squelch politically unpopular viewpoints, which are protected under the first amendment (Reichman, 2014). Yet Dirks was not alone. Several university administrations in recent years have put out statements and initiatives that elevate and promote "civility," such as Pennsylvania State University, Rutgers University, University of Missouri and University of Tennessee, to name a few (Flaherty, 2014; Salaita, 2015).[43] Even though the participants in this study have a consistent practice of speaking out in public, at times quite passionately, it appears as though the prevalence of the "civility" rhetoric in academe does indeed have an impact on their sense of freedom, particularly for the women of color in this study.

The term incivility was brought up by about half of the interviewees (mostly faculty of color and women) during our discussions on academic freedom. Of those, the majority admit they intentionally try to avoid being deemed uncivil, angry, or overly emotional, affirming the significance of *tone* in regards to academic freedom. Several participants noted that it is not that "uncivil" speech does not exist, however they question who determines what is "uncivil" and whom gets labeled as "uncivil." Professor Santos looks at this

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[40] Dirks claims that the timing of his statement, sent the month following Salaita's firing, was completely coincidental. After sparking his own free speech controversy with his "civility" statement, Dirks clarified that his statement was to be received by the UCB community as a request, not a rule. See his clarification here: statement https://academeblog.org/2014/09/13/fsmers-respond-to-civility-appeal/

[41] http://news.berkeley.edu/2014/09/12/chancellor-dirks-on-civility/

[42] Also see The Council of UC Faculty Associations' Statement on "Civility" and Academic Freedom in response to Dirks here: https://cucfa.org/news/2014_sept11.php

[43] Also see the AAUP's statements on civility: https://www.aaup.org/issues/civility

phenomenon in her research. When I met with her in her office, we spoke in Spanglish (translated below) about some of the questions that inspires the work she does on political emotions and the role of the public intellectual:

> Why is it that certain groups are permitted to express anger and others not? … Like Trump and so many White male politicians around the world… [many] people think their expression of anger is fine—that that's what it means to be a leader… Why are some sanctioned to express anger and who gets to decide?… If Steven Salaita or a woman of color [express anger], they are seen as a threat, uncivil… With the Salaita case… his anger was considered illegitimate and was not forgiven… It was not like, 'Oh, what's this outburst?' Like so many outbursts made by Trump, for example are forgiven… [Salaita] couldn't go back and… undo it, he could not clarify it… he tried to, you know put it in context, but there was no undoing it.

In our interview, Susan Long concurred. She referenced several incidents, including the Salaita case, where professors of color expressing their anger over injustice resulted in huge academic freedom scandals. While she admitted that she would not state her opinions in the same manner as the individuals she mentioned, "Who wants to be reduced to one action?"

Conclusion

Public intellectuals contend with various challenges in their attempts to articulate a grammar of political morality that resonates outside of the academy. This chapter examined why the participants engage in discursive risk in the face of unknowable, yet potentially severe personal and professional consequences. The data revealed that their sense of responsibility to maintain personal integrity and solidarity with the Other, as well as their sense of hope in a better collective future, drive them to consistently assert where they stand on sensitive issues in the public arena. The majority of the activist-scholars interviewed feel that the culture of the academy and the expectations of their profession do not encourage ethical risk-taking.

This chapter therefore explored how the participants navigate the risk-taking process within this environment. From the data, reflexivity emerged as a salient praxis shared by the participants in deciding the stakes of a given risk. Besides professional retribution, a newly developed concern for activist-scholars is the increased threat of being doxxed or harassed by cyber bullies. In efforts to

prevent harassment (and in some cases, further harassment), the most referenced considerations weighed by the participants when negotiating risk-taking were: 1) the contentious nature of a given social issue (the Israel/Palestine conflict being regarded as the most contentious); and 2) careful deliberation over one's tone of speech, which was of particular concern to women of color. Cyber harassment, critiquing Israel, and the threat of being labeled "uncivil" emerged in the findings as have a chilling effect that the participants also navigate when deciding how they engage in extramural speech. In the following chapter, I will examine how the participants social locations, such as academic rank and discipline, and race and gender, affect their sense of reassurance in the protections provided by academic freedom.

Chapter Five: The Stratification of Freedom: An Intersectional Analysis of the Perceived Protections of Academic Freedom

This chapter examines my participants' perceived protections of academic freedom according to their social identifications and institutional positioning. In order to better understand the effectiveness of academic freedom, it is necessary not only to assess the moments where it is overtly violated, but it is also useful to explore the *perceived* everyday effectiveness of academic freedom. While *absolute* free speech does not exist,[44] if activist-scholars feel pressured to refrain from commenting on issues that they consider critically and socially important, free inquiry, the bloodline of the university system, and the innovative knowledge-production that arises from it, are also threatened. In what follows, I examine faculty members' sense of safety and freedom when speaking out politically, as it intersects with their positionings in social and institutional hierarchies.

The concept of intersectionality, which has roots in Black feminist thought, is an analytical framework that addresses the convergence of various marginal social identities such as race, class, gender, sexuality and physical mobility (Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1991; Harris & Leonardo, 2018, Moraga & Anzaldúa, 2015). Individuals affected by interlocking systems of oppression, such as racism, sexism, classism, ableism, homophobia, and transphobia, experience compounded challenges compared to individuals who do not belong to multiple marginal groups. In this study, over half of the participants occupy more than one marginal identity, which greatly impacts their lived experience, including how they experience their right to free speech. For example, when talking about her experiences in academe, Assistant Professor Cardi Habibi notes, "I've never been 'Arab' in one instance and 'woman' in a separate instance; I've always been both: Arab woman." Over a third of the participants are women of color, therefore, racism and sexism emerged as the intersection of institutional forces they face.

The findings show that entangled with the experience of being a member of social minority groups, how one experiences academic freedom is also affected by one's location within the academy, mainly one's academic discipline and academic rank. In this chapter, while I focus on how participants' perceived academic freedom protections are impacted by these social and institutional

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[44] The First Amendment does not protect speech that is deemed a "true threat," speech that incites illegal activity, or harassment on the basis of protected characteristics such as race, gender, sexual orientation, religion. (See Lasson, K. (1984). Group libel versus free speech: when big brother should butt in. *Duq. L. Rev.*, *23*, 77.

positionings, it is impossible to compartmentalize these categories. This chapter begins with an examination of the ways participants spoke of race and gender in relation to academic freedom, yet these themes are also interwoven throughout the subsequent sections, which focus on how the participants' field of study and rank impact the practice and deployment of academic freedom. A large part of this chapter examines the dissident scholars' perceived protections according to academic rank. Because academic freedom is linked to tenure, codification by academic rank provides a rich framework for comparing and analyzing participants' experiences regarding their freedom of expression.

Race, Gender, and Academic Freedom

There is no lack of literature describing the ways the US university system reflects the racial and gender hierarchies prevalent in larger society. From its inception, the modern university was designed to serve the interests of wealthy white men (Karabel 2006; Grosfogel, 2013; Saunders, 2010; Wilder, 2014) and arguably, it still does (Aguirre, 2000; Ahmed, 2012; Bernal & Villalpando, 2002: Garza, 1993; Giroux, 2010; Niemann, 1999). While initiatives to diversify the teaching body of universities is becoming more common, faculty of color are still disproportionally outnumbered. According to the National Center of Education Statistics (2018), of all full-time faculty in degree-granting postsecondary institutions in 2016, people of color made up only a quarter of the teaching body. The data also indicates that the majority of women and minority faculty are concentrated at less prestigious institutions and are at the lower end of the faculty ranks (Olsen, Maple & Stage, 1995). Research also shows that Black, Latino and women faculty are underrepresented in STEM fields (Li & Koedel, 2017).

Although they are disproportionally represented, faculty of color are more present in academia than ever before. As historian Dehorah Gray White points out, "Things have changed, but some things have only been altered and there is a big difference between change and alteration" (Matthew, 2016, p. 21). This belief is reiterated by the editors of *Presumed Incompetent: The Intersections of Race and Class for Women in Academia* (2012), who state, "While many of the formal barriers have been lifted, academic institutions remain, at their core, profoundly inhospitable to the experiences and points of view of those formerly excluded" (p. 7). The data gathered in this study regarding the experiences of minority faculty members corroborates this existing research.

The inhospitability towards the historically underrepresented in academe manifests in a myriad of ways. Or, as editor of *Written/Unwritten: Diversity and*

the Hidden Truths of Tenure, Patricia Matthew (2016) notes, "there is a pattern to how this gap is maintained, even as we see signs of progress" (p. 3). Several patterns that perpetuate systemic inequalities were acknowledged by the majority of the participants of this study, including six white/white-passing males who mentioned that they have it "easier" compared to their white women, and women of color colleagues.[45] Moreover, unlike several of the white women and women of color I interviewed, not a single white male participant mentioned feeling pressure or being "warned to be careful" with their speech. None were referred to as a "complainer" by (male) colleagues when they took stands on controversial issues. And, none were made to feel they had to serve as representatives of their race or gender within academic settings.

One of the most frequently referenced injustices impacting academic freedom was confirmed by several women participants: students tend to give lower evaluations to women (particularly women of color) faculty compared to their male counterparts (Andersen, & Miller, 1997; TuSmith, 2001). Professor LaDuke, for example, recalled that there have been semesters where she felt "demoralized" by the harsh pushback she received from students who did not want to be challenged around issues of race and gender. Dr. Hakim, on the other hand, contended that, "as a white-passing male, I can get away with saying riskier things."[46]

As mentioned in the previous chapter, many participants have also experienced firsthand, as well as witnessed, overt hostility towards racial and gender minorities through the practice of excessive scrutiny by white colleagues, which leads many public intellectuals of color to obsess about the tone and delivery of their public comments (Cooper, 2017; Dutt-Ballerstadt, 2018; Williams, 2018). Speaking to the numerous high-profile academic freedom controversies involving African American professors in recent years, Finley, Gray and Martin (2018, p. 4) argue that:

> Black academic freedom is always already fragile and fleeting. Black professors at PWIs [predominately white institutions] are are rendered invisible by the systemic neglect they often experience from within their institutions. At the same time, black professors are hypervisible because they tend to make up a very small percentage of the full-time tenured

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[45] There were also several white women interviewed who acknowledged that in addition to sexism, women of color experience additional challenges due to their race.

[46] The reliance on student evaluations of teaching is particularly harmful for non-tenure track faculty (NTTF), particularly women of color NTTF, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

> faculty. Among the consequences of the hypervisibility of faculty with black and brown skin are a heightened sense of scrutiny and the constant gaze from many white colleagues and students that they must endure almost daily.

Several participants in my study echoed this sentiment.

Assistant Professor Samantha Arlette recalled her first year in a predominantly white department:

> Every time I had to walk in between the buildings, I'd run into… white students and colleagues—they'd see me, and they'd go: 'Hi, how are you doing? Welcome to [the department.] Where's your book?' They'd say it just like that… 'Where's your book?'… It stressed me out so badly, I thought, *'How bad am I supposed to have it? I just got here!*

Arlette recounted that, feeling sheepish and distressed, she went to her assigned mentor (a white woman) to seek counsel. She told her mentor that she did not understand why she was being "greeted" in this way. Her mentor replied, "Oh, I'm so sorry. I told them that whenever they see you, they should ask you where the book is because I thought it might motivate you." Arlette thought to herself, "I'm a grown ass woman who borrowed a hell of a lot of money to put myself deeply in debt to go back to school. Do you think you have to motivate me to do the work?" She then asked her mentor, "Can you imagine what it must be like as the only black woman in this department to have all these old white dudes every time they see me pressure me about the book?" Arlette noticed, "It was like the light bulb turned on, and she said, 'Oh my God, I'm so sorry.'" This anecdote hints at why Arlette and many others are highly critical of attempts to increase diversity on college campuses when there still seems to be a lack of understanding, and earnest effort, to properly support and retain minority faculty.[47]

Strong critiques have been made of the way diversity is employed in academia (Ahmed, 2012). The increase of faculty of color is often framed as a reflection of an institution's commitment to diversity, yet "that commitment often buckles under the need to only reward… those who conform to… preconceived notions of what it means to be a successful academic" (Matthew,

[47] Arlette did not stay at this institution after she was denied tenure by a predominately white review committee.

2016, p. 2). In *Written/Unwritten*,[48] Matthew references the protagonist, Chris Jaynes, in an Edward Allen Poe inspired novel, *Pym*. Jaynes is the only African American faculty member in a Literature department. After being denied tenure for failing to limit his intellectual focus only to the African-American canon, and for refusing to sit on the "toothless"[49] diversity committee, he says to the hip-hop scholar that replaced him, "You're here so you can assuage their guilt without making them change a damn thing." (Matthew, 2016, p. 2). Here Matthew invokes the literary to highlight how racism operates insidiously in the academy. She states that when minority faculty are "hired for their difference, they are often penalized" for not meeting the expectations of "their white peers" (Matthew, 2016, p. 22).

Several participants of color shared moments where they challenged white authority figures within their institutions. Ernesto Maya, associate professor in the physical sciences, believes that he was on the fast track to tenure denial when his institution asked him to be the faculty representative on a committee that was going to vote on a controversial partnership between his department and a private firm. He recalled meeting with his superior who said to him, "This is what's going to happen…" and proceeded to tell him that in an hour there was going to be another meeting with all the leadership in the college and that Maya was to vote in favor of the contract with the firm. Maya admitted to me that he was "younger and more arrogant then" and thought at the time that he was appointed as the representative due to his merit. He realized quickly that in reality, he was appointed because they thought he was "an industry guy" who would go along with his supervisors.

To the dismay of his boss, Maya responded, "Well, I'm the faculty representative and have no idea what the faculty thinks so I see it as my responsibility to find out and come back to the table and let you know." His superior responded, "Don't try to make things difficult." Maya reflected, "This was the origin of my problems here." After an ugly battle, Maya ended up winning his tenure denial appeal and says that at best, he is "tolerated and ignored" by the majority of his "conservative" colleagues in his predominantly white department. Similarly, Karen Patel explains,

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[48] *Written/unwritten*, edited by Patricia Matthew (2016), "is a collection of tenure-track journeys recounted by faculty of color from humanities departments around the country" who describe and theorize "academic systems that are often structurally hostile to diversity" (p. 2).

[49] Johnson, M. (2012). *Pym.* New York, NY: Random House Digital, Inc., p. 8

> Being a woman of color in the institution is extremely challenging because you are expected to play certain roles, and as long as you conform to those roles, everything is fine… But [when confronting power], your voice is always perceived—no matter what you say—as more threatening, more dangerous, louder than it would be if somebody else said the same thing… So there's a certain kind of color-blindness.

Patel here is pointing to some of the ways that colorblind racism functions in the academy: through 1) the expectation that people/women of color "play their role" and conform to the status quo, i.e., not threaten the interests of "white male senior professors and administrators," and 2) deeming critiques made by people of color, particularly women of color, as uncivil and threatening.

Just as the discourse of civility (elaborated in Chapter Four) plays into colorblind racism in the academy, another practice brought up by several participants was the consistent attempt to discredit women of color's intellectual contributions as "unscholarly." The "methodological" rejection is a "safe" euphemism not infrequently invoked when rejecting alternative or non-majoritarian research. Professor Clark, a white woman, recalled with abhorrence how over the decades in her department, the work of women of color has often been described by white colleagues as "methodologically uninteresting." Clark continued to say, "It doesn't matter that this person has read swaths of literature." Clark explains that because the literature these women often reference is not written by white men, it is likely the nature and content of their scholarship rather than the methodology that is devalued by their white male colleagues. Professor Habibi had numerous examples of being belittled by male colleagues. She shared one instance when she was giving a talk on her campus:

> A more senior male, in a condescending manner, asked me why I didn't mention a particular issue during my talk as though to expose me as not credible and to represent himself as the 'real expert' … dismissing my contributions as incomplete in front of a large group… during the interaction, he seemed to point to my being a young woman of color as an indication that I was incompetent.

Habibi was not alone in having several of these types of encounters. Several women of color spoke to the exhaustion that accompanies having to explain, justify, and legitimize their perspectives. For example, LaDuke left her former institution because she felt that her "credibility and approach was second-

guessed constantly" as a feminist scholar. This is exacerbated in departments made up of predominantly white males, according to my participants.

In what follows, I focus on the participants' sense of academic freedom protection according to academic discipline and academic rank. Racial and gendered experiences are interwoven and contextualized within the following discussions, allowing for an intersectional analysis of how academic freedom is perceived by dissident scholars within their institutions.

Academic Disciplines

'Academic discipline' emerged as a significant theme when investigating faculty members' perceived academic freedom protections. A liberal arts education incorporates a range of disciplines that are believed to prepare individuals for active participation in civic life. Over time, the codification of disciplines has been further organized hierarchically, with Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM) fields valued more highly than humanities and social ("soft") sciences (Burris, 2004; Newfield, 2009; Washburn, 2008). The elevation of STEM is demonstrated not only in the funding disparity between STEM fields and the humanities and social sciences (Lye, Newfield & Vernon, 2011), but also in the steady drop of majors in almost every humanities field since the 2008 economic crash.[50] As Brown (2015, p. 177) argues, under neoliberalism, "knowledge, thought, and training are valued and desired exclusively for their contribution to capital enhancement." Compared to a humanities degree, a degree in STEM promises more capital enhancement. This stratification of disciplines has worrisome consequences regarding what kinds of knowledge are legitimized and disseminated to college students and the larger public. In this section, I will first examine the reflections of dissident scholars in the humanities and social sciences and conclude with the perspectives of the participants in STEM.

Humanities and social sciences. In *Humanists and the Public University*, Lye, Newfield & Vernon (2011) suggest, "most, but by no means all, of the faculty and students involved in recent university protests hail from the humanities" (p. 7). Indeed, when searching for potential participants for this study in the virtual public sphere, faculty members who met my "public intellectual" criteria (outlined in chapter three) were much more abundant in the

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[50] See the National Center for Education Statistics: https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/use-the-data

humanities and social sciences compared to STEM fields. Susan Long, associate professor in the humanities, has been actively involved in campus politics for many years and affirms this sentiment. In venues that reach beyond the academy, Long has addressed the historical and present-day importance of free speech and academic freedom; she has critiqued the corporatization of public higher education as well as administrators who fall short in honoring the university's social mission. In line with Ferguson (2012), she notes that while "critical university studies" as a phrase did not arise until after the 2008 conjuncture, interdisciplinary fields of study originated decades ago with an insurgent spirit that was inherently critical of academe. Long contends,

> Doing gender or women studies… doing Asian American literature and ethnic studies—many [scholars in these fields] have long biographically conceived of themselves as combing their research interests with a self-consciousness of the university as a site of struggle... So from the very beginning, in choosing to do a Asian American studies PhD topic and looking for a job in that field, I was already thinking of myself as someone who's doing a kind of critical university studies although I never thought of it as such. In many ways you could say Asian American studies is a form of critical university studies because you can't **not** think about the relationship between the object of study and its conditions of production and reproduction (her emphasis).

In large part, she credits the insurgent spirit rooted in her discipline for the sense of safety she experiences as an activist-scholar. Long admitted that she does not feel she has taken risks like her colleagues from more conservative departments who have also "been active on the anti-neoliberalization front." She admits,

> It's been easier for those of us in the humanities who have been fighting on these issues especially when we want to exert solidarity with other constituencies on campus, such as students protesting fee hikes, or staff protesting layoffs, or anti-unionization policies. I think it's easier for humanities professors to support those causes.

Dr. Patel echoes Long's position, stating that at the center of the fields in which she works—ethnic studies, postcolonial studies and feminist theory, where there are inherent apertures to connect intellectual work with political work. A lecturer in the humanities and a union leader, Eric Moore also mentioned that in his years of organizing on behalf of non-tenure track faculty, lecturers tend to

experience much greater solidarity from their colleagues in the humanities and social sciences.

Like several other participants, Professor Clark is troubled by the trend in tertiary education that is attempting to "organize academic study in relation to consumer demand, with no regard to the intrinsic value of study." She believes that "in relation to academic freedom, this attempt is a chief danger" since humanities departments, which emphasize critical thinking and address issues of social concern are the first to be defunded (Lye, Newfield & Vernon, 2011). While not all humanists actively contribute to social justice movements, the continuous shrinking of humanities departments impacts the kinds of interventions that the university produces. As Newfield (2009, p. 274) states, even when the humanities enjoyed strong financial support in the US during the 1960s,

> Few academic humanists were activists or otherwise deeply radical, but that didn't matter: they represented a parallel world not governed by conservative axioms, and the culture wars discredited this world by denying that the humanities produced valid research knowledge with genuine social value.

While the inferiorization of the humanities does nothing to encourage a robust and diversified range of scholarly perspectives and inquiries, the elevation of STEM does not guarantee a conservative collective voice as there are examples of powerful political dissidents coming out of STEM. We should note that Einstein himself advocated for an end to militarism, racism, and capitalism, amongst other issues.

STEM. Participants offered two potential reasons for STEM's general lack of politicization, the first being financial. Compared to the humanities and social sciences, STEM receives much more steady and substantial streams of funding from public and private sources that represent the interests of the political and economic elite (Newfield, 2009; Washburn, 2008). It then stands to reason that faculty who benefit from this funding, as Moore suggests, often align with, rather than challenge, those in power. Where Moore finds that faculty in the humanities and social sciences tend to side with part-time faculty and students, in his experience as a labor organizer, "STEM faculty generally side with administration." Moore's remarks reiterate critiques of the university's neoliberalization, which emphasizes the role of faculty not as educators or members of the larger community, but rather as entrepreneurs who bring funds and prestige to their institutions (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). This is an issue

that Ernesto Maya thinks about often. In his office, I sat flanked between a scientist-grade sink with eyewash on one side, and about seven empty chairs usually occupied by students during his open office hours. Seated across from me, behind his desk, Maya explained,

> There was a big drive in the 1930's to turn STEM into fields that would yield economic development... mostly through warfare, you know, the production of the nuclear bomb[s]... those in power decided that this was the only way to move forward, so there has been massive investment in these fields. This was exacerbated in later decades and aligns with the divestment in the humanities and social sciences—except for the social sciences who are subservient to STEM... bioethics is a big thing and they are very well paid, whereas, education—who cares right? Only to the extent that you are going to do STEM education... I think what we're seeing today is simply a continuation… it just gets worse and worse and worse. Every turn of the crank. It's really a ratchet that goes only one way and it doesn't come back. It just gets tighter and tighter.

In addition to their economic ties to the political elite, the second reason participants suggested that STEM fields do not encourage participation in social activism is ideological. STEM fields are traditionally defined by their inherent "neutrality" and "objectivity" (Harding, 2016; Smith, 2013). As Harris and González (2012) assert, "these revered characteristics… are not only associated with the hard sciences. They are also traditionally linked with masculinity and are understood as the opposite of femininity" (p. 4). It is therefore unsurprising that these fields, which occupy the top of the academic hierarchy, are also disproportionally composed of white heterosexual males (Li & Koedel, 2017). This over-representation of white males was a point of frustration for all four of the STEM faculty I interviewed.

For example, Dr. Hakim shares that while he believes he has it easier as a white-passing male, he is still considered a "trouble-maker" in his home department for reasons he believes should not be controversial. He explains, "The idea that engineers have built the structured environment that has screwed over people of color is nothing radical, but the College of Engineering can't handle that." In regards to academic freedom in STEM fields, Hakim claims, "You're not allowed to just say what you really think because they see anything political as unbalanced and not objective." He believes that the physical sciences in particular "do not facilitate the ability for people to be honest"

because honesty, for him, would involve "challenging structures of power and that's not the kind of speech you are sanctioned to do here."

Consistent with Hakim's claim, Dr. LaDuke, an associate professor in STEM, left her former institution because she felt the department, and the university more broadly, did not value diverse peoples, epistemologies, or methodologies. She was particularly impacted by "the way in which Indigenous people are invisibilized." LaDuke argues that "scientific subjectivity" as it currently operates, should be considered "a form of whiteness." She recalls feeling that the small contingent doing social science and humanities related work within her former STEM department were "patronized" by many of their colleagues and students. It is therefore no surprise that almost all the faculty of color interviewed who were denied tenure and/or left their positions voluntarily, were in STEM fields.

While only four of the twenty-nine participants were in STEM fields, all four said that their colleagues were largely hostile to scholarship that centers the critical examination of systemic injustice. Perhaps due to having more diverse faculty compositions, disciplines within the humanities and social sciences, tend to be more accepting of diverse epistemologies (Li & Koedel, 2017; Nussbaum, 2012). Due to these disciplines' more diverse make up, participants in humanities and social science departments reported feeling more "safe" engaging publically in political matters compared to the STEM faculty members interviewed. Besides the political orientation of one's home department, the other most significant institutional factor impacting the participants' sense of academic freedom was their rung on the academic ladder.

Academic Rank

Academic freedom and tenure are deeply intertwined. Therefore, unsurprisingly, the participants' sense of freedom, in general, varied greatly based on their relationship to tenure. As discussed in the literature review, although its fate is uncertain in some states, tenure is understood traditionally as a protected status that shields faculty members from institutional reprisal if they choose to take unpopular political positions in their scholarship, teaching, and in their extramural and intramural utterances. Hence, the enduring and well-known counsel often given to graduate students and junior faculty in regards to speaking up about contentious social issues: *"wait until tenure."* There is widespread acquiescence that the university, broadly speaking, and academic freedom, more specifically, operates through a hierarchy of privilege, making academic freedom a *stratified freedom* only to be enjoyed by a dwindling

fraction of its intellectual laborers: tenured professors (Chuh, 2018; Gerber, 2001; Ginsberg, 2011). Simply put, "the fewer tenured faculty there are, the less academic freedom there is or can be" (Chuh, 2018 p. 162).

Interestingly, despite a large fraction of the participants receiving direct advice to prioritize securing tenure above political activism, only one participant "waited until tenure" before becoming an activist-scholar. Out of the twenty-nine participants, only Todd Elias, professor emeritus in the humanities, admits to being overly concerned with being "outted" as a radical when he began on the tenure track. Having been a radical activist for decades and an active member of various political organizations before going on the academic job market, he thought, "If they start looking into me, I'm done." Therefore, during his "untenured days" he admits he "probably overreacted and… was very circumspect."[51] The rest of the participants felt very differently. For example, Professor Gram, outspoken on a number of political issues, has always been of the belief that,

> if you don't do it when you're a graduate student or assistant professor, you'll never have the habit of taking political risks…. And if you wait then, you'll already be so professionalized that you will never even think about the possibility. So yeah, you take risks, of course. I mean what's the point in living if you don't take risks?

Elias was the outlier, but despite the majority not waiting until tenure, predictable patterns did emerge, i.e., the more seniority one had in their institution, the more protected they felt. In what follows, I explore these patterns as well as the deviations. It was not always the case that senior faculty experience a deep sense of security, nor are those bereft of job security more reticent, comparatively. I begin by examining the perspectives of faculty at the top of the academic ladder and work my way down the rungs, concluding with the voices representing the fastest growing sector of intellectual labor: non-tenure track faculty (NTTF).

Senior faculty. Of the twenty-nine participants, thirteen had reached the rank of Professor during the course of this research. Of those thirteen, over three-fourths said that they rarely ever experience apprehension in regards to exercising their academic freedom in controversial ways, which they do regularly. For example, once he obtained tenure, Elias, resumed his engagement with political causes. By the time of the Steven Salaita case, Elias

[51] Elias also shared that his first academic post was in a very conservative PWI.

recalls having "no fear" openly calling out his former chancellor, which he did "to her face in front of the faculty senate." He asserts, "I accused her of obvious hypocrisy… what were they gonna do? Fire me too? I was prepared to make that fight if necessary." Like Elias, Professor Will Peters also enjoys the sense of security that tenure brings when he speaks out on controversial issues,

> Once you're on this side of tenure, risks are relatively minor. Okay so you don't get the promotion you wanted… so what? You're trying to live your life, you're not trying to collect a bunch of goodies… life is not about collecting a bunch of goodies… You have a lot of relative freedom in this job… when we get overly concerned about advancing your career, that's when we trade in our freedom… We all want to be loved, but at what cost? I've already lived longer than many in my cohorts… for the most part I don't worry too much about [speaking out publically].

Peters states here that self-censorship after tenure does not make much sense according to his worldview, which values intellectual and political freedom over careerism and approval of others. Similarly Lisa Hadden, who admits she "never shuts up," told me that she thought it was "very important" for me to take into account how rampant self-censorship was in the academy, even amongst tenured faculty. She is critical of "epistemological radicals" whose intellectual labor deals only with the "abstract," detached from peoples' lived experience. She asks, "What are they doing with their freedom?" She suggests that they are playing it safe by not engaging in on-the-ground social issues. However, for some senior faculty, exercising "their freedom" is not always a straightforward and easy decision.

As scholars have argued, pressures to censor and depoliticize one's work are a concern for many, regardless of academic rank (Bell, 1994; Ginsberg, 2011). Of the thirteen senior faculty interviewed, two specifically requested anonymity for the same reason: fear due to their voicing of internal critique in our interviews.[52] One of the two, Caden Wallace, admitted he was more inclined to express his politics earlier in his career. When asked about his participation in campus politics, Wallace described his increasing sense of insecurity calling out

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[52] As explained in Chapter three, the decision to anonymize all participants (when possible) was made after the interviews were conducted. Before collecting my data, IRB approved the use of real names in this study except in cases when participants specifically asked for anonymity. Only seven of the twenty-nine made this request and two of the seven were senior faculty.

his campus' administration over time. I asked him about his public criticisms regarding how his former chancellor dealt with a protest on his campus:

> The chancellor's response was terrible and I actually wrote an op-ed about it… I wasn't [nervous] at all, it didn't even occur to me. But I think now, ironically, I would be more nervous about that… When I wrote that, I was about as low on the totem pole in terms of status as you can be… it's sort of counterintuitive, but I think I was so far removed from the chancellor that the thought that anything I wrote, that anyone would care, the thought that that would affect my job or my tenure prospects literally never entered my mind. Now that I'm the Associate Dean and I have tenure, and I'm closer to the chancellor… I'd like to think that I would still do it… but I would be more nervous.

Here Wallace illustrates how even for those with tenure who have an interventionist practice, anxieties may arise due to one's increased institutional embeddedness.

While the vast majority of senior faculty in this study described feeling relatively no fear speaking out, several acknowledged that privileges they enjoy (besides tenure) contribute to their sense of safety. Of these senior faculty members, several acknowledged that their lack of reticence may not only derive from having a rebellious spirit, but also from social advantages from which they benefit. Professor of the arts, Simon Jones, says that as a white male, "I've got every piece of privilege." In fact, out of the thirteen senior faculty who stated that they do not experience much hesitation, all but three were white males. Several of the senior faculty interviewed also acknowledged that they were fortunate to have come up professionally during a time when the job market and the expectations for tenure were much less competitive and arduous.

Today, one academic job opening can receive hundreds of applications (Larson, Ghaffarzadegan & Xue, 2014). This was not always the case. Professor Gram shares "When I was hired here in 1976… I never even had an interview. In those days all sorts of things were possible… I remember a whole series of things I did that were… sometimes suicidal, sometimes plain stupid." Similarly, Professor Clark notes,

> This moment in time is different than it was ten years ago… it's a newly polarized atmosphere in a new economic condition marked by the precarious condition of academic labor, the shrinking of non-revenue generating fields—which often has been where critique came from…

> Comparatively, we had it easy. Nowadays, to get a job, you have to have published 500 articles … but for me, I had never published anything until my first book. I got tenure in a much easier time and … I got lots of job offers.

Many of the senior faculty members expressed empathy for those who are currently trying to establish careers in academia due to the pressures Clark alluded to above. Professor Santos shared that because of her sense of job security, she had the luxury of ending her membership to a national academic association due to their attempts at "almost forcing" members not to endorse the BDS movement. "I don't know if I could get away with it if I was an assistant professor" since this association's annual conference provides important networking opportunities for faculty, and it is commonly where job interviews for tenure-track positions are conducted.

An emergent finding in this study is that issues impacting the effectiveness of academic freedom are not only illuminated by the flashpoint cases. As Clark points out "We're not all going to be Steven Salaita, and people aren't necessarily going to be doxxed by *Breitbart*. But that doesn't mean that there aren't neoliberal pressures that are eroding academic freedom." These pressures are best illustrated by examining the reflections and experiences of faculty who have not yet secured tenure.

Mid-career and junior faculty. Ten of the twenty-nine total participants interviewed were mid-career and junior faculty members (six associate, and four assistant, professors). As it turns out, while I attempted to recruit several white mid-career and junior faculty, all ten who agreed to participate in this study were people of color, and seven of the ten identify as women. In my examination of the data, when discussing their perceived protections of academic freedom, mid-career and junior faculty reported experiencing challenges much more intensely compared to their more senior colleagues. In fact, several senior faculty and NTT faculty members acknowledged that junior faculty occupy a particularly difficult position. Participants relayed how assistant professors have to "walk on eggshells" and "bite their tongue," i.e., "bite their academic freedom" in order to ensure they are granted tenure.

Of the ten participants, only one, Rose LaDuke, stated that she had "no fear" of retribution as an assistant professor and that this had everything to do with the fact that she has a "backup" career. She states,

> If I didn't get tenure or if I didn't like it, I could go back out and get a middle class job. Not everybody in the academy has that to fall back on so I understand why they take less risks because they're facing being destitute if they don't get tenure and I never worried about that… what's happening with tenure in the academy may look really bad to people who were conditioned to expect tenure and a middle class lifestyle, but when you come from where I come from, the fact that I have a job for 6 years until I go up for tenure, this is more job security than anybody in my family ever had. So it depends on where you started.

Here LaDuke highlights how one's viable options and conditioned expectations are factors that impact one's intervention praxis as a public intellectual. Besides LaDuke, however, no other mid-career or assistant professor mentioned having other career options if academia did not work out.

Nevertheless, very few mentioned feeling *strong* apprehension regarding speaking out politically. Before the decision was made to anonymize the participants in this study, only two in this cross-section of faculty (both women of color) specifically requested anonymity due to fear of retribution. Card Habibi, assistant professor in the humanities, for example, has already suffered various forms of reprisal for her speech and requested anonymity because she did not want, in any way, to jeopardize her chance at tenure. After our interview, she admitted, "I found myself preoccupied with how to respond to the questions without becoming too visible… I got all nervous…. #academictraumas." When I first sat down with her in her local public library, I reminded Natalie Rogers, associate professor in the social sciences, of the option to remain anonymous. She turned it down and we proceeded to talk for over an hour. A few hours after our interview, however, I received an email from her explaining that she felt "slightly paranoid" about the possibility of her responses becoming public. She then requested to be anonymous and hoped that her request was "taken as a sign of how serious concerns around academic freedom are on [her] campus."

Fear of retribution can lead to reticence and self-censorship, yet, when looked at more closely, it appears that fear is often a by-product of working conditions that function to limit political and public speech. The conditions brought up most by this sub-section of faculty are also key components of professionalization (Said, 1996). Participants identified these working conditions as 1) pressure to "not rock the boat," and 2) pressure to produce (publications and grants), which takes time, attention, and energy away from more public-centered work. The next sections describe how each work condition infringes

upon the participants sense of freedom and also examines how the PI's push against these pressures.

Don't rock the boat. About half of the mid-career and junior faculty participants reported working under conditions where they felt directly "surveilled" and pressured by colleagues (in varying degrees) to modify their public engagement. Participants were counseled not to "raise trouble" because it "would harm their careers." For example, John Brun, assistant professor and interdisciplinary scholar, is very outspoken on a broad range of social issues via Twitter, Facebook and through his public speaking engagements. His social media commentary earned him an invitation to be a guest on the conservative Tucker Carlson show (to which he responded "absolutely not"). His posts also became a point of concern for the dean of his department who requested a meeting with him in order to discuss his social media activity. Brun shared in our interview that his dean's concern came from a good place, but since he considers himself to be much more radical than his dean, he felt the encouragement from his superior to "tone it down" also functions to perpetuate a culture of censorship. I asked if he has since 'toned it down,' and he admits "there has been an increase in the times that I will put a direct quote from the article I'm posting so that I don't necessarily have to say anything… I'm keeping my receipts." While Brun has not reduced his engagement on social media platforms, he has altered the way he engages after the conversation with his dean.

Like Brun, Dr. Habibi also believes that the line between well-intentioned mentorship and attempts to censor can get fuzzy. She explained,

> Senior faculty have often extended their support to me, not just as a colleague, but as a youngish woman who needs to be protected. I have been 'advised' to temper my language and convictions by older male colleagues, usually white, as a show of protection. Of course, they have also shown genuine care. For example, when I was prevented from speaking at a major university in Europe [for political reasons], many of my male, senior colleagues really looked out for me. In some ways, being read as a meek ethnic minority female in need of protection, while colonial and patriarchal in some instances, totally helped me in other situations when I really needed allies.

Unlike Brun, who only modified his online behavior but remains an avid tweeter and facebook user, Habibi has reduced her online presence significantly. This has been a difficult decision. Besides the backlash she has personally

experienced (death threats, slander campaigns, vandalism of her property), and not so subtle "advice" from senior colleagues to "tone down" her speech, she has seen online spaces facilitate the "academic death" of several activist-scholars whom she deeply respects.

Her reasons for reducing her digital footprint are quite reasonable, yet Habibi points to a work condition that her senior colleagues did not have to consider when they were earning tenure. She explains, "We are in a moment where the academic is increasingly pushed to become a brand—have a website domain, publish on social media, etc." Habibi is uninterested in posting for the sake of promoting herself and her "brand," or by speaking her truth only to become the center of an academic freedom scandal. Yet she feels like her choice to reduce her online presence might also jeopardize her career options. She shared with me that she was recently told by a member of a search committee that she was passed up for a position to "someone who was very active on social media." If this racket does only get tighter and tighter, as Professor Maya suggests, perhaps in time, the expression will become "post and publish, or perish."

Produce or perish.[53] Several PI's explained that it is not out of fear of not getting tenure or of other forms of institutional reprisal that professors "conform" to the professionalized culture of academia. Rather, the pressures to produce publications and secure grants consume their time and energy. Clark notes,

> It's often not an overt pressure to do only non-political scholarship… you can produce scholarship that is as political as you want, but you're going to be so busy that you can't produce anything that is non-scholarly political. You actually have to spend most of your time writing reports on previous work you've done in order to get a grant because your promotion depends on how well you draw in extra money. It's just crazy. And then citations—if you write a controversial article, you might get more citations. So twenty people might be saying that this person is absolutely wrong, but in the quantitative analysis, that's a good article. That whole idea of a judgment based on statistics and market share is inimical to academic freedom.

[53] I'm using "produce, or perish" to signal professional expectations not captured in the phrase "publish or perish." Participants explained that pressures go beyond producing publications in academic venues. They also include pressures to produce grants, and a following on social media.

Over half of the mid-career and junior faculty interviewed concur with Clark and mentioned how challenging it is for them to meet the demands of their job while also staying engaged in public conversations. Although Associate Professor Sue Kon has a track record of entering public dialogue, for the past several years she has not been as engaged as she would like. She admits,

> I've been working on [finishing a book] for years that prevented me from engaging in certain ways… I needed to finish it because it's important for my career, but also because I wanted to finish the book! I've been working on it for forever. I want it to be done and so I have to make choices about the kinds of things I can contribute without totally exhausting my spirit. Now [that it's finished] I have an opportunity to engage in a way that's more like a public intellectual and that's a new phase of my career that I'm really excited about. And I have a kind of entryway into the conversation because of my position. So you can use [your position] in service of some larger vision or goal.

Kon believes that her professional status comes with legitimacy that allows her to contribute to on-the-ground social struggles in a particular way, yet finds that academic duties have impeded her from being of more service to larger society.

As a group, the mid-career and assistant professors interviewed expressed the most anxiety about becoming the center of an academic freedom controversy. Also, they are the most embedded in cyberspace conversations, which can increase their likelihood of becoming the center of such a controversy. They reported feeling pressures to conform to expectations such as "not rocking the boat," and of becoming an academic celebrity—either from becoming highly cited, or highly followed on social media. This sector of participants all happened to be people of color and many, particularly the women, had their engagement of feminism, racism, colonization, and environmental justice discredited and deemed "unscholarly." Their reflections also point to the power that small groups of senior faculty have on university campuses in maintaining a culture that reflects white male norms and values. In addition, their experiences show how much the academy still has to go in terms of embracing diversity. In spite of all these challenges, these PI's still manage to stay engaged in social justice conversations with publics outside of academia. While some have modified their political commentary, they still take political risks and show solidarity to on-the-ground struggles.

Below the rungs of the ladder: NTTF and the academic zone of non-being. Of the 29 participants, six were non-tenure track faculty (NTTF)

members.[54] Over the last 50 years, the US academic labor force has transformed significantly. According to a 2017 report by the AAUP on Contingent Faculty in US Higher Education, at all US institutions of higher education combined, "the percentage of instructional positions that is off the tenure track amounted to 73 percent in 2016… while a little less than 50 percent of faculty positions at master's and baccalaureate institutions are part-time." [55] The tenure system is eroding at the same time that we are seeing a spike in the casualization of faculty labor.[56] According to the US National Center for Education Statistics, the number of part-time NTTF increased by over 614 percent from 1970 to 2015. Dr. Mia McIver, President of the University Council of the American Federation of Teachers, the union representing University of California lecturers and librarians, argues that temporary faculty are brought in to do permanent work for less pay. She explains that the "UC Office of the President administrators publicly describe contingent faculty as subsidizing tenure-track faculty by teaching their classes for them."[57] She argues that "this two-tier model, in which teaching is effectively outsourced, drives a wedge between" ladder faculty and non-tenure track faculty, reifying institutional stratification.[58] A number of terms are used to refer to this sector of the teaching population in the literature and in common parlance. As described in a UC Berkeley Academic Senate report (Burawoy & Johnson-Hanks, 2018, p. 2)[59]

> "Contingent" or "casualized" faculty… stresses the insecurity of employment; "adjuncts"… suggests they are supplements to regular

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[54] The identities of all six have been anonymized even though two of the six said they had no desire for anonymity. Of the six, four of the six were men (two identified as men of color), two identified as a white women.

[55] https://www.aaup.org/news/data-snapshot-contingent-faculty-us-higher-ed#.XBf-0RNKh0s. In the University of California system, for example, precarious instructors (including adjuncts, visiting assistant professors, academic student employees, and others) teach nearly one-half of undergraduate credit hours (https://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/infocenter/uc-employee-headcount).

[56] In 1975, contingent faculty made up 43 percent of all university faculty in the United States, where now NTTF make up over 70 percent (Hurlburt, Steven & McGarrah, 2016).

[57] https://ucaft.org/content/mia-mciver-testimony-select-committee-hearing-master-plan-higher-education

[58] https://ucaft.org/content/mia-mciver-testimony-select-committee-hearing-master-plan-higher-education

[59] https://academic-senate.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/divco_on_ugc_lecturer_survey_report_w-_encl.pdf

faculty; a more neutral term, frequently adopted, revolves around tenure status, namely "non-tenure track faculty."

That being established, based on the following exchanges, one could argue that even the term "non-tenure track" is far from neutral.

In my interviews and in the literature, the NTTF experience is heavily marked by inferiorization, which manifests as insecurity, invisibility, disrespect and low pay. It is often expressed by the feeling of being a "second-class citizen" (Burowoy & Johnson-Hanks, 2018; Reed et al., 2018; Gappa & Leslie, 1993). Speaking to this, Dr. Hakim pointed out that his job title, "non-senate faculty," reflects his inferior institutional status. He explains, "We are defined by what we are not… it's like being called a non-man." Similar to what Fanon (2008) calls the zone of non-being, designated for those beneath "the line of the human," to be below the rungs of the academic ladder (i.e., non-tenure track), is often equated to being nothing more than cheap expendable labor (Grosfoguel, 2016, p. 10). Moreover, NTTF are more likely than tenure-track faculty to be women and people of color, which intensifies social stratification in institutions of higher education.[60]

In general, NTTF, the "new faculty majority," lack institutional power and protections when compared to the rest of the teaching body (Kezar, 2012).[61] Dr. Gloria Sullivan, who has been a lecturer at her institution for over a decade, shared that she wishes she could have more of a voice. "You just don't have the same kind of political power… I see appointments to committees and I think, 'I would like to be on that committee,' but I can't." Some question whether contingent faculty have the "institutional loyalty necessary to participate equally with those on the tenure track" (Gerber, 2014, p. 7). However, McIver believes, "There is no justifiable reason to exclude such an enormous number of faculty from shared governance…We have tremendous responsibility for educating students but little to no voice in decision making about curricula and other matters."[62] Norms in this regard vary by institution. For example, Eric Moore and Debra Jacobs both sit on academic senate committees at their universities and have influenced decision-making. "We don't have formally recognized rights to

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[60] https://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/infocenter/uc-workforce-diversity, also see Olsen, Maple & Stage (1995).
[61] While not the norm, all six NTTF interviewed have language in their contracts (ranging from vague to explicit) indicating that they are entitled to academic freedom protections.
[62] https://ucaft.org/content/mia-mciver-testimony-select-committee-hearing-master-plan-higher-education

sit on committees, but in practice we're often non-voting members," says Jacobs.[63] She continues,

> There is this misconception that all we do is teach, that we do no service… this is out of line with reality for decades now. Many of us do sit on committees and do an enormous amount of service work, but it's officially uncompensated. It's voluntary and the university management right now really has us in a double bind where the choice that we're presented with is either: volunteer your time, have a voice in the process and don't get paid for it, or be excluded from the process altogether. And that's totally unacceptable.

Scholars have long expressed concerns that the increased dependency of NTTF would have serious ramifications for core tenets of the academy, such as student learning (Street et al., 2012) and the weakening of academic self-governance and intellectual freedom (Cross & Goldenberg 2009; Gumport 2000; Kezar, Lester & Anderson, 2006). However, a lack of representation in shared governance, while limiting the academic freedom of NTTF, is not the main factor that makes NTT appointments precarious compared to ladder faculty with respect to taking risks.

The eminent risk of unemployment. As mentioned above, more often than not, NTTF lack academic freedom protections, since academic freedom is most often tethered to tenure. While NTTF comprise a little less than half of the teaching body at four-year institutions of higher education, on average, NTTF do close to 70 percent of all the teaching.[64] In other words, those most responsible for disseminating knowledge to the vast majority of college students are usually denied the academic freedom protections that ostensibly undergird the university system. The NTTF interviewed mentioned that while on paper their institutions claim they have academic freedom protections, in practice, this is difficult to assess. Considering most NTT appointments must be renewed at the end of every term, if superiors find a NTTF member's speech to be unsavory, they can simply wait until the end of the term and not renew their contract, leaving the NTTF essentially defenseless (Rhoades, 2013). Since contingent faculty are vulnerable to "nonrenewal," challenging the status-quo—whether in

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[63] In a comprehensive review of faculty policies at 183 institutions, Shavers (2000) found that only 7 percent of campuses granted voting rights to non-tenure-track faculty.

[64] https://www.aaup.org/news/data-snapshot-contingent-faculty-us-higher-ed#.XBf-0RNKh0s.

the classroom or in surveilled cyberspace—is a risk that often restricts and weighs heavily on many of the NTT public intellectuals interviewed in this study.

However, two of the six stated that they believe that the more public one is with their political stances, the more protected they are. Both Ahmad and Moore have been at the center of many political organizing efforts and have won a great deal of respect and recognition from various constituencies, (e.g., students, colleagues, journalists, and community activists). They feel confident that people would rally in their defense if their contracts were not renewed. This sense of security bolsters, for example, Ahmad's principled approach to his work. He states,

> No other human being has a lock on your mental or spiritual capacity in the world, so in this sense I don't have any illusion that the university is, in essence, the source of my daily bread. That's the perception rather than the reality, so I don't walk into a meeting with an administrator thinking that I need to tippy toe around them. If anything, their circumstance or my circumstance is inconsequential to what is needed to be said and what is needed to be done.

Here, Ahmad demonstrates the tenacity that underpins his public speech. He shared that administrators have tried on multiple occasions to "get rid" of him, but that his "teaching speaks for itself." He added, "they don't ask me to speak at university events though." Similarly, Eric Moore shared that

> a lot of people know who I am on campus and it's not to say that they all think I'm right so much as it would probably look really weird if I just got fired one day. I actually worry much more about the sort of scholar who wants to keep his or her head down or wants only one part of their work to be public.

The same way that in a boxing match, being "in the pocket," or in close proximity to one's opponent provides a fighter with a counterintuitive advantage by not shying away from potential harm, Moore feels that NTTF activists are more vulnerable when they are not "all in" with regards to confronting power. Yet Ahmad, who feels relatively secure that he will not be fired, understands that for others, the stakes might be incredibly high. He reflects on the hierarchy of needs and says, "It's very difficult for you to give overarching moral statements when you are hungry." Unlike Ahmad and Moore, there were other NTTF

interviewed who were concerned that their political commentary could jeopardize their careers.

While having been active participants in political movements on and off campus, these participants shared that their sense of freedom feels particularly restricted when it comes to critiquing or challenging the actions of their superiors.[65] Dr. Idris Hakim, a lecturer in STEM, works at two different universities in order to cover his living expenses. Illustrating the difficulty he has experienced critiquing his superiors, he described a conversation with his boss. They were discussing Hakim's job prospects, as Hakim was interviewing for a tenure-track position elsewhere. His boss, who would be writing him a letter of recommendation, wanted Hakim to "scratch his back" by depoliticizing a report Hakim and others were working on that described the climate experienced by NTTF on their campus. Hakim explains,

> This is how speech gets shut down. He is looking to me, offering me this carrot of advantage if I back his game in shutting down the story about what is going on with lecturers… there is a way in which we [lecturers] feel trapped because we have to smile and be nice to our bosses. That is a structural way that we are unable to assert ourselves because our bosses hold this power over us. [My boss] doesn't just hold it, he wields it… he actually uses it to try and manipulate us. This is textbook how politics works, but the university imagines itself immune to it.

Hakim felt coerced by his supervisor to compromise his free speech and the struggle of NTTF at his institution in order to get a positive letter of recommendation. He ended up not depolitizicing the report, and not getting the tenure-track job to which he applied.

Sullivan shared Hakim's frustrations. She stated that she is unhappy with the "neoliberal turn" she has witnessed in her department over the years, which has manifested in many ways, in particular through the depoliticization of the curriculum. I asked Sullivan if she has attempted to change this structural trend. She said, "Yeah, but I have a hurdle and it's called my boss… she determines the budget. She determines the staffing." Their department is in a strategic planning phase of sorts and Sullivan, an advocate for returning to the incorporation of social justice tenants into their curriculum, was told by her

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[65] Four of the six also specifically mentioned their fear of speaking about the Israel/Palestine conflict, but since they share this concern with their tenured and tenure-track colleagues, I have incorporated the NTTF's reflections on this matter in the Israel/Palestine section in chapter four.

supervisor that she would voice Sullivan's position in the strategic planning meetings, in which non-senate faculty could not participate. Sullivan has been told by colleagues who were in attendance that her issue was never brought up by her supervisor. She shared that while "you know you're not at the table… you can't call out your boss as a liar." Some ladder faculty expressed apprehension in respect to challenging their superiors, but the NTT participants stressed this fear much more.

Several of the NTTF interviewed shared many of the same apprehensions as their tenure-track and tenured colleagues regarding publicly sharing insurgent articulations, such as the fear of being misinterpreted and discredited, and fear of broaching highly contentious issues, which could lead to retaliation from their institution as well as harassment from outside academe. Yet unlike their tenured and tenure-track colleagues, the NTT participants experience the eminent risk of being unemployed at the end of any given academic term. McIver shared, "After taking one of my classes, my students often ask whether they can take another with me. I have to respond that I don't know whether I'll be teaching next year. We can only invest in our students to the extent that the University invests in us."[66] While the neoliberal pressures of professionalization experienced by ladder faculty prove to infringe upon their academic freedom, NTTF are up against some different neoliberal pressures that detrimentally impact their sense of academic freedom. The two greatest challenges as expressed by my participants are: forced overturn or "turning" (i.e., the neoliberal ethic of cost-efficiency) and the weight that is put on student evaluations of teaching (i.e., the neoliberal ethic of customer satisfaction).

Turning. Dr. Jacobs, an active union organizer, explained that forced turnover, or "what we call turning," is amongst the greatest challenges NTTF face, not just in terms of their academic freedom, but also in terms of their livelihood. She explains that turning can occur in a myriad of ways. She describes the three most common for the NTTF represented by her union:

> Someone is hired for a term or a year and is doing an excellent job, but is not reappointed within the first eighteen quarters or first 12 semester… We have very strong seniority raises in our contract. So as people gain more experience, they earn more money and more job security… another very common form is when recent PhDs are offered lecturer positions, but there is either an explicit or implicit communication that they will only be

[66] https://ucaft.org/content/mia-mciver-testimony-select-committee-hearing-master-plan-higher-education

> able to stick around for a year or two and then they have to leave in order to make room for the next group of people who are coming through the pipeline… another way is when people have been a lecturer maybe for a few years and then they're asked to move into a different job title that doesn't have union representation.

In the end, NTTF are often let go as a way of minimizing costs. If this sector of the teaching body is seen and treated as a disposable workforce, whether one "makes waves or doesn't," says Jacobs, you can possibly be out of a job when final grades are due… and when student evaluations are assessed.

Student evaluations. It is an unfortunate irony that decisions regarding reappointments and promotions for NTTF are often based solely on student evaluations of teaching (SET) even though SET research demonstrates that using student evaluations does not accurately measure teaching effectiveness (Starks & Freishtat, 2014). Rather, the data shows that SET are influenced by the perceived physical attractiveness of the instructor (Ambady & Rosenthal, 1993) and racial and gender bias (Anderson & Miller, 1997; MacNell, Driscoll & Hunt, 2014; TuSmith, 2001). Instead, SET tend to serve as a measurement of teacher popularity (Anderson, 2018; Boatright-Horowitz & Soeung, 2009). Anderson (2018, para. 1) explains,

> No matter how effective you are, or how passionate or innovative, popularity is the key. Educators on short-term contracts hear this message every semester when student evaluations come in… and when they find out about informal student complaints during the semester. This common, though unofficial, directive to "be popular" is an increasing problem.

Popularity is of course subjective, but is not usually acquired by challenging students who do not want to be challenged. Several participants spoke to the backlash they have received after teaching courses that address anti-racism.

Dr. Koffman is considered a "popular" teacher in a progressive social science department. He admits that his popularity has to do with the kind of students that are attracted to his courses. "I have a reputation at this institution… you know… College Republicans are just not gonna sign up for my classes." Indeed, it seems they usually do not. Therefore, the occasional bad evaluation does not bother him because, as he says, "I'm a conscientious white man and a good departmental citizen. I teach two of the largest classes that no one wants to teach." Koffman is cognizant of his white male privilege as well as

the benefits that come from being in a supportive department. Yet, he still has to deal occasionally with students who try to taint his teaching record because they oppose his politics. He has had students complain, although not in a persistent or detrimental way. He shared,

> I did have a student that just really decided he hated me and wrote a letter to the dean saying that I sabotaged his grade because I didn't like his politics… The kid was an engineer, he needed to fulfill a [required] course, looked in the course catalog, chose the [required] class with the lowest number he could find and he ends up in my class… It was a history course on race and by the time I got to the advent of rap music and de-industrialization… I'm talking about Ronald Reagan in a way that clearly did not mesh with his high school dinner table republican conversation. He decided that I was a degenerate communist and wrote this letter to the dean… and whatever, I dealt with it. While I am responsible for his grade, I didn't discriminate against him. I hadn't read any of his stuff, the Graduate Student Instructor read everything. I said 'bring your papers into me and I will read them and if we need to reevaluate your grade then we can.' The dean called me in after I'd done all this and said I handled it well.

Koffman continues to say that this student then:

> took it up to sort of troll me on Rate My Professor and left review after review after review to the point where somebody called my attention to it… You can actually go to Rate My Professor and say 'this is me, I need to respond here.' I said to them, 'this is one student who's been my student once. Keep their initial review, that's fine, they can give me one star and call me a communist, whatever. But he can't leave 18 of them because he's only been my student once.' And they went through and deleted his reviews.

In general, Koffman has overwhelmingly positive student evaluations, which he acknowledges might not be the case if he were a woman of color saying the same critical things about race.

While bereft of white privilege, Dr. Yosef Ahmad also is not fazed by negative evaluations due to the respect he has earned on his campus from over a decade of teaching in multiple departments. Even though he feels there are a number of administrators who would love to "get rid" of him due to the

negative attention he draws to the university with his activism around the Palestine/Israel conflict, he feels that his popularity with students prevents him from being terminated. Ahmad teaches on a campus with a student body that identifies largely with leftist politics and, as is the case with Koffman, Ahmad also does not get many conservative students signing up for his courses. I found it interesting, however, that on Ratemyprofessor.com, while Ahmad is considered "inspirational" and "respected" by his students, he is also labeled an "easy grader" who does not give out much homework.

Idris Hakim in our interview mentioned that he feels it is a common self-preservation tactic for NTTF, particularly for those committed to controversial social causes, to be "easy graders." Hakim believes that for many NTTF activists, it is more important to teach in a way that is consistent with one's political beliefs, which might challenge students, rather than upsetting their students by grading them harshly.[67] While Hakim believes that being an easy grader can improve one's teaching evaluations and thus help protect NTTF activists from being let go, he shared that even if he were more lenient with grades, he still would not feel protected enough as a younger non-tenure track faculty member to be more radical in the classroom.

> I would rather be pushing a lot farther but… I get pushback from students and I'm always nervous about that. The first days of class, I pick out who are the big white guys who are gonna be the ones who, you know—it's always the same people… I have this danger of teaching to them and that robs the rest of the class, and I do that sometimes. I keep trying to break the habit, but I'm just nervous about the ways in which they're gonna come at me.

While he wishes he did not feel this pressure, Hakim admits that the fear of reprisals from a few students shapes the way he exercises his academic freedom. He is not alone. Moore also said that the fear of student grievances is at the forefront of how he designs his courses and does not feel safeguarded by the protections outlined in his contract. While there is limited research that examines how institutional reliance on SET might compromise academic freedom (Haskell, 1997), my findings support that for the NTTF sector of the teaching body, it often does. Even with limited data, it takes no special insight

[67] Research shows that low grades received by students is reflected in low SET (Starks & Freishtat, 2014).

to recognize that the fact that one's employment depends on high SET is antithetical to the principle of academic freedom.

While she feels relatively unconcerned about student evaluations, also due to her long-standing positive teaching record, Sullivan has noticed that her students have become more critical of her political views in recent years. Continuing to discuss the neoliberal turn in her department, Sullivan, who works in a field that interrogates social inequalities, says that the types of students she teaches have changed. She says,

> Neoliberalism is more than an economic strategy; it's a whole political and cultural mindset. When I came in… we had an incredible cohort of graduate students coming through who were also creating accountability… we were choosing [students who were] community organizers, activist-scholars. We don't choose them anymore. We're not choosing people whose paths through the university may be in the university for a moment and then out into these bigger political worlds.

Sullivan is very concerned about the neoliberalization of the university where the ever-growing contingent workforce has to cater to students with a "customer service" attitude if they want to keep their job and make a living. The heavy reliance on SET is not only misleading and discriminatory, and not only does it weaken academic freedom, it can also be argued that dependence on SET, as they function today, impairs the university's ability to fulfill one of its core responsibilities: providing quality education.

In line with Sullivan's comments, dependence on SET is another expression of neoliberal practices that yield specific economic as well as political outcomes. SET, compared to more comprehensive and effective tools of evaluation, is relatively cheap and easy to administer. Therefore, in addition to being cost-efficient, it is aligned with business interests by generating a "customer satisfaction" dynamic "that undermines sound pedagogy" says Dr. McIver.[68] While most of the NTTF who agreed to participate in my study have long-standing appointments, that is more of an exception rather than the rule. Hakim and Moore perhaps more accurately reflect the experiences of the largest and fastest growing section of the teaching body. Both are concerned with appeasing students and do not feel they are challenging them to develop their intellectual and ethical potential to the extent that they would like. As Dr.

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[68] https://ucaft.org/content/mia-mciver-testimony-select-committee-hearing-master-plan-higher-education

Sullivan asks, "Isn't that the greatest kind of teaching the kind that has contestation?"

Conclusion

This chapter examined how the participants in this study perceive the effectiveness of academic freedom through an intersectional framework. The findings revealed that in general, academic freedom is a stratified freedom drawn across academic-rank lines, however there were consistent threads of concern shared amongst participants from across the academic ladder, such as fear of institutional reprisal and fear of being harassed by the larger public. The stratification of academic freedom also reflected the racial and gender hierarchies of larger society. In the data, white males felt the highest levels of academic freedom while faculty of color, particularly women of color, reported the most obstacles in exercising their intellectual freedom due to being highly scrutinized by their white male colleagues and pressured into conforming to white male expectations of what it means to be a "legitimate" academic. The fear of being doxxed or of becoming the center of an academic freedom controversy was also expressed most by women of color faculty members. Overall, faculty in STEM departments also reported feeling less protected compared to faculty in the humanities and social sciences. Participants attributed STEM faculty's general lack of solidarity to social justice causes to both financial interests, as well as STEM's positivist ideological orientation.

Participants mentioned several concerns regarding neoliberalism's impact on academic freedom in the university, such as industry-driven academic research, the gutting of the humanities, the immense pressures for tenure-track faculty to "not rock the boat," to publish as much as they can in academic venues, and to bring "brand" recognition to their university. Another significant theme was the phenomenal growth of the contingent workforce who more often than not lack academic freedom protections and are vulnerable to nonrenewal at the end of every academic term. According to the participants, non-tenure track lines of employment raising exponentially while tenure lines dwindle poses a serious threat to academic freedom and shared governance.

Chapters Four and Five center the voices of activist-scholars and provide a qualitative analysis of how academic freedom is experienced in a moment when harassment of faculty members is causing increased alarm. Their narratives touch on the complexities involved when an academic decides how to engage in public dialogue and highlight how processes vary depending on one's positioning within social and institutional hierarchies. Yet in spite of the

challenges that limit one's sense of academic freedom, for the majority of the participants, their fear of *not* publicly expressing their solidarity with controversial social causes was stronger than their fear of reprisal.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

Research on the neoliberalization of the U.S. university system addresses, from various angles, how current shifts across the higher education landscape are in direct opposition to the university's social mission. Some scholars detail the changes in funding, tuition rates and student debt (Goldrick-Rab, 2016; Newfield, 2016), which undermine college accessibility. Others focus on partnerships with private industry and corporate control of research (Washburn, 2005), which interfere with knowledge production that benefits public interests. Others still, address how the adoption of market metrics, which have resulted in the gutting of humanities programs and increased dependency on a contingent teaching staff, make educating students a secondary priority for higher education institutions (Brown, 2015; Giroux, 2014). Giroux (2014) laments, "the academy's retreat from public life leaves an ethical and intellectual void in higher education" (p. 10). This project's research questions and findings align with the belief that the U.S. public university has a responsibility to advance knowledge that is in the interest of the greater good, and centers individuals who address this ethical and intellectual void. *Public Intellectuals in the Era of Privatization* sits at the intersection of these literatures and uses the voices of activist-scholars employed at U.S. public universities to tell a complex story about how academic freedom—the ostensible bedrock of the U.S. university system—is experienced by those who regularly put this safeguard to the test.

Academic freedom is intrinsically linked to the university system's social mission as it allows faculty to pursue inquiry that may, in some cases, challenge the interests of those in positions of power. While there is no consensus on academic freedom's meaning and implementation, South African literary scholar, John Higgins (as cited in Scott, 2019, p. 1), explains, "reference to it is usually motivated by its absence." This study does not only examine when academic freedom is "absent," but rather provides a nuanced examination of the limits and effectiveness of academic freedom as experienced by dissident scholars. Chuh (2018, p. 158) reminds us "dissent is in itself not an end but is instead a point of departure." While for some it is easier than for others, the participants in this study utilize their access to broad audiences to stimulate intellectual-political-ethical developments in the larger community serving as a bridge between the academy and the public it is tasked to serve. Public speech is one of the most powerful weapons humans have, and as Brown (2014, para. 12) asserts, "even the most civilly uttered sentences can disturb or terrify." This study explored the participants' processes for engaging in this form of risk-taking, including an examination of their motivations, the considerations they

take into account when deciding whether or not to speak out, as well as their subjective experiences as public intellectuals with keen attention paid to their social and institutional positionings.

Summary of Findings

Using critical university studies (CUS) and intersectionality as methodological frameworks, I have documented the ways in which economic, racial, and gendered factors intersect with the practice of academic freedom. This dissertation examined why the participants engage in discursive risk in the face of unforeseeables, yet potentially severe personal and professional consequences. The data revealed that their sense of responsibility to maintain personal integrity and solidarity with the Other, as well as their sense of hope in a better collective future, drive them to consistently assert where they stand on sensitive issues in the public arena. The majority of the activist-scholars interviewed spoke to the pressure they feel to conform to orthodoxy, which they credit to the general culture of the academy.

This dissertation also explored how the participants navigate the risk-taking process. From the data, reflexivity emerged as a salient praxis shared by the participants in determining the stakes of a given risk and in deciding whether it engage in extramural political speech. Besides professional retribution, a newly developed concern for activist-scholars in the past decade or so is the increased threat of being doxxed or harassed by cyber bullies. In efforts to prevent harassment (and in some cases, further harassment), the most referenced considerations weighed by the participants when negotiating risk-taking were: 1) the contentious nature of a given issue (the Israel/Palestine conflict and challenging one's superiors being regarded as the most contentious); and 2) careful deliberation over one's tone of speech, which was of particular concern to women of color. Cyber harassment, critiquing Israel, critiquing one's superiors, and the threat of being labeled "uncivil" emerged in the findings as having a chilling effect.

This study examined how dissident scholars perceive the effectiveness of academic freedom through an intersectional framework taking into consideration academic rank and discipline, race and gender. The findings revealed that in general, academic freedom is a stratified freedom drawn across academic-rank lines, where more senior faculty tend to feel "freer" than mid-career, junior, and non-tenure track faculty. While there were outliers, consistent threads of concern where shared amongst participants from across the academic ladder, such as fear of speaking to the contentious issues just mentioned, fear of

institutional reprisal, and of being harassed by the larger public (e.g., being doxxed and/or receiving death threats). The stratification of academic freedom also reflected the racial and gender hierarchies of larger society. In the data, white males felt the highest levels of academic freedom while faculty of color, particularly women of color, reported the most constraints when engaging in intellectual inquiry. This was due, in part, to the hyper scrutiny they receive from white (often male) colleagues, and the pressure to conform to white (often male) expectations of what it means to be a "legitimate" academic. The fear of being doxxed or of becoming the center of an academic freedom controversy was also expressed most by women of color faculty members.

With respects to academic disciplines, overall, faculty in STEM departments reported feeling less protected compared to faculty in the humanities and social sciences. Participants attributed STEM faculty's general lack of solidarity to social justice causes to both financial interests, as well as STEM's positivist ideological orientation. When discussing academic disciplines, participants mentioned several concerns regarding neoliberalism's impact on academic freedom, such as industry-driven academic research, most often in partnership with STEM departments, and the nation-wide divestment in the humanities.

Describing their experiences exercising academic freedom in controversial ways, participants from across the academic ladder feel immense pressure to "not rock the boat." Many spoke to how they believe their practice of "rocking the boat" has negatively impacted their promotion process and/or job prospects, as well as their sense of belonging within their home departments. Some found/find their home departments so hostile that they have left and/or are considering leaving their institutions. Participants claim to have been subject to censoring, and at times self-censoring. They do not feel the academy encourages ethical risk-taking and claim that this is in part demonstrated by the implicit and explicit expectations of their profession. Participants argued that over the past few decades, the pressures for tenure-track faculty to publish in academic venues and to bring "brand" recognition to their university has intensified. This takes an enormous amount of time and energy making engagement in public dialogue difficult. Another significant theme that emerged was the phenomenal growth of the contingent workforce who, more often than not, lack academic freedom protections and are vulnerable to nonrenewal at the end of any given academic term. Participants assert that the exponential rise of NTT lines while tenure-track lines dwindle, poses a serious threat to academic freedom and shared governance.

This dissertation centers the voices of activist-scholars and provides a qualitative analysis of how academic freedom is experienced in a moment when harassment of faculty members is causing increased alarm. Their narratives touch on the complexities involved when an academic decides whether or not to engage in dissident speech and highlights how processes vary depending on one's positioning within social and institutional hierarchies. Yet in spite of the challenges that limit one's sense of academic freedom, for the majority of the participants, their fear of *not* publicly expressing their solidarity with social causes is far stronger than their fear of retribution.

Limitations

While this study expands the scholarly understanding of academic freedom's limits and effectiveness in the context of neoliberalism, its limitations provide generative points for further research. This project only included the experiences of scholars at three public Research One institutions. All three had below the national average in terms of non-tenure track faculty and unlike the majority of their counterparts at other institutions, the NTTF featured here had academic freedom protections included in their contracts. Therefore, the sample used in this study does not reflect the faculty dynamics of the "average" public institution of higher education in the United States. A study that includes private universities, teaching-focused colleges and universities, as well as community colleges could provide a much more comprehensive analysis how academic freedom functions across the U.S. higher education landscape.

STEM faculty were also under represented in this study. Since STEM fields receive disproportionately more funds than the humanities and social sciences, often from the private sector, a larger sample pool of STEM activist-scholars would shed more light on the queries explored here. In this crucial moment when the climate crisis is intensifying, the perspectives of STEM activist-scholars are of particular importance. Additionally, this study only includes faculty, not students—undergraduate or graduate. While numbers vary by institution, graduate students, who receive disproportionately lower pay compared to faculty, teach a significant percentage of college students' class credits, and yet, more often than not, are denied academic freedom protections. Therefore, an examination that includes their perspectives would also be valuable in understanding how academic freedom is operating in today's U.S. institutions of higher education.

Finally, while the three research sites reflect regional diversity, demonstrating shared experiences amongst activist-scholars on a national scale,

this study does not speak to the dimensions that an international examination of academic freedom would include. *Scholars at Risk*, an international organization established in 1999 dedicated to protecting scholars and promoting academic freedom, report that outside of the United States, from December 2018 to December 2019 alone, there have been 90 killings, acts of violence and disappearances of activist-scholars, 61 imprisonments, 53 prosecutions, 19 loss of positions and 6 accounts of travel restrictions (see www.scholarsatrisk.org). While academic freedom in the United States may not always function as it is intended, it can be argued that U.S. academics enjoy more "freedom" than faculty members in other geographical locations across the globe. An international analysis would indeed provide broader insight into how academic freedom is experienced on a global scale.

Recommendations

This dissertation refocuses the discussion of higher education accountability to center the university's contribution to the greater public, rather than its "return on investment" for the consumer-student/parent. The recommendations offered here stem from a reflexive understanding of the public university's social responsibilities, especially as they relate to academic freedom. As mentioned previously, "the future of the common good and of academic freedom are bound up together" (Scott, 2019, p. 14). Implementation of the recommendations below requires collective insistence that public universities function as spheres of debate and intellectual production in service of the greater good, as well as sites of collective resistance towards shifts in its mission as dictated by the market.

This study highlights the praxis of public intellectuals who point out when there are inconsistencies and misalignments of values and actions, modeling what social accountability within the academy can look like. Many of the conversations I had with the participants illuminated interventions, strategies and possibilities for strengthening academic freedom and the university's public mission. They spoke to the necessity of increased accountability at their institutions, or the need, as one participant put it, to "make things right" with respect to serving the collective good. Indeed, if institutions of higher education want to be understood as democratic spheres, they have to be politically and morally accountable to wider society (Giroux, 2014). Some participants discussed the need for different forms of assessment for NNTF as a way to bolster academic freedom. A few others advocated for conflict-of-interest regulations for public-private partnerships. However, the recommendations

below address a broad set of political and economic relations that the participants brought up repeatedly as being most influential to how academic freedom is valued and implemented.

Budgets reflect values. Higher education journalist, John Warner (2019) asserts, "there is no better documentation of the *real* values of an institution or organization than its budget" (para. 11, italics in original). An examination of federal, state, and institutional budgets does indeed reflect a devaluation of public higher education and the assertion that it is not worthy of investment. In my state of California, for example, the budget for correctional institutions has steadily increased while the budget for public higher education has steadily decreased.

> In 1970, corrections received just 3.7 percent of the state's general fund revenue, while UC and the California State University systems together received nearly 14 percent. Today, corrections accounts for almost 9 percent of California general funds, while UC and the California State University system receive 5.2 percent. (University of California, n.d., para. 1)

Consistent with privatization trends, government moneys that *are* allocated to higher education are increasingly directed away from *public* higher education. Zagier (2011, para. 8) explains that in the 2000's "the private [for profit] sector's slice of federal aid money grew from $4.6 billion to more than $26 billion." The difficult funding constraints for public higher education was acknowledged and problematized repeatedly by the activist-scholars interviewed in this study.

Neoliberal logic claims that every public sector problem has a market solution. Newfield (2016) explains that for public higher education, the go-to solution has been "implementing systemic *businessing*" of the system (p. 25, italics in original). For example, UC Berkeley Chancellor, Carol Christ, stated in an interview, "Colleges and universities are fundamentally in the business of enrolling students for tuition dollars" (UC Berkeley Public Affairs, 2016). Newfield (2016, p. 26) contends, "Turning universities into private businesses is not the cure for the college cost problem, but rather its cause." He suggests that letting lawmakers off the hook when budgets are cut gives lawmakers no incentive to increase funding for public higher education in the future. Participants concur and hold that collective organizing around budgetary adjustments is a productive angle for mobilization.

Participants in this study, as well as faculty, students and citizens across the county have expressed grave disappointment in how neoliberal "solutions"

are eroding public higher education. For example, University of Cincinnati's AAUP chapter found in the largest survey of their faculty done in years, that over half of the respondents "strongly agree" that the current budgeting model has "negatively affected" the core academic mission (Warner, 2019, para. 8). Similarly, the *Vampire Slayers*, a working group of faculty, staff, students and community members based at San Francisco State University, argue that the budget crisis is actually a *values* crisis—a crisis of distorted priorities and access to political power (See www.vampireslayers.org). Therefore, based on this study's findings and a growing public sentiment, it is recommended that those interested in strengthening academic freedom and the public mission of their institution organize and advocate for a reallocation of funds (federal, state and institutional) that reflect the values of public service and equity rather than consumerism.

The following budgetary reallocations recommended come directly from the data highlighted in Chapters Four and Five. To be clear, this does not suggest that university administrators oppose the following recommendations, but rather that pressures on a federal, state and institutional level to increase funding for the following concerns could strengthen academic freedom and the university's public mission. For instance, one area of investment could center teaching and curricula. As mentioned throughout this dissertation, over the past decades, humanities courses are often the first to be canceled when there are budget cuts (Cole, 2015; Donoghue, 2008; Nussbaum, 2012). While not easily measurable using market metrics, the social benefit of a robust liberal arts curriculum, which often offers critical perspectives addressing issues such as racial, gender, and environmental justice, is essential in a democratic society. Therefore, advocating for investment in humanities and social science courses could help support the academy's link to broader society. Additionally, moving away from dependency on dispensable contract workers to teach the majority of college courses, to instead investing in more secure tenure-track lines of employment, would demonstrate a stronger commitment to academic freedom and the university's social mission

The remaining recommendations invite readers to reconsider collectively institutional policies, specifically the institution of tenure and "diversity" initiatives. This invitation is made with the hope that this reflection might lead to collective action that achieves revision of said policies and practices in ways that strengthen academic freedom and the university's contribution to the greater good.

Rethinking tenure. This study highlights the intrinsic connection between academic freedom and tenure, as well as academic freedom and the

social mission of the public university. Since it is a linchpin for protecting the dissident speech of faculty, it is no surprise that tenure was referenced and problematized repeatedly by the participants of this study. Based on their reflections, tenure, as it stands, could be reexamined in order to better facilitate faculty contribution to the university's social mission, and for academic freedom to function more effectively. Those interviewed problematized primarily the following: tenure requirements, the depoliticization that can occur in the process of earning tenure, the anti-democratic and stratified culture that is produced through the tenure system in the academy, and the lack of commitment towards diversifying faculty make-up.

Just as budgets reflect values, it can be argued that tenure requirements do as well. Therefore, it is helpful to examine critically what kind of academic work is elevated, and consider broadening the criteria for tenure. While tenure requirements vary from institution to institution and department to department, Corbin, Douglass-Jaimes & Wesner (2015, p. 6) note,

> Peer-reviewed publications (PRP) are the primary currency for tenure promotion (in terms of article quantity, number of citations, and impact of the publishing journals)… This method of evaluation reinforces the idea that it is only through PRPs, and to a lesser extent books, that academics can make a contribution worthy of consideration for tenure.

As this study's findings reveal, activist-scholars often feel so consumed with working on securing publications in top-tier journals, read almost exclusively by other academics, that they do not have the time to engage with broader audiences to the extent they would like.

Questioning her former institution's valorization of public intellectual work, Professor LaDuke referenced a colleague who researches issues of inequality and is deeply involved in social justice movements. This colleague also was denied tenure at their former institution. LaDuke discusses her colleague's tenure denial:

> The fact that you can't include all her very high profile public speaking as part of her impact factor and all we care about is journals that 150 people read—those are standards that were developed by a very un-diverse academy. They come out of a really archaic kind of academic world. You know [said colleague] didn't publish as much as some other scholars, but from my point of view, who cares? She did get grant money. She has an incredible public persona. I think we need a more diverse measurement

> of what counts as impact factor… She's done MSNBC; most academics don't have a platform like that. She'll reach more people in one interview on MSNBC than many people will reach in their entire career.

In addition to the lack of weight community engagement holds in the tenure process, Research One institutions, while inherently research-focused, were criticized by participants for their "devalorization of teaching." One participant states, "Even though this is a research institution, students deserve good educators. Yet there is little incentive to prioritize relationship with students, particularly undergraduates." Any serious attempt to fulfill the social mission of a university would require the prioritization of high quality teaching, yet a significant portion of the participants argue that this is not the case at their places of employment.

Participants also argue that the institution of tenure functions as a mechanism for depoliticization and conformity, and thus inhibits the effectiveness of academic freedom. Rather than emboldening and reinforcing individuals' sense of security, participants spoke of the tenure process as a "taming" process where one assimilates to the accepted politics of their university. Assistant Professor Brun notes, "The way that our career goals are framed—your very being here is aimed at getting to tenure. There's this idea, obviously, that with tenure, you can say more things… pursue more radical ideas." Yet many, like Dr. Ahmad, suggest, "You'll already be so professionalized at that point… staying reticent for so long changes a person." Participants assert that the process ensures conformity. Professor Gram argues, "You can't get [tenure] without being vetted as not being a threat—can't say anything that might get people upset for about 6 years." Gram suggests that the tenure process "keeps most people in line."

Additionally, due to the increased reliance on private funding sources, and the expectation that scholars will secure external funding, Corbin, Douglass-Jaimes & Wesner (2015, p. 4) argue that this has "resulted in a disproportionate focus on research with marketable possibilities that fit comfortably into dominant regimes, all of which remain an easier 'sell' than scholarship and activities focusing on… 'controversial' topics." Professor Hakim concurs,

> We aren't sanctioned to talk about moral and ethical leadership because that is reserved for church on Sunday. We are creating an amoral, unethical society. We are training [faculty] to not challenge superiors, for example, who act unethically and are empowering those scholars with

> wealth and resources. Those that advance have political and social power and have been trained to leave out morals and ethics.

The assertion that the academy values conformity over ethical risk-taking was prevalent throughout this study. Since the tenure process was charged as a key mechanism for depoliticizing intellectual inquiry, to strengthen academic freedom and the academy's responsibility to issues of social concern, it could be useful to reassess how tenure requirements could be adjusted for this end.

Another aspect of tenure deemed problematic repeatedly by the participants is how the institution of tenure reifies hierarchy and fosters elitism. Participants suggested that the elitism they see reflected in many of their tenured colleagues is reinforced by the fact that there is little accountability for senior faculty. Several specifically referenced how many tenured professors across the country get away with sexual harassment and "barely get a slap on the wrist." Tenured, tenure-track, and NTTF all mentioned how many of their tenured colleagues have been acculturated into their own hierarchal position and treat campus community members from lower rungs (NTTF and students) as inferior. While deeply invested in his research, Dr. Ahmad, makes it a point to "never treat the human beings [he] teach[es] as less than." He continues, "I talk to a lot of students. A lot of times I'm chatting with them and they're like 'wow you're the first faculty member who's taken time to talk to me like this.'" Lecturer, Idris Hakim, acknowledged that there are some tenured and tenure-track faculty who show solidarity to NTTF, but he feels that overwhelmingly the institution of tenure, as it operates on his campus, creates antagonism between groups. He explained that a small contingent of tenured faculty tried to convince the academic senate to unionize,

> The reason [tenured faculty] didn't… is because… they don't see themselves as workers… they want to see themselves as having more status as shared governors of the university. This is a class thing… they want to be the bosses, not the employees.

Participants argue that the lack of incentive for building relationships with NTTF and students on campus when earning/maintaining tenure leads to social stratification. Gram, a senior faculty member and advocate of faculty unionization, states, "this makes it harder to solve internal problems, let alone larger social problems… and so much for advancing our social mission."

Equity vs. Diversity. The final recommendation is for institutions to critically reexamine how "diversity" is honored and maintained on their

campuses, particularly as it relates to tenure and academic freedom. In *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life*, Ahmed (2012) demonstrates how the term "diversity" is relatively hollow in higher education discourse and how that is an intentional maneuver. She argues that "diversity" lacks a clearly defined commitment to equality and social justice while still making people "feel good" (p. 71). This sentiment is reflected in several of the testimonies presented in this dissertation that speak to faculty of color experience. Faculty of color, women, and members of marginalized communities often hold diverse epistemological orientations, but those perspectives are then delegitimized or deemed "unscholarly" in a Western hetero-male dominated academic culture. Issues of diversity were often brought up when discussing tenure. For example, LaDuke argues that her colleague referenced above, was denied tenure by a predominately white male committee using old standards created by predominately white men. She states that this needs to change,

> This is part of the reason for diverse people to stay in the academy. We need more senior people who are going to make those arguments at those high levels. Right now we have a whole lot of assistant professors and postdocs, but we don't have progressive diverse thinkers in high numbers in these high level administrative positions willing to make structural change that will accommodate more diverse ways of working.

Said colleague was a "diversity hire" and was supposedly "adored" by her students. According to LaDuke, her colleague attracted more students of color than the department had seen in years, yet efforts were not made to support her advancement because her scholarship and research methods did not mirror current academic standards, which do not value her community-engaged work.

Thus, particular attention could be paid to increased recruitment efforts for faculty of color paired with a strong commitment to retention of those hires. Attention might also be paid to troubling institutional practices that seem neutral, such as "civility" codes, a topic mentioned on numerous occasions in this dissertation. As Brown (2014, para. 13) affirms,

> When we demand—from the Right OR the Left—that universities be cleansed of what is disturbing, upsetting, enraging, "offensive" or triggering, we are complicit both with the neoliberal destruction of university as a place of being undone, transformed, awakened (rather than a place to get job training) AND with neoliberalism's destruction of public spaces and the distinctive meaning of political rights.

In addition, other interventions could be that critical educators with expertise in diversity matters run trainings in new faculty orientations and consult strategic planning at departmental and institutional levels. As a measure of accountability, annual reports could outline administrative efforts to support and protect the academic freedom of faculty that represent "diverse" communities. These are merely a few specific initiatives that could support academic freedom, particularly for faculty of color, women, and all members of marginalized groups. In effect, I recommend that advocacy for historically under-represented communities be taken into consideration at every juncture level: student, staff, faculty and administrative representation, curriculum, tenure requirements, etc. As Professor Long said to me in our interview, "Our free speech genuinely depends upon greater social equality, economic equality, gender equality. There isn't freedom without equality."

Moving forward

As Professor Patel argues in Chapter Four, social responsibility, which requires reflexivity, is like a muscle that must to be exercised constantly. Thus, in order for the public university to fulfill its social responsibility, constant reassessment of its policies and practices and a willingness to make change in accordance to the values of its social mission are necessary. I suggest that critical reassessment inform policy changes and greater financial investment in the areas of curriculum and teaching, tenure streams, and social equity. This will be facilitated by revitalizing the university's public good status and through large-scale efforts that hold those in positions of power accountable. Newfield (2016, p. 339) confirms, "If you think all this is impossible, you are right—inside the current paradigm. We can't get there from here. But we can get there from another ethos and paradigm." This dissertation began by conceptualizing academic freedom and intellectual autonomy as an ethos that serves the greater good rather than private interests (Scott, 2019). It ends with recommendations aimed to strengthen academic freedom *as an ethic*. While certainly not easy, collective consciousness-raising and (campus) organizing has proven to be an effective means of creating institutional change. This does not suggest that the university has or will ever be a democratic utopia, however, the opportunities that colleges and universities provide for disseminating ideas that push social emancipation forward is simply too important to squander. Therefore, political and moral accountability and an authentic recommitment to academic freedom is the collective task at hand.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Interview Instrument (RQ1): Understanding participants' experiences and motivations regarding their academic freedom at their home institution

1. Tell me about your background working in academia.
    1. Why do you choose to work in the academy?
    2. Why do you choose to work in a public university?
    3. Is working in the academy what you expected? If not, how has it differed?
    4. What is most rewarding about working in the academy? Most frustrating?
    5. Have you experienced tensions between your principles/values and the culture of the academy?
2. Tell me about your political background.
    6. What are the social issues that concern you the most?
    7. When did you begin using your free speech to express your political views?
    8. What is the relationship between your teaching and activism?
    9. What is the relationship between your research and activism?
    10. How do you define public intellectual?
3. Tell me about your motivations regarding exercising your academic freedom.
    11. How do you define academic freedom?
    12. What sources do you draw from for conceptualizing academic freedom?
    13. What compels you to voice your political views to a public audience?
    14. Do the social issues you speak up about affect you personally?
    15. How do you understand political solidarity and what does it look like to you?
    16. What does integrity mean to you and does it affect the ways you exercise academic freedom?
    17. What do you hope to achieve by being public with your political positions/concerns?
4. Have you experienced fear regarding exercising your academic freedom? If so:
    18. What is it exactly that you fear?
    19. Has your comfort level changed over the course of your career?
    20. Has obtaining tenure assuaged your fears?/ Do you think obtaining tenure will assuage your fears?
    21. Do you have children, dependents, or are there other factors that might influence your choices regarding exercising your academic freedom?
5. Tell me about your experiences exercising your academic freedom.

22. How do you negotiate the tone, content, when and where, and how much to express?
23. Are there certain social issues you feel are more intimidating to speak freely about?
24. Are there some social issues important to you that you do not address publicly?

6. Are there any challenges you have faced with respect to free speech at your institution?

25. Has your comfort level regarding expressing dissent changed while employed by at your institution?

7. Do you use social media to address the public?
If so, do you feel you are taking a risk by doing so?

Interview Instrument (RQ2): Understanding the university's response to you or others exercising academic freedom

1. I'd like to start out by hearing a bit about your time at this institution.
   - How long have/did you work at your institution?
   - What is your impression regarding your institution's commitment to academic freedom?
   - How do you think social responsibility is valued and practiced at your institution?
2. Describe how the administration has responded to you exercising your academic freedom.
   - Describe any instances that received a response
   - Describe the language used/actions taken by the administration
3. Describe how the administration has responded to others exercising their academic freedom.
   - Describe any instances that received a response
   - Describe the language used/actions taken by the administration
   - Have responses from administration differed depending on the faculty member's academic rank?
   - Have responses from administration differed depending on the social issues raised?
   - Have responses from administration differed depending on the medium of communication used by the professor (e.g., speaking at a rally, social media post)?
4. Describe how the administration has responded to students who exercise their freedom of scholarly inquiry in regards to controversial subject matter.

5. Has the administration's language/actions aligned with the institution's values?
6. How do non-administration react (other faculty, students) when you exercise your academic freedom in politically controversial ways?
7. Do you feel that the university helps/hinders the professoriate's dialogue with the public?

Interview Instrument (RQ3): Understanding the perceived impact of neoliberal-colorblind rationale on the university's commitment to academic freedom

1. How would you describe the culture of the university?
   - Do you think your institution is fulfilling its social mission?
   - What do you think your institution is contributing to society?
   - What keeps the university functioning as a site of possibility?
2. Scholars have described the neoliberalization of the university as a process where the institution adopts the following policies and practices. Please tell me your thoughts on these in relationship to your institution:

   - Disregard and divestment in public goods
   - The selling off of resources to outside investors
   - Suppressing human rights and labor rights
   - The decline of both tenure and faculty representation in university governance
   - Salary increases for top administrators and athletic directors vis-à-vis increases in student fees

3. Brown (2015) and others speak of neoliberalism as a rationality that creates a certain kind of subject, one that is interested mostly in their individual social mobility.
   - Do you see this mentality at your institution?
   - If so, do you see it having an effect on academic freedom?
4. Scholars have described colorblind racism as a neoliberal manifestation of white supremacy and argue that colorblindness is becoming a trend in our social institutions (Goldberg, 2009).
   - Do you see it practiced at your institution?
   - Do you see it used in your institution's discourse (e.g., press releases, comments made to media)?
5. From your perspective, to what extent has neoliberalism and professionalization affected academic freedom?

- Do you think it has lead to depoliticized work?
- Do you think it has lead to less community engagement, on an institutional or individual level?

6. Describe the relationship between ladder faculty and contingent faculty at your institution.
   - Do you think your institution's reliance on part-time faculty affects academic freedom on your campus?
7. Do you think that the climate at your institution is generalizable to other U.S. public universities?
   - Why or why not?
8. Is there anything I didn't ask, but that you would like to address?