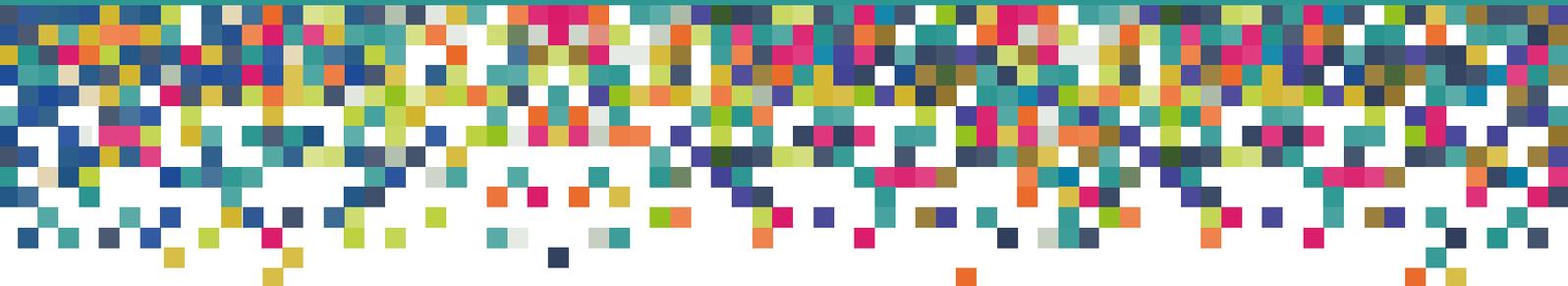




Media and  
Communications

## Media@LSE Working Paper Series

Editors: Bart Cammaerts, Nick Anstead and Richard Stupart



### Decentring Eurocentrism in Communication Scholarship

A Discursive Analysis of resistance in  
influential communication journals

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Published by Media@LSE, London School of Economics and Political Science ("LSE"), Houghton Street, London WC2A 2AE. The LSE is a School of the University of London. It is a Charity and is incorporated in England as a company limited by guarantee under the Companies Act (Reg number 70527).

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## 1. ABSTRACT

In light of recent student protest movements, such as the 2015, #RhodesMustFall, #FeesMustFall, and #LiberateMyDegree campaigns, as well as, more recent debates happening amongst communication scholars, such as the 2018/19 controversy which erupted within the National Communication Association in the United States, the purpose of this thesis is to explore the epistemic strands of calls to 'decolonise the academy', and to critically examine how communication scholarship responds to Eurocentric epistemic dominance. By providing a Faircloughian Critical Discourse Analysis of 14 abstracts from three influential journals this thesis finds that although these abstracts do act as forms of resistance against Eurocentric epistemic dominance, they do not necessarily feed into broader more politicised decolonial discourses. There is therefore, much work to be done if communication scholarship is to take seriously the much needed task of decolonising the knowledge it produces.

## 2. INTRODUCTION— THE ERA OF FALLISM AND THE DECOLONIAL TURN

*See we need to see this system collapse*

*So take a walk in our shoes as we visit your past*

*So much ignorance we witness in the critical mass,*

*Critical analysis aint written on plaques*

*So imma spit it in rap metaphorically we bringing Nitro-glycerine tanks*

*Here to burn the current structures down to sizzling ash*

*Use the flames to put a light to Cecil's villainous past*

*It's the other side of history our syllabus lacks.*

- Lyricist, André Dallas (cited in Rhodes Must Fall, Oxford 2018:17)

In 2015 Chumani Maxwele, a student activist from the University of Cape Town (UCT), threw a bucket of human excrement over the statue of the brutal British imperialist/colonialist, Cecil Rhodes, that stood on the UCT campus (Klein, 2015). In relation to the incident Maxwele stated: 'As Black students we are disgusted by the fact that this statue stands here today as it is a symbol of White supremacy' (cited in Klein, 2015). The video of the incident that later circulated, ignited the *Rhodes Must Fall* (RMF) movement which called for the decolonising of education; the re-organisation of spatial relations (Mbembe, 2015), and succeeded in the removal of the statue (Klein, 2015). The campaign inspired sister movements internationally, including the *Rhodes Must Fall Oxford* (FMFO) campaign which, amongst other 'decolonial' initiatives, demanded the removal of the Rhodes statue at Oriel College Oxford. These movements built on, and connected to other interventions internationally (Bhambra et al., 2018), such as; steps by Georgetown University to atone for its connection to slavery by awarding preferential status in the admissions process to the descendants of slaves from which it profited (Swarns, 2016), and Goldsmiths University of London's *Anti-Racist Action* protest in which protestors have occupied Deptford Town Hall since March 2019 (Weale, 2019).

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Broadly speaking, these social movements have 'revived questions about representation within the academy and exposed ongoing inequities' (Chakravartty et al., 2018:257). More importantly, they are attempts to transform the academy; 'the purpose of the knowledge it imparts and produces, and its pedagogical operations' (Bhambra et al., 2018:2).

Within the media and communication field, scholars of colour and their White allies have sought for years to address the lack of diversity, with calls to 'de-Westernise' or 'internationalise' the field dating back to the 1990s and early 2000s (Curran & Park, 2000; Downing, 1996; McMillin, 2006). Recent examples include Paula Chakravartty, Rachel Kuoad Victoria Grubb's article, *#Communicationsowhite* published in 2018 in the International Association of Communication's *Journal of Communication*. The article demonstrates that communication scholarship is still dominated by White male scholars, and continues to perpetuate Whiteness as normative. Through coding and analysing the racial composition of primary authors, as well as, the citations in both International Communication Association (ICA) and National Communication Association (NCA) journals, the authors found a lack of representation of non-White scholars in 'publication rates, citation rates and editorial positions' (Chakravartty et al., 2018:254). They concluded that communication scholarship has an economy of knowledge production 'that perpetuates the ongoing universalisation of a specific expression of humanity' (Chakravartty et al., 2018:263) and in doing so institutes 'racial subjection' (Chakravartty et al., 2018:263).

Another example is a recent debate amongst NCA members. Started in part as a reaction to the *#Communicationsowhite* article, NCA members expressed their frustration at the lack of diversity, in terms of journal editorships and editorial boards, as well as, the awardees of the association's 'Distinguished Scholars Award' (National Communication Association, 2019). In June 2018, several association members collectively signed a letter to the NCA president calling for closer adherence to the organisations mission statement: 'inclusiveness and diversity among our faculties, within our membership, in the workplace, and in the classroom; NCA supports and promotes policies that fairly encourage this diversity and inclusion' (National Communication Association, 2019). The letter argued that despite nominations of senior scholars of colour, the Distinguished Scholars program remains overwhelmingly White (2019 *#Communicationsowhite* Controversy, 2019). Following the letter, NCA announced changes to the way it would select awardees of the program (National Communication Association, 2019). New Distinguished Scholars are to be chosen by a selection committee of NCA members appointed by the Leadership Development Committee rather than current Distinguished scholars, as was the procedure in previous years (2019 *#Communicationsowhite* Controversy, 2019). The changes created a controversy amongst NCA members with some

(mostly White male) distinguished scholars angered at their loss of power and a perceived accusation of prejudice (2019 #Communicationsowhite Controversy, 2019).

These examples illustrate the need to unveil the colonial legacies of knowledge production and a desire to decentre the Eurocentrism which continues to pervade academic scholarship both in its content, and in the over-representation of White males as knowledge producers. There have been various approaches which have brought these issues to the forefront within communication scholarship. These include: *de-Westernising/internationalising* media and communication scholarship, *postcolonialism and decoloniality*. It is my contention that not only have these approaches gained popularity in different periods as dominant paradigms of resistance, they also offer different levels of radicalisation, with decoloniality and the current decolonial turn being the most political. Relatively recent in communication scholarship, the decolonial turn attacks, 'the deep underlying structure and taken-for-granted ways of organizing, conducting and disseminating research knowledge' ( Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999:88).

Combining these approaches to form a conceptual framework in which to answer the question—*How does current communication scholarship react to Eurocentric epistemic dominance?*—this thesis provides a discursive analysis of 14 abstracts from three influential International Communication Association journals and seeks to critically examine the ways in which current communication scholarship resists Eurocentrism.

### 3. THEORETICAL CHAPTER

#### 3.1 Normalising Whiteness And Naturalising European Knowledge Production

##### 3.1.1 Colonialism and Education

*We have a history of people putting Maori under a microscope in the same way a scientist looks at an insect. The ones doing the looking are giving themselves the power to define.*

- Merata Mita (cited in Tuhiwai-Smith, 2007:59)

Colonialism marks a period in which European powers scrambled for control over colonial territories and resources (Hall, 1997), and a process by which they obtained cultural and political hegemony in many parts of the world (Shohat & Stam, 1994). As Valentin-Yves Mudimbe (1988) notes, the word colonialism derives from the Latin word *colère*, which means

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to cultivate or to design. Obviously, the neutral or peaceful connotations of this word are far from reflected in the actual experiences of colonialism around the world (Mudimbe, 1988). The apparatus of colonialism (Sartre, 2001) has tended to violently organise and transform non-European countries into European constructs (Mudimbe, 1988). This organisation manifested itself in three ways: the domination of land, the integration of Global South economic histories into the European model, and the reformation of Global South minds (Mudimbe, 1988).

Focusing on the process of colonisation in the African continent, Mudimbe (1988) argues that traditional values and customary organisations were broken down. Through the building of schools, the establishment of the press and the construction of churches, colonisation 'diffused new attitudes which were contradictory' (Mudimbe, 1988:4) and ruptured and trivialised traditional ways of thinking and knowing. Generally speaking, colonial education played a critical role in assimilating indigenous peoples into European modes of thinking, as well as, a means of denying traditional knowledges and cultures (Tuhiwai-Smith, 2007). Furthermore, indigenous knowledges encountered by Europeans at this time were deemed to be European 'discoveries' (Tuhiwai-Smith, 2007). For non-Europeans were the 'objects' of research and to have acknowledged indigenous contributions to European scientific foundations, would, 'in terms of research practice, be as legitimate as acknowledging the contribution of a variety of plant, a shard of pottery or a preserved head of a native, to research' (Tuhiwai-Smith, 2007:60).

The European university has historically been a site through which colonialism, and by extension, colonial knowledge was 'consecrated, institutionalised and naturalised' (Bhambra et al. 2018:5). Although initially a medieval institution, the university became the means through which colonial intellectuals developed the social science disciplines (Van Milders, 2019). The European university produced theories on racism, discourses in support of the continuation of colonial rule, and intellectualised the subjection of colonised people (Bhambra et al. 2018). Indeed, the European university instilled colonial administrators, doctors and missionaries with knowledges about the overseas territories to which they would be posted to govern and rule (Bhambra et al., 2018). Founded on the spoils of colonial brutality, the European university 'became an infrastructure of empire, an institution and actor through which the totalising logic of domination could be extended; European forms of knowledge were spread, local knowledges suppressed, and the native informant trained' (Bhambra et al., 2018:5). Thus, the university and the knowledge it produces is embedded in structures derived from colonialism.

### 3.1.2. Eurocentrism

*Western history, while patronizing and even demonizing the non-West, thinks of itself in terms of its noblest achievements—science, progress, humanism—but of the non-West in terms of its deficiencies, real or imagined.*

- Ella Shohat & Robert Stam (1994:3)

Eurocentrism is a residue of, and discursive rationale for, colonialism (Shohat & Stam, 1994). An ideological filament common in racist and colonial discourses, Eurocentrism, is a way of thinking that continues to permeate and influence contemporary practices (Shohat & Stam, 1994). Eurocentric discourse normalises and justifies the imbalance of power generated by colonialism. It places Europeans and neo-Europeans (such as the settlers of New Zealand, South Africa and the Americas), 'as the world's centre of gravity, as the ontological 'reality' to the rest of the world's shadow' (Shohat & Stam, 1994:2). Eurocentric thinking constructs 'over-simplified and reductionist' (Hall, 1997:235) binaries in which Europe is always perceived as flattering and the non-European, is subsequently 'Othered' and presumed to be inferior: 'our 'nations', their 'tribes; our religions, their 'superstitions'; our 'culture', their 'folklore'; our 'art', their 'artefacts'; our demonstrations, their 'riots' [...]' (Shohat & Stam, 1994:2)

A Eurocentric world view operates at the heart of the globalised education system (Pillay, 2015). It places the metaphorical idea of Europe at the centre, and other countries are perceived as superfluous; having no real input in the state of world history, and trying desperately to catch up with Western modernity (Pillay, 2015). Disciplines and discourses which emanate from the university system are produced by a culture which places itself at the top of the civilisation ladder (Pillay, 2015). For example, in discussing the decolonisation of philosophy within the university, Maldonado Torres et al. (2018) state that the discipline remains dominated by Eurocentrism and Whiteness in general. They argue that this is in part a legacy of colonialism; 'Western imperialism, racialised slavery, White heteronormative male supremacy, and segregation, which highly elevated the value of civilisation and abstract universality and exclusively linked them with concepts, norms and values that were considered to be of European provenance' (Maldonado-Torres et al., 2018:64).

Although Maldonado Torres et al. are specifically discussing philosophy in the preceding quote, other scholars note that the liberal arts and sciences also have to contend with the continued investment in White heteronormativity and Eurocentrism (Grosfoguel, 2013). In the foreword to the 2008 edition of Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, Ziauddin Sardar (2008)

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argues that if it holds true that Western civilisation was responsible for colonial racism, and that Europe itself is structurally racist, then it would not be too a great leap to see this racism embedded in the knowledge production that stems from such a civilisation. Furthermore, the discourses and knowledges produced from this system would work to service the continuation of this dominance. Indeed, in discussing communication research in the African continent, Last Moyo and Bruce Mutsvairo (2018), argue that 'Eurocentrism as a dominant epistemological perspective' (Moyo & Mutsvairo, 2018:28) is pervasive in *all* academic disciplines.

### 3.1.3 Whiteness and Universality

*One is White as one is rich, as one is beautiful, as one is intelligent.*

- Frantz Fanon (2008:36)

Although often treated as biological, 'race' is an ideological social construct, and 'Whiteness', is an ideology that affords power to those racialised as 'White' (Guess, 2006). Moreover, 'Whiteness' is often rendered invisible. In Richard Dyer's *White* (1997), he makes visible what has been concealed as the norm, by analysing representations of Whiteness. His rationale is that historically, race has been something only applied to non-White peoples. He argues that Whiteness conceals itself under the illusion of universality and, as long as Whiteness remains unracialized: 'they/we function as the human norm. Other people are raced, we are just people' (Dyer, 1997:1). For Dyer (1997) this secures a position of power for those who are racialised as White. This power, 'reproduces itself regardless of intention, power differences and goodwill, and overwhelmingly because it is not seen as Whiteness, but as normal.' Robin DiAngelo (2018) reiterates these sentiments in *White Fragility* in which she notes—from a White American perspective—that, school reading lists are dominated by White authors, who are seen as representing the *universal human experience*, yet during times in which diversity is promoting, for example, Black History Month—Black authors are used for their perspectives: 'Toni Morrison is always seen as a Black writer, not just a writer' (DiAngelo, 2018:144). It is only when seeking the racialised perspective that Black authors are chosen. This reinforces 'the idea of Whites as just human, and people of colour as particular kinds (racialised) of humans' (DiAngelo, 2018:144).

Philosopher George Yancy (2004) in discussing the social ontology of Whiteness argues that Whiteness holds a normative centre. Using the example of a philosopher-mentor to whom he told of his desire to study African-American philosopher, Yancy (2004) notes that the mentor's response was to advise him to not get pigeon-holed. His advice carried the normative

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implication that focusing on African-American philosophy came with a penalty: 'If you want to be considered a 'real philosopher', don't focus on something as marginal as so called African-American philosophy' (Yancy, 2004:1). The mentor had failed to see that;

- a) he too had pigeon-holed himself, in his preoccupation with solely White philosophy and,
- b) that his advice demonstrated a presumed universality of White philosophy (Yancy, 2004).

Yancy (2004) further argues that White people tend to perpetuate the dualism of 'good White' and 'bad White' in which the latter refers to the extremism of White supremacy. Discussing how this phenomena operates within academia, Jesse Daniels (1997) writes:

'By obfuscating the connections between White supremacist movements and the White supremacist context in which they exist, traditional paradigms 'e-race' the central importance of being 'White.' And, more to the point, these interpretations leave unexamined—indeed, completely irrelevant within such a framework—the privileged position of White academics, or the ways White supremacy (with all the connections to class, gender, and sexuality in place), are inscribed in academic institutions' (20).

Moreover, should Whiteness become visible is to undo its universal epistemological position.

### 3.1.4 Epistemicide

*Wherever they went, in their voyages of land, sea, and mind, Europeans planted their own memories on whatever they contacted.*

- Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (2009:7)

To legitimise its authority, Western scientific knowledge has historically promised peace, freedom, progress—most importantly, the sharing of that progress with the rest of the world—and has failed to achieve any of these things (Santos, 2014). Conversely, and anti-democratically, countries on the periphery have had their knowledges destroyed in the name of science (Santos, 2014). Santos (1998) terms this *epistemicide*, and further argues that the epistemological privileges afforded to Western science, after contact with the Americas, not only enabled the technological revolutions that consolidated Western dominance, but suppressed other forms of knowledges and the subaltern social groups whose social practices were dependent on such knowledges.

Similarly, Anibal Quijano (2000) argues that during the process of colonialism Europeans not only expropriated any cultural discoveries they found in the colonies to benefit modernity and

capitalism in the European centre, but also repressed the forms of the knowledge produced by the colonised. Moreover, according to Quijano (2000), the colonised people were forced to learn the dominant culture, in the terms of religion, technology and material activity:

‘all of those turbulent processes involved a long period of the colonisation of cognitive perspectives, modes of producing and giving meaning, the results of material existence, the imaginary, the universe of intersubjective relations with the world: in short the culture’ (Quijano, 2000: 541).

Thus, part of the success of the modern world is in making those on the periphery, or the oppressed position, think epistemically like those at the centre or the dominant side (Grosfoguel 2008).

### 3.1.5 The Westernised University

*The Westernised university is a machine of global mass production of Eurocentric fundamentalism.*

- Ramón Grosfoguel (2016:29)

The Westernised university is a global institution or structure of power that diffuses Eurocentric knowledge not just in Europe but to the rest of the world (Grosfoguel, 2016). After five hundred years of European expansion the Westernised university can be found in ‘Dakar, Buenos Aires, New Delhi, Manila, New York, Paris or Cairo’ (Grosfoguel, 2016:30). As Grosfoguel (2016) argues, if we examine the social sciences of today’s universities, the theories are developed by male thinkers from predominately five Western countries: the United States, France, Italy, Germany and the United Kingdom. Grosfoguel (2016) deems it absurd that the knowledge produced from these five countries should claim universality for the rest of humanity. Indeed, it is deluded to assume that these countries can give us theories and knowledge applicable to understanding the entire world. Grosfoguel (2016) does not speak in absolutist terms and acknowledges that there are pockets of resistance to this dominant trend. For example, professors within the departments that may teach against the grain.

Grosfoguel (2016) employs the term ‘epistemic racism/sexism’ to characterise the Westernised University. He states that the Westernised university views knowledges produced in regions

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outside the west as inferior to those produced by the five countries that represent the canon, which is racist (Grosfoguel, 2016). Furthermore, knowledge produced by women is also not considered canonical, which is sexist. Thus, the 'foundational structures of knowledge of the Westernised university are simultaneously epistemically racist and sexist' (Grosfoguel, 2013:75).

Similarly for Julie Cupples (2019), the Westernised university is a site where the production of knowledge is embedded in Eurocentrism under the guise of objectivity and universalism. Cupples (2019) argues that the knowledges which are non-Eurocentric, such as indigenous knowledges are often marginalised or ignored. Moreover, Cupples (2019) views the Westernised university as a global phenomenon akin to slavery and colonialism.

The concept of the Westernised university as employed here by Cupples (2019) and Grosfoguel (2013 & 2016) is likely based on the work of Immanuel Wallerstein (1996) who had earlier argued that from 1850 onwards 95 percent of all scholarship came out of five countries. According to Wallerstein (1996), scholars were encouraged to make their research more comparable to different situations and demonstrate *universal truths*.

### 3.1.6 Academic Dependency and the Global Economy of Knowledge

*Works produced [at the centre] command more attention and acknowledgement than works produced elsewhere. A centre is a place from which influence radiates.*

- Rainald von Gizycki (cited in Alatas, 2003:603)

According to scholars such as Syed Farid Alatas (2003) and Raewyn Connell (2011), underlying the current structure of knowledge production is a global division of labour (Connell, 2011). Similarly to the structuralists schools of thought: *dependency theory* and the more recent *worlds systems theory*, which look at economic inequalities between the Global North (core), and Global South countries (periphery), for Connell, and Alatas *the economy of knowledge* argues that the periphery supplies data to the core and applies knowledge developed in the core to their own contexts. Conversely, as well as producing data, the core collates and processes data producing theory and methodology which is then applied to the periphery (Alatas, 2003).

Moreover, Alatas (2003) argues that there is both a 'dependence on ideas' (604) and on 'the media of ideas' (604). With regards to the former Alatas refers to the knowledge produced; the theory, empirical social science—'the various levels of social scientific activity' (604). By 'the media of ideas' (604) Alatas refers to the circulation of knowledge in books, journals articles

and conferences. Alatas states that 'the degree of academic dependency in this case can be gauged from the structure of ownership and control of publishing houses, journals, working paper series and websites' (604).

### **3.2 De-Westernising And Internationalising Media And Communication**

John Downing (1996) states, that the majority of communication literature is based on data from two regions of the world Britain and the United States, with the experiences of countries such as Germany, France, Italy, Canada and Australia also providing a basis for the media theory. Downing argues that communication theory should 'develop itself comparatively' (xi) and states that extrapolating from unrepresentative nations is narrowly Eurocentric. Downing argues against universalism, stating that other than the fascist experiences in Germany and Italy the problematics addressed in communication theory are almost from identical places – affluent stable democracies with some imperial history, which are thus, not necessarily representative of the rest of the world. The focus of his book *Internationalising Media Theory*, is on the mediatic processes of Eastern European countries during the 1980s and early 1990s, offering a different perspective to media theory.

For Silvio Waisbord (2019), de-Westernisation refers to a shift to accepting academic knowledge developed outside of the Western world. Communication scholarship has historically based itself on American and Western European analytical concepts and epistemologies. For proponents of de-Westernisation, the inclusion of non-Western ideas is necessary for the enrichment of the field. It aims to include the perspectives of the subaltern and broaden the limited scope that communication theories rooted in America and Europe allow: 'broadening the geographical-intellectual horizons of the field is imperative to reassess the validity of arguments, interrogate premises and arguments, expand analytical horizons, and bring in research questions and intellectual traditions from around the world (Waisbord, 2019:101).

In favour of de-Westernisation, James Curran and Myung-Jin Park (2000) argue that although they believe that some normative values are universal, such as liberty and equality, media studies would be enriched by a 'wider comparative perspective' (58). Like Downing (1996), they believe that the current ways of understanding media are limited to the perspectives of a few 'untypical countries' (Curran & Park, 2000:58) Furthermore, they believe that this gives a distorted view of the West and the non-west.

Conversely, Wendy Willems (2014b) argues that many of these calls to de-Westernise and/or internationalise media and communication studies have unintentionally silenced a 'disciplinary history' (Willems, 2014b:1) outside of the West which had already been challenging Western epistemologies. Willems argues that these calls have been made from the centre and have been more concerned with including non-Western ideas rather than decentring Western theory. For example, Willem's (2014b) argues that the work of Curran and Park, offers a critique of the *Four Theories of the Press*, yet at the same time 'reproduces its ideological taxonomy of world political systems' (Willems, 2014b:2) through the books layout and design into five 'normative' sections which 'reiterate the superiority of Western political systems' (Willems, 2014b:2).

De-Westernisation is a sanitised approach to decentring Eurocentric dominance, I agree with Willems in that it often reproduces European ideologies. Moreover, it calls for the inclusion of the knowledges produced in periphery countries without employing the more political stance of drawing attention to the foundations of knowledge produced in the centre.

### **3.3 Geography, Coloniality And The Imbrications Of Western Modernity: Distinguishing Between Decoloniality And Post-Colonialism**

As Grosfoguel (in IHRCtv, 2014) has previously stated, the intellectual traditions associated with *postcolonialism* and *decoloniality* have been explicit in challenging narratives emerging from Eurocentric traditions. While both traditions are concerned with theorising the problematics of colonialism and its legacies, *postcolonialism* is an interdisciplinary field which consolidates the works of such theorists as Edward Saïd, Gayatri Spivak and Hommi K. Bhabha (Bhabra, 2014). While these scholars may address socio-economic concerns, much of their work is cultural (Bhabra, 2014). Their work refers mostly to the Middle East and South Asia and the periods in which they were colonised (Bhabra, 2014). Conversely, the work of scholars in the *decoloniality* school, such as Anibal Quijano, Walter Mignolo and Ramón Grosfoguel emerged from Immanuel Wallerstein's world-systems theory (an explanation of the unequal development between the core, semi-periphery and periphery countries) and work in development and underdevelopment (Bhabra, 2014b). *Decoloniality* emerged from Latin America and addresses a much broader time frame, as it starts its inquiry from the period Europeans first made contact with Latin America in the 15th century (Bhabra, 2014b). Both schools of thought have sought to challenge institutionalised knowledge, and the Eurocentric,

parochial traditions emerging from Europe particularly in relation to the origins of European modernity (Bhabra, 2014b). In doing so, they seek to undo 'the historical structures of knowledge production that are rooted in various histories and geographies of modernity' (Shome & Hedge, 2002:250). Moreover, *postcolonial* and *decoloniality* scholarship offer critiques of a knowledge production which was, and continues to be based on the legacies of colonialism, imperialism and the structures of modernity (Bhabra, 2014b). These two traditions are 'connected sociologies' and have the potential to decentralise or unsettle Eurocentric knowledge production (Bhabra, 2014b).

As Shome and Hedge (2002) have previously argued, communication scholarship is often parochial and steeped in a Eurocentrism that ignores the rest of the world. In an age of globalisation, *post-colonial* theory and *decoloniality* illuminate the reality that current communication issues are steeped in colonial and imperial histories.

What I have attempted to show here, and what I shall continue to argue in the proceeding section, is that there are *analytical* distinctions (IHRCTv, 2014) between *postcolonialism* and *decolonial* perspectives. However, they are not necessarily binary positions, as Grosfoguel (cited in IHRCTv, 2014) has previously noted, there are scholars that exist within postcolonial literature that demonstrate decolonial perspectives and vice versa.

### 3.3.1 Postcolonialism

Edward Saïd's discourse analysis, *Orientalism* (1978) combines post-structuralist Foucauldian concepts of discourse, with Gramscian theories of hegemony. Saïd (1978) discusses the notion of 'positional superiority' (7) to conceptualise the ways in which knowledge production was part of Europe's imperial conquest. In order for Orientalism as a discipline and way of thinking to occur, Europe/the Occident placed itself in a superior position to the Orient, putting 'the Westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the relative upper hand' (7). In demonstrating Europe's creation of this analytical bifurcation (the Orient/Occident division) Saïd unsettles the concept of the universal, as the universal was based on this division, as well as, the elision of the Orient's capacity to contribute to a shared history (Bhabra, 2014). History was in the hands of Europe, and a product of its actions upon other regions. Moreover, it submerged those actions in favour of the idea that modernity was endogenous to the West, thus naturalising Europe's position over the 'Other' (Bhabra, 2014; Grosfoguel, 2011).

In *Can the Subaltern Speak?*, Spivak (1988) examines the now out-lawed tradition of *Sati* or widow immolation, in which a widow sacrifices herself by sitting upon her deceased husband's pyre. Spivak argues that the voices of these women were silenced between Indian patriarchy

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who romanticised the sacrifice these women were making and British imperialism who outlawed the practice deeming it inhumane. Spivak summaries this situation by stating 'White men are saving brown women from men' (93). She is against the assumption that the oppressed can speak for themselves and instead argues that their silences should be illuminated. Furthermore, Spivak argues that those that can speak, should be aware that it is their economic and intellectual privileges that enable them to do so.

Employing Foucault's use of 'epistemes' and discourse, Spivak sees imperial history as 'epistemic violence' (76). She states that this violence is most evident in the construction of 'the other' and the 'obliteration of the trace of the other in its subjectivity' (76). For Spivak, imperialist discourse constructs reality in a way in which the colonisers (Europeans) are central and the colonised are marginal to the colonisers' centrality.

Homi Bhabha (2014) argues that 'the objective of colonial discourse is to construe the colonised as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration' (103). Colonial rule operates like an apparatus of power and colonial discourse constructs a conception of the colonised people 'through which it variously authorises that rule, installs racial differences, and produces the colonised as entirely knowable' (Williams, 1997:123). For Bhabha post-colonialism is 'an attempt to interrupt the Western discourses of modernity through [...] displacing, interrogative subaltern or post-slavery narratives and the critical-theoretical perspectives they engender' (Bhabha, 2014b:346), rather than being about parallel histories or interpretations (Bhabha).

As previously stated, communication scholarship is rooted in Western Eurocentrism. The incorporation of post-colonial thought, invites a more democratic approach to the scholarship. For 'it is these critiques that will lead eventually to the production of a more just and equitable knowledge base about the third world, the other, and the 'rest' of the world' (Shome & Hedge, 2002). However, it is perhaps important to note here, if it has not already been made clear, many postcolonial theorists borrow from European thinkers such as Foucault, Gramsci, Derrida, Lacan and Marx, to develop their ideas (Grosfoguel, cited in IHRCTv,2014). Indeed, one of the key criticisms of postcolonial literature by decolonial thinkers, is that it often fails to get out from under the spell of Eurocentrism (Grosfoguel, 2011). As Grosfoguel (2011) has noted, a body of thinkers that have emerged from outside Europe, and yet many postcolonial theorists have chosen to build their ideas on those of scholars from Europe, whom were already imbued with Eurocentrism thus diluting the radicalism of their critiques (Grosfoguel, 2011).

### 3.3.2 Decoloniality

The concept of coloniality was first articulated by Anibal Quijano (2007) in his article *Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality*. Quijano argues that the European expansion into Latin America in the 15<sup>th</sup> century 'began the constitution of a new world order, culminating, five hundred years later, in a global power covering the whole planet' (2007:165). According to Quijano, even with the passing of colonialism, the Western world remains the beneficiary of the current system. Although colonial rule, in most cases, ceases to continue exist, *coloniality*— 'the most general form of domination in the world' (170) is its successor.

For Quijano, with colonialism, came the repression of knowledge production and modes of knowing. In exchange, European modes of knowing and knowledge production were imposed on the colonised. Moreover, Western culture 'was made seductive,' (169) as a select few in non-European countries were made elite through access to education, thus it 'gave access to power' (169). European culture became aspirational, a 'cultural model' (169) as non-European cultures now sought to develop. Furthermore, contrary to dominant understandings of modernity, Quijano argues that European modernity, rather than being endogenous to Europe, is imbricated with colonialism. This combination is coloniality.

Building on Quijano's concept, Walter Mignolo (2011) argues that modernity, as a discourse, is a European narrative which 'builds Western civilization by celebrating its achievements while hiding at the same time its darker side: coloniality' (2). For Mignolo, modernity cannot exist without coloniality. For Mignolo, decolonial thinking emerged at the time of European contact with the Americas in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century 'as a responses to the oppressive and imperial bent of modern European ideals projected to and enacted in, the non-European world' (3).

Santos et al. (2007), argue that there is immense epistemological diversity in the world and that it must be recognised if there is to be a resistance against capitalism and the current world order. They argue that the 'epistemological privilege' granted to European nations in the seventeenth century has also been responsible for supressing other forms of the knowledge. For Santos et al., the 'monoculture of scientific knowledge' (xx) ought to be replaced with an 'ecology of knowledges' (xx). The ecology of knowledge promotes a more democratic approach to knowledge production granting an 'equality of opportunities' (xi) and thus 'decolonising knowledge and power' (xi).

As Antje Glück (2018), notes one of the main arguments for decolonising media and communication scholarship is based on the reality of a dominant Western/European epistemology which rarely acknowledges ways of knowing that originate outside Western contexts. Moreover, she notes that many scholars warn against the imposition of assumed

universal concepts used to deconstruct and understand the media around the world. Knowledge production is currently dominated by the United States and to a lesser extent Europe (Glück, 2018). Since its commencement as a discipline and practice, she notes, media and communication scholarship has 'been shaped and dominated by US-led problems, ideas and practices' (Glück, 2018:1).

#### 4. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH QUESTION

It is hoped that the preceding chapter has made evident that calls to decolonise communication scholarship could imply very different things. Several approaches to decentering Eurocentric knowledge production have been discussed: *De-Westernising/internationalising*, *postcolonialism* and *decoloniality*. These approaches demonstrate that 'decolonising' has two dominant interpretations: firstly it is a perspective which takes empire and colonialism (and racism) as objects to be studied, resituating these phenomena as forces which shaped European modernity (Bhabra et al, 2018; Grosfoguel). Secondly, in decentering European knowledge systems, 'decolonising' suggests that there are non-European ways of knowing and producing knowledge. Within these two broad definitions, there remains a multiplicity of approaches, aims and political projects (Bhabra, 2018).

It is my contention that the discussed approaches offer different levels of radicalisation to the task of provincializing Eurocentric media and communication knowledge production from the centre. Whereas *de-Westernising* and *internationalising* media and communication call on communication scholars in the West to 'engage with difference' (Waisbord, 101). *Postcolonialism* and *decoloniality* emerged from the non-European world, and go further in critiquing of colonialism as the foundation for Eurocentric knowledge production. While *postcolonialism* employs European thinkers in their critiques, the more radical *decoloniality*, is more urgently focused on how modernity and Whiteness are barriers to epistemologies of the South.

As each of these approaches are 'currents of resistance' (Connell, 2017:8) which, to differing extents, attempt to decenter Eurocentric knowledge production, they shall be combined, to form the conceptual framework through which the following research question will be answered:

***How does current communication scholarship react to Eurocentric epistemic dominance?***

Thus the purpose of this thesis is to analyse the ways in which current communication scholarship resists, through employing elements of *de-Westernising/internationalising*,

*postcolonialism* and *decoloniality*, the normalisation of Whiteness and the naturalisation of European knowledge production in the various modes outlined in the literature review.

This work can be seen as particularly building on Chakravartty et al.'s 2018 piece, *#Communicationsowhite*, which provided a content analysis of the dominant communication journals and demonstrated that non-White scholars continue to be under-represented in communication journals, citation rates, publication rates and editorial positions in media and communication studies. However, rather than providing a content analysis and discussing the absence of a diverse scholarly body, this study seeks to critically analyse those articles within communication discourse which act as forces of resistance, and attempts at decentring Eurocentrism. Through Critical Discourse Analysis this thesis explores the orientation of communication scholarship towards equity, and resistance to ideologies of Eurocentrism and (White) universalism.

## **5. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

### **5.1 Discourse, ideology and power**

For the purpose of this thesis, discourse refers to a group of statements which provide the language for representing and talking about a topic (Hall, 1997). Discourse can only be defined in terms of its relation to other 'objects' be these 'internal,' for example, other texts within a discourse, or 'external' such as power relations (Fairclough, 2010). Discourse is both a mode of action and a mode of representation—it 'is a practice not just of representing the world, but of signifying the world, constituting and constructing the world in meaning' (Fairclough, 2010: 64). More than merely representing the world, discourse constructs the world and contributes to the construction of knowledge. An example of this is Saïd's *Orientalism* in which he demonstrates that Europe *produced* the Orient through discourse and the ideology of the 'Other' as inferior to the European. Furthermore, discourse refers to different types of language or text employed in different social situation. For example, this thesis is concerned primarily with *academic* discourse.

Discourse is closely linked to ideology. For Fairclough (2010), ideologies are constructions of reality which are built into discursive practices (processes by which text is produced, interpreted and consumed), and which 'contribute to the production, reproduction or transformation of relations of domination'(36). Fairclough argues that ideologies are most effective when they become common sense. He does not see ideology as separate from society and impenetrable; rather he believes that humans are capable of transcending ideology (Fairclough, 2010). Moreover, whether discursive practices are ideologically invested depends

on whether or not they ‘incorporate significations’ (91) which contribute to retaining or transforming existing power relations.

Employing Gramsci’s concept of hegemony, Fairclough argues that hegemonic power is dominance of one social class by an over. More than mere domination, he argues that is also about forming ‘alliances’ (92) and ‘integrating’ (92). Hegemony is unstable, a struggle ‘to construct or sustain or fracture alliances and relations of domination/subordination’(92). For Fairclough (2010) hegemony provides a mode for analysing social practice and power relations in terms of determining whether particular discourses reproduce or challenge existing hegemonies.

### 5.2 Critical Discourse Analysis

Associated mainly with the ideas of Norman Fairclough, Tuen A. Van Dijk and Ruth Wodak, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) primarily studies the way in which social power and dominance are enacted, reproduced and resisted through text (Van Dijk, 2008). The purpose of CDA is to ‘understand, expose and ultimately resist social inequality’ (Van Dijk, 2008:352). Conversely, it may reveal how relations of power and dominance are being resisted (Van Dijk, 2008). Crucial to CDA is the understanding that discourse is not value neutral, rather it is influenced by social context and produced by interaction with society (Van Dijk, 2008). Unlike content analysis, CDA systematically analyses language and text revealing how authors use language to persuade their readers to think about subjects or events in a particular way. It assumes that power relations are transmitted through discourse and it is the analysis of this relationship, as well as, that of other ‘objects’ (Van Dijk, 2008). CDA denaturalises language, to reveal the taken-for-granted assumptions (Van Dijk, 2008). For example, it may unveil Whiteness or Eurocentrism under the guise of universalism. Fundamentally, the critical discourse analyst perceives that language both shapes and is shaped by society (Van Dijk, 1993). This former statement is perhaps most relevant to this thesis as it is my contention that communication scholarship, and scholarship in general, is performative and informs real world actions.

### 5.3 Methodological Justification

The purpose of this thesis is to determine how dominant communication journals, a form of scholarly discourse, resists Eurocentrism within communication scholarship. As Van Dijk (1993) argues, CDA is a socio-political methodology which examines inequality by ‘focusing on the role of discourse in the (re)production and challenge of dominance’(283). *De-Westernising/diversifying, postcolonialism* and *decoloniality*, are all methods of resistance that if employed by media scholars, can decentralise Eurocentric dominance within the field.

Fairclough draws on Gramsci and Marxism, viewing discourse in ideological terms (Candlin et al., 2017). It is through CDA that one can reveal the power relationships embedded in discourse (Candlin et al., 2017). Moreover, this uncovering can be used as evidence to bring about social change. For example, identifying incidences of resistance within communication scholarship provides data that could be used to for bringing about the desired social change.

It should perhaps be reiterated that a content analysis of ICA journals was recently completed and the findings reveal a lack of diversity of authors from non-White backgrounds in terms of articles produced and works cited. Although this work is fundamental in demonstrating the need to decentralise the obvious levels of Eurocentrism and Whiteness within communication scholarship, the research does not show the ways in which this dominance is being resisted. CDA can unveil *the ways in which* current scholarship resists Eurocentric epistemic dominance in media and communication scholarship. For example, it can demonstrate how resistance is indicated, revealing what is being said, what is not, and if the approaches are political enough to enable change.

### **5.4 Justification for using International Communication Association Journals**

The International Communication Association (ICA) is a communication association for media scholars, students and teachers. Historically an American association, claiming to be *international*, 'was more a result of the imperial hubris of an U.S. organisation claiming international status' (Validivia, 2011:318). However, it now has over 4,500 members from over 80 countries. They publish five 'internationally renowned' (Icahdq.org, 2019) journals: *Communication, Culture, and Critique (CCC)*, *Communication Theory (CT)*, *Human Communication Research (HCR)*, *Journal of Communication (JoC)*, and the *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication (JCMC)* of which CCC, CT and JoC are *qualitative*. *With its high-impact rating journals, ICA purports that its scholarship 'shapes the next generation of researchers, it addresses societal concerns, and it informs a broad swath of communities outside of academia'* (Icahdq.org, 2019). By its own admission, ICA and its associated journals are a dominant and influential force within the media and communication field.

### **5.5 Research design**

This thesis utilises Fairclough's three dimensional approach to CDA and takes into account the following considerations:

- *Textual dimension*: The physical text itself and ‘covers traditional forms of linguistic analysis’ (Fairclough, 1995:57) this includes the choice of grammar, diction and sentence structure.
- *Discursive dimension*: This focuses on the consumption and production of the text. It can also include how people arrive at interpretations of texts. This level also includes intertextuality, the types of broader discourse that may be reflected in the text: ‘which types of discourse are [...] are drawn upon and how are they combined?’ (Fairclough, 2010:4). For example, is the sample echoing postcolonial discourse?
- *Societal dimension*: The level is most concerned with ideology, hegemony and power. It examines the social practice within which discourse belongs ‘in terms of power relations, in terms of whether they reproduce, restructure or challenge existing hegemonies’ (Fairclough, 2010:95) it also provides ‘a way of analysing discourse practice itself as a mode of hegemonic struggle, reproducing, restructuring or challenging existing orders of discourse’ (Fairclough, 2010:95). This is perhaps the most important element for this thesis project, as its purpose is to partly examine how/to what extent European epistemic dominance is resisted in the representative sample.

Although this thesis operationalises all aspects of Fairclough’s CDA model as a framework for conducting the research, as the framework can be used with various different emphases (Fairclough, 1995), the latter two dimension are of the most concern.

## 5.6 Sampling

The data sources are abstracts from articles in three ICA journals: *Communication, Culture and Critique*, *Communication Theory* and *Journal of Communication*. The journals were selected based on ICA’s international status and the high-impact ratings of the journals which demonstrate their dominance and the power that they have in creating discourse within the communication field.

The inclusion criteria included articles that:

1. Were published in one of the above mentioned journals,
2. were published in 2018 and,
3. could be retrieved by searching the databases of the journals using the search terms: race, diversity, Black women, liminal Whiteness *or*,

4. contained keywords which were representative of the article being written about a country, or cultural phenomena outside the West<sup>1</sup>

This led to 14 abstracts being retrieved (6 from *Communication, Culture and Critique*, 5 from *Communication Theory* and the remaining 3 from *Journal of Communication*).

As mentioned above, the criteria of selection depended on keywords which I identified as being strong indicators of resistance in terms of decentring Eurocentrism. Such words included **Whiteness** and **race**, as well as, looking for articles that discussed countries outside of the Global North or centre such as **urban China**, and **Argentina**. All articles which reflected this criteria were included in the sample selection. To clarify, none of the 2018 journal explicitly discussed *de-Westernisation* or *decoloniality*. However, it is my contention that just because one is not discussing decoloniality or one of the other forms of resistance, it does not mean that they are not *doing* this sort of resistance. As Fairclough states ‘even when one’s practice can be interpreted as resistant and contributing to ideological change, one is not necessarily aware in detail of its ideological import’ (Fairclough, 2010:90). I would also add that different ideological imports often demand similar changes.

With regards to academic dependency we need to be wary of the over-representation of work published about the Global North. It is my contention that publishing about non-Western forms of knowledge is an act of resistance to the current economy of knowledge production. Furthermore, all of the approaches to decentring Eurocentric scholarship as outlined in the literature review, demand the inclusion of work from outside of the centre. It is for these reasons that I have included data that either, focused on media and communication phenomena derived from the periphery, such as the piece on K-Pop, and/or was produced in the periphery such as the majority of articles in the Latin American special edition of *Communication Theory*.

As racial diversity appears to be a common theme in the various approaches to decentring Eurocentric dominance in communication scholarship, I have included articles that address topics about race. These range from those which discuss the racialisation of non-White bodies, as well as, those which explicitly racialize Whiteness. The reason the latter has been

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<sup>1</sup> However, only ‘Original Articles’ were included. Thus, the sample excluded two ‘commentaries’ from the Latin American issue of *Communication Theory*. This was due to the lack of text available for analysis in the commentary pieces.

incorporated is because Whiteness often goes unnoticed and is deemed as the universal in academic scholarship. Articles that address Whiteness are going against the grain.

It should be noted that the *Rhodes Must Fall* campaign commenced in 2015. Journals from 2018 were selected to allow for the passage of time for the calls to decolonise the academy to surface in the academic literature.

### 5.7 Reflexivity and Ethics

*Most of the literature we read and of the models and methods we follow have originated in Europe and America, they therefore cannot lead to a real understanding of [Global South] discursive phenomena.*

- Laura Pardo (2010:188)

It is important to note that I am writing this from the vantage point of a student that has been educated from within a Westernised University and having only been exposed to Western methods of analysis. This work is being produced from the centre, and privileges Western methods of analysis. Although Critical Discourse Analysis purports to be socio-political (Van Dijk 1993; Fairclough, 2010) and focuses on resisting inequality (Van Dijk, 1993), it is important that the reader is made aware that there are currently movements to decolonise CDA which demand the following (Resende, 2018):

1. that theories from the Global North are recognised as territorialised and thus not universal/superior,
2. the contextualisation of theory,
3. recognition of locally produced knowledge,
4. recognition of the positionality of the subaltern and mistrusting the assumption of 'scientific knowledge' (Resende, 2018).

Scholars at the margins have also been critical of the ideologies embedded in methods more generally speaking. For example, in *White Logic, White Methods* (2008), scholars argue that Whiteness shapes the production of knowledge, that White supremacy 'has defined the techniques and processes of reasoning about social facts' (Zuberi, & Bonilla-Silva 2008:17) and 'the practical tools used to manufacture empirical data' (Zuberi, & Bonilla-Silva 2008:18). Unfortunately, as noted, although I am aware of such concerns, it is difficult to address them given that my education is grounded in the West.

One of the criticisms of CDA is that it is ideologically driven and selective. For example, Hammersley (1997) argues that CDA is too ambitious in its claims to social change. However, as philosophers of science such as Karl Popper (2002) argue that scientific investigation is *always* conducted 'within paradigms of knowledge' (Machin, & Mayr 2012) that are always culturally bound. These paradigms limit our perspective of the world and how we can investigate it. Thus this is not a phenomena unique to critical discourse analysis.

This thesis was completed under the guidance of an appointed supervisor and an ethics form was submitted to the London School of Economics and Political Science. There were no ethical concerns.

## **6. RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION**

This section will discuss the findings from the three journals. It is divided into three main sections the first discusses the individual journals and their focuses both in general and in relation to this thesis. The second section discusses findings related to de-normalising Whiteness and the latter discusses finding related to de-naturalising European knowledge production. It is important to note that although the findings have been divided into sections there is a lot overlap within the sample. For example, an abstract can be seen as both resisting normative Eurocentrism *and* diversifying media and communication.

### **6.1 The Three ICA Journals**

#### **6.1.1 Communication, Culture, & Critique**

This journal publishes critical qualitative articles relating to the role of communication in the modern world. It claims to bring a diversity of critical approaches including postcolonial critique, critical race theory and queer theory, to analyse the role of media, communication and culture and their power relations globally (Icahdq.org. 2019).

The abstracts selected from this issue focused on a range of issues that centred around race and identity. Of particular interest were articles which focused on Whiteness as an identifier as these unmasked the tendency for Whiteness to be hidden and normalised.

**2018 2-Year Impact Factor:** 0.653 (Icahdq.org. 2019).

### **6.1.2 Communication Theory**

This journal publishes articles, theoretical essays and reviews on a range of pertaining to communication theory (Icahdq.org. 2019).

The abstracts selected from this issue were all from the May 2018 special issue: *Latin American Communication Theory Today: Charting Contemporary Developments and Their Global Relevance*, all of these articles had a Latin American focus and discussed theory and theorists from Latin America demonstrating a plurality of approaches to knowledge and knowledge production. It appears that the aims of the issue were varied but fundamentally its purpose was to recognise Latin American approaches to communication theory (which have been developing in parallel to Global North theories) and to resituate Latin America in international communication theory.

**2018 2-Year Impact Factor:** 3.395 (Icahdq.org. 2019).

### **6.1.3 Journal of Communication**

This journal is the most general of the three, and is 'an essential publication for all communication specialists and policy makers'(Icahdq.org. 2019). It concentrates on communication policy, theory and research (Icahdq.org. 2019).

The abstracts selected from this journal discuss race and diversity, two of which focused on these issues, as issues that requiring attention within the field of media and communication.

**2018 2-Year Impact Factor:** 3.753 (Icahdq.org. 2019).

## **6.2 De-normalising Whiteness**

### **6.2.1 De-legitimising Whiteness as Normative**

As previously discussed, Whiteness has a tendency to masquerade as normative. It functions to make itself standard, normal and unraced. On most occasions Whiteness as a racialised subject position remains hidden in dominant discourse. Although White individuals are overwhelmingly represented in media and cultural institutions such as museum and art galleries, their representation is generally as the norm (Dyer, 1997). They are therefore, not represented as racialised individuals. However, there are occasions in which Whiteness is marked as a racial category and its privileged position revealed, as is evidenced in many of the abstracts.

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The abstracts *Classifying Whiteness: Unmasking White Nationalist Women's Digital Design through an Intersectional Analysis of Contained Agency* and *The Self-Radicalization of White Men: "Fake News" and the Affective Networking of Paranoia* predominately discuss the concepts of nationalism. The central focus of *Classifying Whiteness* is on how White nationalist women coded racist ideologies into 'the epistemological foundations of digitally mediated, communication systems and communities'. Whereas, *The Self Radicalization of White Men*, discusses how paranoia networked through digital media to 'radicalise men'. It is important to note that the discussion is about *White* nationalism, thus, Whiteness is unveiled as a racialised group. In discussing the extreme ends of White Supremacy ('White women as the corner stone of the White nationalist movement' and 'radicalise White men') the two abstracts almost fall into the trap of erasing the central importance of the privilege in Whiteness. However, this is redeemed in the latter abstract which argues that radicalisation is not 'an individual pathology' but is caused by 'an ecology that is effectively networked by state and non-state actors'. Therefore, suggesting that potential to 'violent physical and structural effects' is possible in any White man. Moreover, in discussing a phenomena specific to White women, as in the first abstract, the research is focused on an underrepresented group in White nationalist discourse.

In *Liminally White: Jews Mormons, and Whiteness*, the abstract refers to Jews and Mormons as historically 'attempting to achieve a Whiteness' this demonstrates that there is an obvious privilege that exists in the ability to claim this identity and to 'pass' for White. The word 'achieve' suggests that Whiteness is both desirable and attainable. Moreover, it categorises the group as having been 'inscribed historically as non-White' which implies that the racial identifiers were placed upon them as social constructions, as opposed to essentialised identities. The suggestion that these two groups became 'liminally White' by 'making numerous and radical concession to U.S American culture,' assumes that Whiteness in America has served as the cultural norm. Moreover, the abstract feeds into discourses about the hierarchical nature of Whiteness, it is seen as boundary that could be crossed or a hierarchy that could be climbed. The use of the words 'liminal' and 'radical' suggest the difficulty an 'othered group' might face in trying to cross the boundary into White.

Although none of the abstracts discussed thus far overtly state that they are acts of resistance, in discussing Whiteness they are de-legitimizing the idea that Whiteness is normative and unracialized. In doing so, they bring to the surface Whiteness as a racialised category and begin to question its position as representing the universal.

### 6.2.2 Diversity

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Diversity is an important theme in all of the approaches to decentering European knowledge production discussed in the literature review, and a recurring theme within the sample. It was discussed explicitly in the abstracts but also featured in the ways that articles from Latin America were prominently featured, or in how phenomena from outside of the Anglo-American centre were discussed. Diversity is important as it broadens the lens through which we see the world, rather than viewing occurrences from the vantage point of White male middle class Americans, for example, the inclusion of perspectives, theories and research from other countries broadens conceptions of reality. Moreover, if discourse constructs the society in which we live, a discourse which is diverse and democratically inclusive produces these attributes in society. It can also be a form of resistance to academic dependency by incorporating theory from other parts of the world instead of perceiving periphery countries as sources of data.

The *In Search of a Latin American Approach to Organizational Communication: A Critical review of Scholarship*, abstract stated that the article offered a 'critical review of organizational communication scholarship' stemming from the Latin American region. It argued that although Latin America has its own approach the signs were 'subtle' but 'consistent'. The abstract is written in both English, Spanish and Portuguese; it thereby challenges the hegemonic status of the English language in academic publishing and broadening/*diversifying* the reception of the article. The abstract claims to be combine the J. Marque de Melo's 'features of Latin American Communication studies' with dominant 'Anglo American Frameworks'. The piece appears to be linking to broader conversations about the democratization of knowledge production and it seems to overlap with the discourses on epistemic diversity. The words 'In Search' in the title, seem to allude to the fact that other forms of knowledge become submerged by Eurocentric dominance.

*Reading the Black Woman's body via Instagram Fame*, discusses the policing of Black women's bodies in the digital space. Using the case study of an Instagram photo 'of a [Black] fourth-grade teacher' the abstract argues against 'post-feminist assertions' and states that the article both 'shows how Instagram offers opportunities for women to compose liberated conceptions of self' while at the same time it serves 'as a powerful mediator of domination'. The abstract clearly feeds into broader discourses on feminism but also discourses on platform discrimination and the idea that digital worlds reflect the real world in terms of the encoded discrimination, as well as, discrimination in how we use them. Important to the issue of diversity is that the article is not speaking about *White* feminism but is clearly discussing the way these issues affect Black women. Therefore, drawing on intersectionality and showing how discrimination is layered. Furthermore it is against the discourse on post-feminism and presumably post-racial discourse, which has similarities.

*Diversifying ICA: Identity, Difference, and the Politics of Transformation*, the outgoing president addresses and specifically discusses the issue of 'ethnic and gender diversity' both within the organisation at ICA conferences and 'in our publications'. The author 'challenges communication scholars' to 'read and cite diverse research' and acknowledges 'our shared #Communicationsowhite problem'. Evidently the author hopes that in diversifying communication scholarship within ICA it will 'reflect the diverse communication research that exists globally'. In using the word 'our' the author attempts to be inclusive—this is a problem that is shared by all communication scholars. The author mentions the #Communicationsowhite article reiterating the importance for diversification and 'postcolonial feminism' as a means for attaining diversity.

The abstract *Transnational Identities and Feeling in Fandom: Place and Embodiment in K-pop Fan Reaction Videos* discusses North American Fans of Korean Popular Culture Music reaction videos to the first time they watch music videos. The abstract discusses the reaction videos as 'transnational representation of embodiment'. The author argues that the reaction videos represent 'the fluid complexities of transnationalism.' Fan-groups are argued to transcend national boundaries. The abstract feeds into discourses of the 'Korean Wave' and transnationalism. A limitation of this abstract is that it 'centralises' the experience of fans in 'North America', so although it is diverse in examining a phenomena that has developed outside Europe/America, it continues to centralise the experiences of Americans.

Diversity can imply many different things; it could allude to a diversification in terms of *who* is discussed, for example people of colour as opposed to White males, it could also refer to which forms of knowledge are being acknowledge and appreciated, as demonstrated in the Latin American example. However, it should be noted that diversity alone is not enough as the inclusion of diverse articles or even a diverse range of authors does not address the colonial foundations of dominant knowledge production.

## **6.3 De-Naturalising European knowledge production**

### **6.3.1 Knowledge plurality and Indigenous theory**

Fundamental to decoloniality is the insistence that other knowledges exists. Decoloniality challenges the claim that there is a singular 'universal' knowledge. Advocates of decoloniality claim that there are ways of knowing that are 'created by those who are being excluded in the realm of the singularity of knowledge' (Sithole, 2016:128). Recognising the existence of indigenous and Latin American approaches to communication is an acknowledgement of knowledge plurality or 'ecologies of knowledges' (Santos, 2014).

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*From Media to Buen Vivir: Latin American Approaches to Indigenous Communication*, 'synthesizes' the developments in 'Latin American Indigenous communication' from 2005 to 2015. The researchers have reviewed 'the main theoretical frameworks' and observed a 'progression' away from the 'dominance of external views' and an 'emergence of indigenous people's own perspectives'. The authors purport to also 'discuss the limitations of the original literature on this topic.' The abstract demonstrates a resistance to Eurocentric epistemic dominance and suggests that localised/contextualised theories are better suited to communication theory than universal theories. Moreover, the inclusion of the abstract in the journal legitimises the status of indigenous knowledge as being no less inferior than knowledges derived from the West. It acknowledges the limited literature on this topic, no doubt due to the saturation of Western produced theories purporting to be universal. The piece also acts as a form of justice against epistemicide as it revives indigenous knowledge which was likely buried in the process of colonisation and its predecessor coloniality, and in validating indigenous communication it rejects the need to think akin to those at the centre.

Similarly *Communication Research in Argentina (2001-2015): Between Expansion and Intellectual Intervention*, which 'outlines' the contemporary 'landscape of research studies on communication and culture in Argentina', in focusing on Argentina a country in the periphery, provides access to an alternative knowledge. It too overlaps into discourses about the plurality of knowledges and provides what Santos calls 'a new critical gaze', a way of knowing and seeing the world from the vantage point of those that are typically the objects of study.

By including articles on theory developed in countries in the periphery, the ICA journals are recognising the equality of the knowledge produced by those outside of the centre. It resists the dominant ideology that knowledge resides with the centre.

### **6.3.2 Resisting Eurocentrism**

Eurocentric knowledge production is what Rosalba Icaza and Rolando Vazquez (2018) term 'arrogant ignorance' (112) because it claims to be broad and wide-ranging, and purports universality while ignoring the epistemic diversity in the world. Resisting Eurocentrism is an epistemic stance that challenges the ignorance of monocultural approaches to knowledge practices. Closely linked to diversity, the resistance of Eurocentrism demands the acknowledgement of the 'geopolitical and genealogical location' (Icaza & Vazquez, 2018:112) of knowledge practices and the denaturalisation of 'common sense' ideas regarding the superiority of Europe (and neo-Europeans) over internal and external 'others' (Icaza & Vazquez, 2018).

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The abstract, *#Communicationsowhite*, argues that 'racial inequalities' and the 'colonial legacies of White supremacy' are evident in contemporary scholarly literature. The researchers have conducted a content analysis on ICA and NCA journals revealing an underrepresentation of 'non-White scholars'. Moreover the abstract explicitly states that its objective is to 'de-centre White masculinity as the normative core of scholarly inquiry.' In mentioning 'colonial legacies' the abstract is calling attention to the genealogical location of mainstream knowledge production, as it acknowledges that legacies of colonialism are embedded (and hidden) in knowledge. In addressing the 'Whiteness' as 'normative' the authors are also resisting the stance that such scholarship is neutral and universal. Although it does not explicitly state so, the abstract feeds into decolonial discourse particularly in relation to its disavowal of Whiteness as a the normative centre of scholarship.

*Cultural Voyeurism: A new Framework for Understanding Race, Ethnicity, and Mediated Intergroup Interaction*, argues that communication research could benefit greatly from 'progress in cross racial communication and interaction' and suggests that 'mediated group interaction' through 'cultural voyeurism' could remedy this. The piece suggests that through cultural voyeurism individuals can grasp a better understanding of racial difference and in doing so, reduce 'racial prejudice'. This is because cultural voyeurism, through a mediated process 'provides a window into a culture' that the individual 'would otherwise be unable to contact'. Further research into the area of these mediated experiences could demonstrate how racial prejudices can be eroded. The abstract demonstrates the validity of non-White/non-European experiences. Furthermore, an effect of more research in the area would lead to the representation and experiences of those who are marked as 'others' being more openly discussed in communication discourse. It could also lead to the realisation of voyeurs that their experience of reality is privileged and not representative of everyone and the realisation that knowledges of the world 'are situated geographically and historically' (Bhambra et. Al 2018:2). Thus de-centring the experience of Europeans and neo-Europeans as normative.

The abstracts *A Latin American Approach to Mediatization: Specificities and Contributions to a Global Discussion About How the Media Shape Contemporary Societies* and *Here and There: Resituating Latin America in International Communication Theory* like all the abstracts in the Latin American special issue, are written in Spanish, Portuguese and English. The former abstract discusses how theories in Latin America have developed in 'parallel' to those 'flourishing' in the centre. It discusses the work of sociologist 'Eliseo Verón' and the 'contributions' made by other Latin American researchers. The words 'contribution' and 'global discussion' alude to the need for a truly global discussion to be democratic and inclusive, whereas the word 'flourishing' suggests that work in the Global North has dominated the global discussion. The piece overlaps with discourse about knowledge plurality and argues that 'possible exchanges'

could occur between the Global North and Latin American approaches to mediatization. This also challenges the idea that knowledge produced outside of the centre is inferior. The acknowledgement that media shapes society, reiterate the need for pluralistic/democratic approach which does not merely privilege Eurocentric perspectives.

The latter abstract discusses the need for the special issues. It discusses how the developments of Latin American communication theory have only 'circulated to a limited extent beyond borders'; the abstract states that Latin American communication theory has had a 'limited presence' within the journal and argues that this 'evidences' the necessity for editorial reform 'aimed at addressing the gap' as well as a 'foregrounded situated approach generated in the region'. The words 'here and there' demonstrate the contextual difference between theory that is developing in the centre and those in the periphery. '(Re)situating' suggests that Latin America and other periphery regions are often ignored in global discussions about international communication theory. It also suggests that Euro-centred communication has dominated the field ignoring other regions even when true or democratic *international* communication would require global input.

Resistance to Eurocentrism helps shift the perception of those typically perceived to be 'others' and objects of study, to knowledge-producing subjects. Demanding the inclusion of more articles by people of colour and demanding the recognition of the narratives of people of colour are both means of achieving this. Furthermore the inclusion of articles from outside the centre, or those which focus on regions from the periphery challenges any authority that Eurocentric perspectives have over what classifies as knowledge.

## 7. CONCLUSION

*If Rhodes gone fall, then we gotta rise*

*Scream it from the spires, de, decolonise!*

- Lyricist, André Dallas (cited in Rhodes Must Fall, Oxford 2018:19)

This thesis has used Critical Discourse Analysis to examine the various ways in which communication scholarship, as represented by influential International Communication Association journals, is currently challenging Eurocentric epistemic dominance. It has demonstrated that there continues to be a demand for further diversification as evidenced in the #Communicationsowhite abstract, but also a willingness to diversify. It has also shown that there has been willingness to expose Whiteness and an inclination toward knowledge

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plurality. It has argued that although the articles may not have specifically discussed decoloniality or postcolonialism, their existence within an influential journal could be regarded as taking from these approaches. This is especially true of the articles in the Latin American edition of *Communication Theory*.

However, the positive attributes of these abstracts notwithstanding, it is disappointing that decoloniality, in particular, was not addressed explicitly and the journal articles appear to have ignored the rhetoric of the decolonial turn in its broader contexts. Overtly adhering to the demands of decoloniality would dramatically transform media and communication scholarship. As it stands, the most radical approach to decentring Eurocentrism, 'decoloniality,' continues to be silenced at least within these abstracts, allowing only for the most sanitised expressions of resistance.

It has hopefully been illustrated that decoloniality demands much of researchers and knowledge producers, which may be particularly difficult to operationalise by those that have been educated within Westernised universities. This is because decoloniality does not depend on scholars from the West. However, although difficult, it does not mean that it should be avoided. As previously noted, this radical approach would be the most efficient in truly decentring Eurocentrism in communication scholarship.

Further research could include an examination of a broader range of communication journals and/or a comparison of journals published in the Global South to those in the Global North.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A : Sampled Journal Abstracts.

#### Communication Culture & Critique

- 1) Anderson, W. (2018). Classifying Whiteness: Unmasking White Nationalist Women's Digital Design through an Intersectional Analysis of Contained Agency. *Communication Culture & Critique*, 11(1), 116-132.
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APPENDIX B : ANNOTATED ABSTRACTS

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

**A Latin American Approach to Mediatization: Specificities and Contributions to a Global Discussion About How the Media Shape Contemporary Societies**

**Un enfoque latinoamericano de la mediatización: especificidades y contribuciones a una discusión global sobre cómo los medios dan forma a las sociedades contemporáneas**

**Midiatização sob uma abordagem latino-americana: especificidades e contribuições para uma discussão global sobre como os meios de comunicação vem delineando as sociedades contemporâneas**

Carlos Scolari<sup>1</sup> & Joan Ramon Rodríguez-Amat<sup>2</sup>

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*Challenging academic dependency in the global economy of knowledge*

*Plurality of knowledge*

*oppositional to the francium impact in media studies*

*what does Latin American have to offer? - invited to a seat at the table*

*Spanish*

*Portuguese*

*Argentine Sociologist*

*work mainly from outside of the Anglo-saxon world*

*seems to be saying that in Latin America*

*Media Studies Discourse*

*intentional liberation out of Eurocentric in origin of the 1950s*

*semantics*

*transformative, this is more than 1 way approach*

*region transformative in that there is more than 1 knowledge existing in plural knowledge produce outside the west able to work in parallel with non western knowledge thus challenging the concept that knowledge produced outside the west inferior.*

**Key**

**Text**

**discursive**

**social practice**

(challenging) the dependence on knowledge.

broadening the geo-geographical-intellectual horizon  
Plurality of knowledge feeds into the discourse of knowledge ecology.

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

### In Search of a Latin American Approach to Organizational Communication: A Critical Review of Scholarship (2010–2014)

En busca de un enfoque latinoamericano de la comunicación organizacional: una revisión crítica de la producción académica de 2010 a 2014

Em busca de uma abordagem latino-americana para comunicação organizacional: Uma revisão crítica da pesquisa em comunicação organizacional na América Latina entre 2010-2014

Spanish  
Portuguese  
Resisting the dominance of the English language in knowledge production

Consuelo Vásquez Donoso<sup>1</sup>, Lissette Marroquín Velásquez<sup>2</sup>, & Adriana Angel Botero<sup>3</sup>

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not internationalization, democratization.

This article presents a critical review of organizational communication scholarship in Latin America to explore its distinctive traits. Combining J. Marques de Melo's (1999) features of Latin American communication studies with Anglo-American frameworks of organizational communication, it offers a systematic mapping of Latin American organizational communication scholarship by focussing on the major trends of the academic production in peer-reviewed journals from 2010 to 2014. The results show that there are subtle but consistent signs of a Latin American approach to organizational communication regarding theoretical miscegenation and the ethics and political commitment of the researcher. This is mainly manifested in the practical orientation of research and the growing interest in documenting and intervening in local organizational realities.

Democratization of Scholarship

missing: why the particular word choice

dominant frameworks

challenging the authority of the western university. Knowledge produced outside the West and demand int theory.

racism inequalities  
abstract universalizing  
white / west / north

Reading Communication

Journal of Communication ISSN 0021-9916

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

#CommunicationSoWhite

Paula Chakravartty, Rachel Kuo, Victoria Grubbs, & Charlton McIlwain

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whiteness  
as normative  
and invisible.  
whiteness not a  
normative centre.

activation of colonial discourses  
existing  
the colonization  
of white supremacy  
are of the  
not a norm  
of decolonality

Racial inequalities and the colonial legacies of White supremacy permeate scholarly and public discussions today. As part of an ongoing movement to decenter White masculinity as the normative core of scholarly inquiry, this paper is meant as a preliminary intervention. By coding and analyzing the racial composition of primary authors of both articles and citations in journals between 1990-2016, we find that non-White scholars continue to be underrepresented in publication rates, citation rates, and editorial positions in communication studies. We offer some analysis as to why these findings matter in our current political moment, and propose steps the field might take towards further documenting and rectifying race and representation in the production of disciplinary knowledge.

right-wing  
public.

Keywords: Communication, Race, Racism, Representation, Inequality, Publication, Citation.

doi:10.1093/joc/jqy003

important because for priority  
whiteness & racism embedded in knowledge  
production through diversification

distance to  
the  
privileged position  
of whiteness within  
academia