THEORIZING A SETTLERS’ APPROACH TO DECOLONIAL PEDAGOGY: STORYING AS METHODOLOGIES, HUMBLED, RHETORICAL LISTENING AND AWARENESS OF EMBODIMENT

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A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate College of Bowling Green State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

August 2018

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ABSTRACT

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In this dissertation entitled, “Theorizing A Settlers’ Approach To Decolonial Pedagogy: Storying As Methodologies, Humbled, Rhetorical Listening And Awareness Of Embodiment,” I outline a set of pedagogical practices for settlers to enact in their classrooms. The purpose of this project was to investigate options for decolonial pedagogical practices, examining how a non-indigenous or settler version of decolonial pedagogy may require a different approach. My primary argument is that varieties of decolonial pedagogical practices must be allowed to exist rather than attempting to homogenize or present formulaic methods. Failure to do so enacts and re-inscribes colonialist practices that attempt to homogenize a complex concept and construct a universal narrative, discounting embodied differences. Instead, I contend that the embodied experience(s) of the educators, specifically in all variations of culture, influence interpretations and applications of decoloniality to pedagogical practices. I also contend that that if settler or non-indigenous educators wish to employ the term decoloniality in scholarship, enact decolonial pedagogy, and consider their work to be decolonial in nature, then they must first engage in rhetorical listening, humility and self-reflexivity with people of color, learning about issues of sovereignty and how settler colonialism affects certain bodies differently than others. I further urge settlers in the field of Rhetoric and Composition, who wish to use the term decolonial, to listen to, learn from, and honor indigenous methods through active relationships and community membership, and to avoid cultural appropriation or false allyship. Finally, I argue that story as methodology that is genuinely decolonial in nature must revere storying and extend those
practices to all professional roles—that of researcher, scholar, community member, and teacher. Drawing from indigenous rhetorics and storied interviews with three self-identified indigenous educators and three self-identified non-indigenous educators, I practice rhetorical listening to the participants’ accounts, focusing on their backgrounds, teaching values and pedagogical practices. After transcribing the interviews, I enact story as methodology, to constellate themes from the participants’ stories. I also draw from situational analysis, using mapping as a method of organization in constellating the themes. This methodology is intentional as it reflects an indigenous research paradigm. This dissertation responds to the arguments of Tuck and Wang (2012), who caution against using decolonization as a metaphor and takes up the challenge in considering how settlers may engage in decolonial work. Ultimately, this project provides the discipline of Rhetoric and Composition with a language surrounding decoloniality and maps out a series of considerations that settlers may take before applying the term decoloniality and decolonization to their scholarship and to their teaching.
This work is dedicated to:

My mom—Thank you for getting me letter magnets when I was a little girl. I owe any, and all, of my accomplishments and education to you. I am a doctor because of you.

Hope & Holly—my twin rocks. Thank you. I would not have made it through these last four years without you. Thank you for putting up with me this year and your unfailing generosity,

Dan, Hope, and Russ.

Praneeth—Dbh, thank you for all of the times you supported me and were my touchstone these past four years and for caring for Kitty.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Christina Cedillo, Phil Bratta, Ezekiel Choffel, Sundy Watanabe, Lisa King and Gail MacKay—thank you for your time, wisdom, insights and stories. You have taught me so much and continue to do so.

Dr. Malea Powell, whom I have quoted extensively throughout this dissertation—Thank you for your contributions to the field of Rhetoric and Composition, especially related to Cultural Rhetorics and American Indian and indigenous rhetorics. Thank you for all that you have taught me.

Dr. Andrea Riley-Mukavetz—I am so grateful to you and appreciate your mentorship, encouragement, support, kindness, empowerment and cheerleading. Miigwetch.

Dr. Dan Bommarito, Dr. Sue Carter Wood, Dr. Lee Nickoson, Dr. Kristine Blair—you all taught me so much during my time in BG. Thank you.

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PROLOGUE: THREE STORIES FROM THE PAST, WRESTLING WITH EMBODIMENT, AND ILLUSTRATING HOW DECOLONIALITY FOUND ME

“Beginnings are always hard to pin down. When does the root of an idea take shape? It is really not as important as the intellectual evolution it pushes us into.

~Devika Chawla

A story:

2006

Graduate Research Methods Course

University of Toledo

I still vividly remember her austere expression, that dark gaze in her eyes. A professor, a guest speaker in the graduate literature research class, was speaking about her scholarship on American Indian literature. As I listened to her, hearing the bitterness and anger rising in her voice, as she relayed the genocide, the discrimination, the persecution and the continuous breaking of American Indian treaties, I looked down. I did not know where to position my gaze. I only could peer at the floor, feeling embarrassed, shameful, hot. She, undoubtedly, had every right to be so angry.

I wanted to do something. I wanted to be angry with her. But I felt it was not my right. Instead, I cowered, feeling sympathy, discomfort, complacency. I felt antsy, anxious with helplessness, unsure of what to do with it: how can I make this feeling useful? To use it to make any positive difference or meaningful change?

Yes, the horrors of what happened and continue to occur must be discussed. We need to analyze and think about the inhumanity of it all. But, what do I do? How do I help? What role should I have, my non-American Indian, 22 year-old self, wondered? In the absence of holding
any indigeneity myself, I physically and mentally retreated, thinking it best, considering my armor of white skin.

Clearly, my ancestors, and myself, by extension, represented white invaders, the colonists, responsible for murdering and persecuting her people. My ancestors were part of a group of people who believed their history and culture and skin color superior to others. Through our own self-righteousness, we believed ourselves modernized and civilized, attempting to legitimate murder and exploitation because of the belief that God was on our side.

True: I didn’t personally make those decisions or perform those actions, but I have benefitted from them. My family and I had been complacent in the type of generational racism or silence that had affected her so deeply. I benefited from colonialism, from the destruction of her people and others.

But, now, what do I do with that? How do I act and contribute to positive, meaningful change when I feel so guilty? When I am not a member of the persecuted?

A story:

2012

American Culture & Literature class

Satya Wacana Christian University, Salatiga, Central Java, Indonesia

American Culture & Literature class

One of my students was on a long oral monologue, talking at length, sharing extensively. I listened patiently, happy and grateful that he was even sharing because Indonesian students are often so shy and reserved at times, hesitant to share anything because of takut salah (fear of
being wrong) or fear that they would be considered sombong (arrogant). Both are taboo and to be avoided in the culture.

“You know, the native people in Indonesia are darker skinned, but the native American people who look, you know, more…bule,” an Indonesian student commented. (Bule is a word Indonesian people originally attributed to Dutch colonialists; it literally means albino, very white skinned.)

He continued, but I must admit that I stopped listening and really hearing him.

Because with his final comment, my mouth gaped in surprise. I raised my eye-brows in shock, and unintentionally narrowed them in discomfort and tension. I paused, a moment, breathed and thought—*why am I surprised? How…or…why would they know any different?* Their belief of American culture(s) derived from movies, music and television shows that came from Hollywood, from Disney, Pixar. It’s not like they studied American history in school or would know that American Indians were indeed the original, the native Americans. Indeed, even American education history lessons eliminates that information.

When he paused, I gently corrected him: “Well, actually, the indigenous peoples of America were not bule, not white people. The Native Americans, were not blond and blue eyed, but had darker hair, eyes and skin were on the land for centuries before European Americans arrived.”

“Oh. Really?”

“Yeah.”

“Interesting. What is the name of their tribe?”

“Well, kind of similar to Indonesia, there are many different “tribes” and ethnicities. So, the cultures, languages vary.”

“Asyik. (Cool) What are they like? What are their cultures like?”

I couldn’t discuss this with them because I knew so little myself. I fell silent, realizing, shamefully, I had little more to offer. I looked around at my students, so eager for knowledge, so interested to hear more about American culture(s), especially the genuine culture(s), the non-Hollywood parts, so unfamiliar to them. And I didn’t have anything to give them.

“Well, sadly, because of the white colonialists many, many American Indians were killed,” I began. They’re not all extinct, Danielle! Stop using the past tense! I continued, steady in voice but shaky in confidence: “Even today, much of mainstream America, er, what you, and most other Americans know about them is very little. Few really take the time to understand the histories and the different American Indian cultures.”

Like me, I thought.

I looked around the room, taking in my students’ expressions: some looked disappointed that I could not offer more; others nodded, thoughtfully. Most were listening intently, waiting for me to continue, to inform them with more.

I opened my mouth but closed it when realized that I had nothing more to say with any level of confidence or education or other base of understanding.

And with that, I felt a redness, a hotness, deep, deep shame rising through me; it colored my cheeks. I was now the one who was “takut salah,” the one guilty of being “sombong.”

Because this was a course that I had proposed and designed. I had created the curriculum and
syllabus of American Culture and Literature with high hopes of showing Indonesians how
diverse and varied Americans were, and by extension, how vast American culture(s) and
literature(s) could be. I had wanted them to see the salad bowl of America, the patchwork quilt.
So, I specifically chose some texts that would study Arab-American, Indian-American, African-
American, Japanese-American texts, true to the World English Literature focus that the
department hoped to cultivate, to give them the opportunity to see America as more nuanced. I
hoped that my students would see American languages and cultures as richer, more expansive
than I had had the opportunity to study in my own undergraduate and graduate level literature
programs. I had hoped to challenge their Hollywood stereotypes that pervaded. Yet, here I was—
realizing just how very little knew I knew or had been taught about American Indians. I took in
how little I had bothered to learn more about American Indian cultures, histories, etc. I was not
an expert on the other areas of literature, but I felt that I could speak to some cultural norms and
traditions, and if/when I did not know, I always had researched to find out more. But I now
realized how much American Indian cultures existed as a total mystery for me.

A story:

2013

Satya Wacana Christian University, Salatiga, Central Java, Indonesia

Literary Theory and Analysis Class

“So, now we’re going to move on to discuss post-colonial theory,” I began that day’s
lecture.

I paused. I looked around at the classroom, full of Javanese, Papuan, Sumatran, Balinese,
and Chinese Indonesian faces all with varying shades of brown hued skin, different styles of
black hair and dark eyes. I looked down, suddenly painfully aware of my pale, white skin, noting the freckles that scattered my arms, thinking of my blue eyes and reddish-blondish hair.

I fell silent momentarily. I didn’t know how to continue. Suddenly, it all felt so ludicrous. What the hell right did I, this blue, have, to talk to them about post-colonial theory? Yes, I was the lecturer, the more educated one, but all the students, these individuals really knew colonialism in ways that I would, could, ever know. And yet, I was supposed to stand in front and lecture them about how colonialism affects lives, history, cultures? It was ridiculous, preposterous: I had not lived this reality; they had; they continued to. Yet, I should instruct them on what this theory was and how they could apply it to analyzing texts? Discomfort, tension, and red-hot shame rose within me again, flooded my cheeks. I fidgeted, feeling “kurang enak” (Indonesian phrase used to describe a feeling of being physically or emotionally unwell or to describe a less than tasty food). Feeling myself to be once again, very, very much the white one, the colonizer.
CHAPTER I BALANCING SHARING AND MAKING SPACE: ALL THE STORIES MUST BE TOLD IN DECOLONIAL PEDAGOGY OPTIONS

I share the above stories in the prologue to illustrate a few embodied experiences that fueled my interest in cultural rhetorics and the desire to learn more about American Indian literatures, cultures, and epistemologies, all long before I could articulate them as such, and before I entered the Rhetoric and Writing Ph.D. program at Bowling Green State University. I also share these stories because I have learned from American Indian scholar and educator, Dr. Lisa King, that ‘all the stories need to be told.’ Through stories, we form connections and establish relationships to other people; we build community; we both learn and are understood and make meaning—through points of similarities and differences, we make knowledge and meaning with one another; this occurs both inside and outside of academia. Lastly, I share these stories because they illustrate some of my internal struggles and reservations that I hold, that I carry within me, my white body. I continue to wrestle with these memories, and they highlight reasons why I struggled to believe that there was a space for me, as a white, Euro-American, non-indigenous educator, to have a seat at this table of decolonial pedagogy and research, as well as cultural rhetorics that often highlights non-western ways of knowing. As I continue to actively think and do, which I understand to be important decolonial practices, and I extend those to scholarship and theorizing decolonial pedagogy in the field of Rhetoric and Composition, these anecdotes serve as important moments and reminders to me. They are instrumental to my journey in understanding why I, as a white, non-indigenous person, came to do doctoral research informed by indigenous methods and epistemologies, and equally importantly, why I feel them important enough to share them with you. It is also my hope and my invitation that readers, non-
indigenous peoples and westerners, will consider your own previous educational experiences and relationships with indigenous epistemologies and American Indians cultures, or lack thereof. For throughout this dissertation, I will call readers to engage in deep and active self-reflection and I will assign some intense emotional homework, for I have come to understand that only through these efforts can we engage in decolonial efforts, whether in through research, rhetorics or pedagogies, or all of them.

There are many possible points of entry and other stories that contributed to my journey in decolonial research and pedagogies. The memories that I highlight above are important pieces of my story, but not the only reasons that I pursued doctoral study on decolonial pedagogy. True, I endeavored to learn from American Indian epistemologies and indigenous methodologies, because of my own lack of understanding in them. As someone who values education, and other ways of knowing and other cultures, I did not wish to remain ignorant, but admittedly, I would also not have sustained intellectual curiosity about a topic that I had limited experience and connection to. Like most others, I probably would not have been enough for me to dedicate years of research and study to American Indian rhetorics, indigenous epistemologies and decolonial efforts unless I had formed a deeper, more personal and intimate connection to these ways of knowing. I also feel greatly indebted to them, to indigenous knowledges, rhetorics, methodologies, and epistemologies, and to decolonial theories; for in learning about them, they provided me with guidance, as I re-immersed into a place that was no longer home.

After five years serving abroad in Central Java, Indonesia, I returned home to the United States and enrolled in a doctoral program. The reverse culture shock and re-acclimation process was intense, much more so than when I moved to Indonesia, because in venturing into a foreign culture I anticipated immense changes. But I hadn’t imagined feeling so alien upon my return to
my motherland. At that point, though America had been home for twenty-five of my thirty-one years, I found western values of hyper-individualism and solitude extremely jarring. My shock was two-fold, because while feeling reverse culture shock in day to day living, I also found the university setting, another place that had been home for many years, strangely unfamiliar. Feeling lost and alien when returning to a place that I remembered as comforting was disorienting and surreal, in a way that only those who have experienced reverse culture shock can understand. The only respite that I felt, the only real sense of belonging and homecoming, the only reassurance for how to endure this, came from learning about decoloniality and indigenous epistemologies.

Through two doctoral level seminars with Dr. Riley-Mukavetz, we examined texts about decolonial theory, indigenous methodologies and epistemologies, and American Indian rhetorics. The material was not always pleasurable, fun or easy to read; rather, it was laden with past and present atrocities committed against American Indians as well as paracolonialism (perpetual colonialist practices) that continue to occur in political, social, economic, religious and educational realms. At many moments, thoughts and feelings, like the ones that I experience in that University of Toledo graduate seminar, returned. I felt shame, sometimes physically and mentally ill, deeply uneasy in my own white skin, as though I wore a heavy sign of shame, embodying the role of the colonizer, whose people were responsible for committing atrocities. The paradox, and inexplicable part, is that, simultaneously, the values and epistemologies of these literary texts and theories also welcomed me. For as much as I was an outsider to American Indian culture(s), I also felt a sense of belonging because of the overlaps and similarities, because of lived, embodied experiences with the indigenous values of Indonesian culture(s), ones that had molded me and shaped my person and experiences over the past five years. Both sets of
indigenous principles held similarities in prioritizing relationships, community, and interconnectedness, values that had been life-giving and sustaining to me, while living on the other side of the world, far away from family and home. Learning about decoloniality and indigenous epistemologies, for me, was a gift; it presented me a compass, accompanying me forward, as a wise and gentle friend. Beyond that moment of re-acclimation, however, it continues to guide me, connecting my past experiences and present values, holding me to a greater sense of responsibility, to have accountability to others. Indigenous values inspire me and continue to teach me about the kind of research/scholar, educator and community member that I wish to become. So, I come forward, write on. And the more I learn and engage with the field, the more frustrated I grow with how cultural rhetorics, storying, indigenous rhetorics, American Indian epistemologies and decoloniality continue to be relegated, to exist at the margins of the discipline. We allow these areas to be pushed to the borders of Rhetoric and Composition, which is devastating, especially when they hold such potential for revolution of our field, for self-reflection and transformation, for renewed relationships, for embarking on a more holistic and relational approach to engaging in research and scholarship, for revolutionizing the teaching of composition. Calling attention to these injustices and the power that these ignored sub-disciplines hold, propels me onward, along with my personal experiences.

I am wholehearted and genuine in these aims and intentions. But, I also aim for transparency: lofty ambitions do not make for an easy path. I understand that rising scholars and doctoral candidates, such as myself, are required to demonstrate competency in the discipline, to cultivate a sense of ethos in our knowledges, especially when displaying our methods, lit review and findings in the dissertation. We are encouraged to discuss the limitations of our research and findings of our data, but often only in very specific and controlled environments. I will
intentionally break these conventions, because of a competing force that informs my approach to this research. In learning from indigenous research methods and epistemologies, and turning to them to inform my research, I also have a greater accountability; I must hold myself responsible, due to my embodiment as a non-indigenous person. Throughout the course of this research and writing, I have learned this inescapable reality: a key part of my journey is that I am called to remain ever cognizant of my embodiment and to remain vigilant, aware of my continuous learner and outsider status to indigenous cultures. As a result, I will undoubtedly stumble and make mistakes. For both the ones that I notice and the ones I overlook, I apologize, or as we say in Indonesian: *Ma’af sebelumnya atas kesalahan yang dibuat saya.*\(^\text{1}\) Knowing that I will make errors makes me nervous, those familiar feelings of takut salah emerging; still, I come forward. For I strive for this doctoral research and any resulting efforts of it to give appropriate thanks and proper credit to indigenous folks; to be accountable to the participants’ stories and to the wisdom of those who I am privileged to know, to have relationships with, as mentors and intellectual elders. I endeavor to learn from, honor, and allow this research to be informed by indigenous values, but to avoid culturally appropriating ways of knowing that are not my own.

Simultaneously, I aim to honor and revere decolonial thinking, with the goal of theorizing a settlers’ decolonial pedagogy. I see decolonial efforts as powerful, as having the potential to revolutionize our discipline, and to help us to adjust and adapt our ways of teaching, our relationships, and ourselves.

To actively think and do, to engage in decolonial practices, is complex, as it requires a lot of self-reflection and self-actualization, a great deal of emotional homework. A key aspect is being aware of embodied differences, listening to others’ experiences of how colonialism has

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\(^{1}\) I apologize in advance for any mistakes that I have made.
affected people with different lived experiences. Though not simple, the need, as teachers of rhetorics and ones who truly care about our students, is too great not to engage in decoloniality, to allow this shifting of epistemologies to inform our pedagogies. Other scholars of color have long recognized the need to involve self-reflection and self-actualizing to inform our teaching (hooks). I strive to add those conversations, use whatever undue and unfair white privilege I may possess, to reassert their teachings: we must consider our own identities and embodied experiences, how they shape our persons, our relationships, and our understandings of rhetorics and knowledges. All are significant in teaching and in studying humanities, specifically, in composition and rhetoric classrooms, since these inner landscapes also affect how we teach (Parker). In considering how we understand ourselves, our values and our pedagogical practices, we may also learn, by extension, how they influence our cultural epistemologies, and understandings and applications of decolonial pedagogy. Only when we start to draw awareness and attention to unquestioned hegemonic structure, this over-reliance of western ways of knowing, or what Dr. Walter Mignolo refers to as the zero-point epistemology, do we finally embark on a path where we may engage in decolonial efforts.

As this dissertation will reveal, practicing decolonial thinking and doing, and by extension, decolonial pedagogy requires many steps and components. First, it requires mental energy and emotional homework, constant acts of thinking and doing, practices in self-reflection, that are exhausting, on-going, even continuous. I have come to understand that using the term decolonial in a sensitive and culturally appropriate way, as a white person, requires both reflection of paracolonialist practices and a base understanding of some principles of decolonial theory. I actively endeavor to engage in decolonial research, using decolonizing methodologies, that honor and learn from indigenous methods and epistemologies. However, throughout the
course of this doctoral research, the goal of the project has shifted. I initially began this project seeking to understand whether I had any right to practice decolonial pedagogy or learn from indigenous methodologies, and if I could do so, then how it must differ from an indigenous approach, from how these methods were presented to me, from an American Indian scholar and educator. I wanted to understand my role in decolonial pedagogy, as a non-indigenous person, borrowing from indigenous epistemologies and methodologies, I wanted to know what my decolonial pedagogy would look like. I wanted to know how I could do it and avoid cultural appropriation and still maintain right relationships with indigenous persons. However, after listening to the stories of the participants and constellating themes from the interviews, it surfaced again and again that educators and academics are unable to escape our own subjectivities. Through active engagement in storying and listening, my goal now is to turn towards theorizing a decolonial teaching philosophy, as a non-indigenous person. As we venture forward, the only option is to embrace our own embodiment, reflect on it, and the limitations of our own bodies and those lived experiences. Heeding the words of indigenous scholar, Shawn Wilson, through this project I aim to “recognize my own subjectivity and work with it,” in order to “promote real change” (“Decolonizing Methodologies: Can Relational Research Be a Basis for Renewed Relationships”). I learned an important and ongoing lesson from the stories, from the embodied experiences, and interpretations of decoloniality from the participants: We should not attempt to homogenize a decolonial pedagogy or speak to a universal pedagogical experience. Rather, in learning from cultural rhetoricians, and I would argue, as any scholar and educator, we must reflect on how a person’s embodied identity plays a role in their pedagogical approach at large, and more specifically, in their interpretations of decoloniality, and consequently, in their approaches to decolonial pedagogy. In this way, cultural rhetoricians add
important contributions to ongoing interdisciplinary discussions in the field of Rhetoric and Composition. As a rising scholar and academic in this discipline, it is my goal that this project will fuel forward further discussions that aim to understand and formulate options for a settlers’ decolonial pedagogy.

To that end, this dissertation aims to story or to theorize, which I understand both actions to be interconnected, inter-related, and co-dependent on each other. Through these stories, through this theorization, I aim to lay a foundation of a settlers’ approach to decolonial research methodologies and decolonial pedagogies that can be used within the field and within cultural rhetorics and writing classrooms. I will do this by constellating themes from the participants’ stories and reflecting on my own stories, interweaving both, but always highlighting and privileging all the stories. Some of these stories will appear and come forward through this dissertation as storying within qualitative methodology, or within data/interviews--the stories of the participants, or from scholarship as a traditional literature review; other times the storying will be seen through the selection of course readings, through student compositions, through facilitated classroom dialogues or anecdotes, or from academic relationships. This is how I use, understand and adapt “storying as methodologies:” I allow stories to guide me and mold me, through interviewing, literature reviews, research, in analysis of data, in theorizing. Stories are the driving point of this research, informing all themes, contents of chapters and discussion. The stories, whether from the participants or other scholars or from myself, whether from secondary and primary resources, are all interwoven. I will not parcel them out into separate categories. In doing this, I understand that I violate many genre conventions and expectations of readers, set forth by western ways of knowing. I intentionally disrupt these expectations, even at the expense of confusing readers. I do this not because I am unable to adhere to set forth genres or academic
conventions. On the contrary, I have far more experience, confidence, and education in sanctioning them off into separate sections, participating in that familiar style. However, in privileging cultural rhetorics and indigenous ways of knowing, I intentionally prioritize stories, because storying transcends genres and categories. I encourage fellow readers to follow, understanding that this approach revisions stories and storying as methodologies to exist not as one part of the dissertation but to lie at the heart and soul of the project.

In my methods, I have drawn from situational analysis to map out the data, or the interviews, or stories. Through color coding and mapping of similar and reoccurring themes from the participants’ stories, the content, the discussion of these chapters, these theories emerged. Through the sharing of their stories, I will guide readers to understand some important considerations, some potential options for decolonial pedagogical approaches. In learning from indigenous ways of knowing, I understand an interdependence and relationality to exist among peoples and knowledges; therefore, I specifically write this dissertation to protest colonialisms, which may disrupt standard academic genre conventions. I will not sanction off separate sections for methods and methodology, literature reviews, data analysis and findings, customary for qualitative research and dissertation formats. Readers, instead, will find these sections interwoven, blending together. Though I do understand some may struggle to understand the format or structure when it veers sharply from those genre conventions, I do this intentionally.

Moving forward, in chapter two, we will examine decoloniality, which may require that we reflect on, even problematize our own prior educational experiences, with western epistemologies and rhetorics, perhaps challenging what we have been taught are legitimized cultural knowledges. This chapter will explore decoloniality, providing a lexicon from Dr. Walter Mignolo, to provide settlers with a language to discuss colonialism and decoloniality,
which I argue are key for theorizing a settlers’ decolonial pedagogy. Chapter Three will explore storying, or more specifically, de-familiarizing commonly held notions of stories and narratives, to instead reconceive of them as living beings, as cultural treasures, a notion borrowed from indigenous epistemologies. I will extend that argument to contend that storying also exists as several methodological practices, to be used in all areas--in research, in writing and in teaching practices. After exploring those mental hurdles and laying that groundwork, chapter four will move onto to discuss a settlers’ version of decoloniality and how a settlers’ decolonial pedagogy requires continued humbled, rhetorical listening, which requires cross-cultural sensitivity and awareness embodiment and the limitations of one’s own embodiment. The conclusion will highlight how all these components involve embodiment, noting that all are interwoven and related, yet foundational to forming settlers’ decolonial pedagogies. The afterword will reflect on the importance of learning from cultural rhetorics and indigenous scholars, and in approaching decoloniality, as settlers. In this section I will provide directions in moving forward with this project and settlers’ decolonial pedagogies within classroom practices.

I anticipate and fully understand there may be frustrations for the audience: at times, readers may question why I spend much time discussing abstract concepts, ones of inner-reflection and self-actualization, delving deeper and deeper into these elusive topics, when so often we approach pedagogy as practice-oriented. It is fair to wonder why I do this, instead of providing models, steps, or concrete examples, perhaps in the form of syllabi, assignments, assessment measures, etc, ones guaranteed to work for any Composition teacher who wants to do decolonial pedagogy. Understandably, this is what academics and scholars have been conditioned to expect, to want. I hear your frustrations, since I have experienced them many times myself in the process of writing this dissertation. I genuinely want to provide instructions
in how to do decolonial pedagogy. But, I will not. I believe so strongly in the transformative
powers of decolonial thinking and doing, and in decolonial pedagogies, that I cannot.
Endeavoring to do decolonial pedagogies would be a great deal simpler if such cookie formulas
were possible. But, even if I attempted to present a few from the stories shared by the
participants as some formulaic method, it would not be useful, as it would not embrace the true
power of decoloniality; it would not constitute a genuine decolonial pedagogy. As Jacqueline
Royster Jones, informed our discipline long ago and we are still struggling to learn: we must first
embrace our positionality and begin with the subjective, especially in discussions of rhetorics
and pedagogy. I do not claim that positionality is the only factor in “how to do” decolonial
pedagogy, but it must always be present and inform our actions, guiding forward our discussions.
As colleagues and participants of this study, Phil Bratta and Christina Cedillo reminded me, we
must also never attempt to divorce ourselves from the specifics of the context. Whether that
“context” refers to a specific curriculum, course objective, class demographic, institutional
politics or educator’s embodied identity, all are important factors in considering any pedagogy,
and in understanding how we may conceive of, and practice, decolonial pedagogy in any
classroom context.

For that reason, I again reiterate: I intentionally resist prescribing umbrella approaches to
decolonial pedagogy, advising ones that are appropriate for all educators, useful across any
context. Moreover, I ask that you join me in this act, this active resistance, of thinking and doing
that rejects the possibility that one model will work for all. For in doing so, we join in collective
efforts of decolonial work, embracing options and approaches that are also instrumental to
Cultural Rhetoricians’ work as advocates and activists. I hope to demonstrate that non-
indigenous, non-POC educators, in the field of Rhetoric and Composition or even humanities at
large—have necessary steps to undergo before we may appropriately use the term decolonial. First, we must pause and reflect, and dwell in this very uncomfortable space as settlers, listening to stories of others of differing experienced, from other bodies whose realities and cultures may differ from our own. We must draw from and learn from all of them, allowing them to instruct theoretical frameworks. All the while we must be accountable to one another, forming relationships with others, having a good heart. We must be humble; we will make mistakes. When this happens, we must adjust and adapt. The work is not, it will not, be easy. But, the efforts are worth it.

In articulating these visions, I am taking advice from Margaret Kovach in her text, *Indigenous Methodologies: Conversations, Conversations and Contexts*. Here she calls for non-indigenous peoples in academic discourse to listen to what is being said by indigenous folks, as it is the “strongest potential for fresh discourse” (p.157). A similar point is made by Dr. Monica Mulrennan, when she states that “there is a place for non-indigenous” people to do research, “but it has to be on the terms of the community and indigenous peoples, more broadly” (“Decolonizing Methodologies: Can Relational Research Be a Basis for Renewed Relationships?”). When such accountability and reciprocity is practiced, only then can the work of non-indigenous individuals honor indigenous epistemologies and persons, make important movements to doing culturally sensitive, appropriate decolonial work. I strive to answer their calls and to engage in this work.

Throughout this dissertation, in doing decolonial work informed by indigenous values, I will communicate and collaborate with both indigenous and non-indigenous educators and scholars. I see this as key and a primary goal in cultivating right relationship, in listening and striving to understand “the opportunity for the renewal of relationships” as well as an
“opportunity to really engage research as part of the reconciliation process” (Mulrennan).

Finally, this doctoral research engages with the work, endeavoring to answer the call made by American Indian scholar and rhetorician, Dr. Malea Powell in her 2012 CCC address, where she urged rhetoric and composition scholars and educators to be a part of “de-linking and de-chaining” from coloniality/modernity. Professor Powell urged her audience to note the colonial matrix of power at work, recognizing all available means for knowledge and meaning making, noting that this would mean making significant shifts in our discipline, ones of epic proportions (p. 393-394). Her address, five years later, continues to evoke much discussion in the field. However, the work is still unfinished; rather, it has only begun. As a non-indigenous person, I did not understand my place or role in this; I still striving to do so, but I am learning. In these efforts I seek to help us understand, through storying theories, how decoloniality and settlers’ decolonial pedagogical practices may serve our discipline, an array of colleagues in our scholarly community and for a variety of student demographics. I commit to participating in these efforts, of decolonial thinking and doing, working toward “significant shifts in our discipline,” with the hope that someday we may actualize those epic changes.

This dissertation begins with, and embraces, subjectivity and embodiment. As self-identified decolonial educator Dr. Christina Cedillo points out, “The first thing I always tell my students is we have to get away from this notion of objectivity.” I would argue, that in applying this truism, one also articulated by Cedillo’s mentor, Jacqueline Jones Royster, to do decolonial pedagogy, we must resist thinking that one option for it may exist. Instead, we must consider our own experiences and embodiments, how they influence our values, thinking and practices. From rhetorical listening of the stories of the participants’ different bodies and embodied experiences and my own, we may begin to see the decolonial options available to us. Only after we have
taken important first steps to embracing differing decolonial options can we ever hope to practice
a genuine form of our own embodied decolonial pedagogy. Therefore, as we embrace
subjectivity and positionality, let me introduce the participants of the study. Let us honor them,
their embodiment, their insights, and their experiences. Let us hear their stories and understand
their stories as methodologies, ones that may be used to build a theoretical framework.

*Storying as a Methodology for Research*

Story as Methodology advocates that stories and analyses of them may exist as
methodology and data of research. Indigenous scholars and research have long recognized the
power of stories and understand that storying holds great potential to form and transform
relationships (Powell “Rhetorics of Survivance: How American Indians Use Writing” 396;
Powell “A Performance in One Act” 384; Riley Mukavetz 1; Powell, Riley Mukvatetz, et al 4;
Chawla; Kovach “Emerging from the Margins” 53; King, Gubele, et al). In translating their
cultural knowledge and meaning making to scholarship and research, by extension, stories also
have the power to build knowledge, maintain history, and ought to be recognized as data worthy
of scholarly and academic research (Powell; Riley Mukavetz; Qwul’sih’yah’maht; Rain
Anderson;). For example, Devika Chawla understands that theoretical roots can be found,
discovered and built from a storied world (16) and that “people without stories are a people
without a history” (20). She also notes that for her Indian culture, the point is to “live in”
storying (Chawla 26), though many indigenous scholars personify stories, understanding them as
“living and breathing beings” (Chawla 23; Powell; Riley Mukavetz; Brooks; King; Rain
Anderson). To that end, in this research project, the stories in the interviews exist as a
methodology. As I will discuss at length in chapter three, I hold to the idea that storying may
blur, diminish or transcend borders of theory and may be used as a tool for a decolonial scholar
and academic practicing a settlers’ version of decolonial pedagogy. For this reason, I engaged in storying as part of my interviews, listening to intellectual elders share their stories, to work toward meaning making and a theoretical framework for how non-indigenous scholars may practice decolonial pedagogy informed by indigenous values.

Rhetoric and Composition scholars can and should do story as methodology. However, since this method borrows from indigenous ways of knowing, doing this rightfully and respectfully requires that we pause and meta-cognitively consider how we approach this work, how may we have a right relationship with this type of methodology. Those of us who are non-indigenous must exercise caution. I argue that we may only do this work of storying as methodology, and practice it as decolonial work, if we appropriately and respectfully recognize its indigenous roots. Failure to do so, I would argue, is cultural appropriation.² If we are able to do this, to recognize and honor its roots, only then, coupled with a thorough understanding that recognizes storying as methodology as embodiment, as performed and lived out cultural philosophy, as an activist stance against colonialism, can we conceive of story as methodology as decolonial work. Otherwise, we do not truly understand storying as methodology and we have no right to assert it to be decolonial work.

We may turn to Dr. Pauline Baird’s work to understand a culturally appropriate way of approaching story. In her dissertation she illustrates her understanding of how stories have a great sense of purpose in forming rhetorical knowledge in Buxtonian culture. She astutely points out that when certain stories are eliminated that it conveys the message that certain peoples’ histories do not matter. She draws from these personal experiences and scholarly inquiry to drive

² Marsha Johnson extends the definition of cultural appropriation beyond “adaptation of a culture that is not your own.” She further explains that there is also a deeper understanding that “refers to a particular power dynamic in which members of dominant culture take elements from a culture of people who have been systematically oppressed by the dominant group.”
forward her own research on the stories of Buxtonian women. We can learn from Baird’s
doctoral work and translate this belief in shaping how we approach stories in the discipline, in
our own writing and in our own teaching. If we communicate to our students, through our actions
and our teaching, that stories do not matter, or that their stories do not matter, then we de-
legitimize their knowledges and embodied experiences. Failing to do so does not allow for
acceptance of all options of rhetorics nor does it embrace cultural rhetorics. Dr. Baird sums it up
well when she notes the overall importance of stories to rhetorics: “story-telling practice marks
the process of making knowledge which highlights important relational actions that map our
interconnected relations as non-western. These stories collapse time” (5). Consequently, if we
are serious about doing using storying as methodology as decolonial work, esteeming non-
western ways of knowing, then we simply must work with stories and approach them as
knowledge and theory.

Similarly, Dr. Andrea Riley-Mukavetz in her extensive research on American Indian
women, also understands the importance of stories as lived experiences and as instrumental in
the making of theories and recognizing of cultural knowledges. In her piece published in
Enculturation, entitled, “On Working from or With Anger: or How I Learned to Listen to My
Relatives and Practice All Our Relations” Riley-Mukavetz explains that “I’m learning how to be
a good relative…I don’t know if I will ever figure it out but I think it has to do with the practice
of carrying stories.” She further explains that “I’m set on understanding who and what has come
before me and listening to the stories and teachings they have left to be learned from in service of
the future—of survival. I believe this is key to cultural rhetorics practice, especially for those
invested in the ongoing effort to delink from the colonial matrix of power.” Riley-Mukavetz
draws from indigenous ways of knowing, specifically when she explains in this piece that “to
carry stories is a way to practice relational accountability.” Although she does not label these efforts as decolonial work in her piece, in referencing the efforts of delinking from the colonial matrix of power, she clearly highlights a similar emphasis and echoes a premise of Walter Mignolo’s. Moreover, she obviously highly reveres stories and their connection to histories, survival, teachings, and rhetorics. Both Riley-Mukavetz and Baird understand the fundamental importance of working with stories as research and cultural rhetorics, suggesting that to do so is also to revere non-western ways of knowing in the academy and in scholarship. I would extend their arguments to contend that a way of doing decolonial work, as non-indigenous scholars in the Rhetoric and Composition field, requires that we shift the way that we think about stories as less serious forms of argument, and instead revere stories, while appropriately acknowledging their original roots in indigenous epistemologies. In this way, story as methodology may act as an important element of a settlers’ decolonial pedagogy, which I will discuss at length in chapter three.

Honoring and Introducing the Participants

The six participants who storied with me are brilliant scholars and educators that yield from a variety of scholarly, educational and personal backgrounds. All were introduced to me through my chair, Dr. Andrea Riley-Mukavetz and her professional networks. The participants have personal, educational and scholarly connections to Indigenous Rhetorics caucuses, American Indian communities and Cultural Rhetorics groups. All have completed graduate coursework, taught at the college level, and been active in scholarly communities. For their stories, time, and insights that they gave, I am humbled and grateful. I consider all six to be

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3 Mignolo defines delinking as “a de-colonial epistemic shift leading to other-universality” (p. 453) and to be “the reverse of ‘assimilation’: to assimilate means that you do not belong yet to what you are assimilating” (p. 462).

4 Dr. Walter Mignolo in his piece, “Epistemic Disobedience” defines the colonial matrix of power to be “a complex conceptual structure that guided actions in the domain of economy (exploitation of labor and appropriation of land/natural resources), authority (government, military forces), gender/sexuality and knowledge/subjectivity” (p. 178).
mentors and intellectual elders, learning much from their stories and insights, and continuing to do so. Although previously written in the acknowledgments, in the spirit of indigenous research methodologies, I restate it here: the goal of this research is to be accountable to these individuals and their stories. One of my aims in doing this decolonial work, as a non-indigenous person, is to revere and esteem indigenous efforts, to learn from them and their emphasis on the need to engage in right and respectful relationships. I share their stories all throughout this dissertation to explain how their insights may act as models and options, hopefully providing a theoretical framework for settlers’ decolonial pedagogies.

To be transparent, I need to clarify that I intentionally sought the wisdom and stories of three participants who self-identify as non-indigenous and three of whom self-identify as indigenous. The decision to involve three non-indigenous scholars was deliberate, as their embodied identity as white persons more closely resembles my own and, consequently, their questions about navigating through understanding colonialism, their relationships to decoloniality, and their questions regarding appropriate use of indigenous scholarship, epistemologies and research methods, may also more closely resemble my own. However, requesting the participation of three self-identified indigenous persons was, arguably, equally imperative to this research. Their wisdom, experiences and perspectives on cultural rhetorics, cultural appropriation, meanings and practices allyship, uses and misuses of indigenous epistemologies, are important insights into decoloniality, especially for me, as a white person. I would argue, by extension, their insights are also vital for settlers, unable to truly understand the embodied experiences of indigenous persons, and yet not wanting to ignore them, but instead, to actively listen and consider them.
The three Ph.D. holders include: Dr. Lisa King, Dr. Gail MacKay and Dr. Christina Cedillo. Dr. Lisa King is an Assistant Professor at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. She teaches courses on Writing and Cultural Rhetorics. Her scholarly interests involve contemporary Native American rhetorics and indigenous rhetorics and often center on cross-cultural sites, such as indigenous museums and centers. Dr. King self-identifies as having mixed lineage; both her European and Delawarean roots inform her heritage. Next, Dr. Gail MacKay recently earned her doctorate from the University of Saskatchewan. She is now employed as an Assistant Professor of Curriculum Studies. She was born and raised in Canada and self-identifies as mixed blood. Her research focuses on indigenous rhetorics and cultural studies within education curriculums. Dr. Christina Cedillo teaches at the University of Houston, Clear Lake. She teaches basic and advanced composition classes as well as rhetorical theory courses. Dr. Cedillo earned her doctorate at Texas A & M University and her research centers on areas of race and genders, embodied rhetorics and rhetorics of embodiment as well as inclusive and empowering pedagogies. Dr. Cedillo self-identifies as Latina ethnically but indigenous racially. She explains that she identifies as Chicana to claim her indigenous roots.

The three other participants include: Sundy Watanabe, Phil Bratta, and Ezekiel Choffel, all doctoral candidates or Ph.D. students. Sundy Watanabe is a doctoral candidate who teaches at the University of Utah. She works with indigenous research methods and draws from indigenous scholarship to inform her own research and teaching methods and curriculums. Sundy does not identify as an indigenous person herself, but in marrying a person of color, a person of Japanese descent, she explained that her realities shifted for both her and her children. Phil Bratta, is a doctoral candidate at Michigan State University and self-identifies as a white, heterosexual male, and a non-indigenous person. His research focuses on embodiment and visual-digital rhetorics.
He often examines “both the digital and the non-digital rhetorical connections between broad cultural movements and embodied practices within spaces and places.” Lastly, doctoral student, Ezekiel Choffel, is a third-year at Syracuse University in the Writing Studies, Rhetoric and Composition program. Choffel self-identifies as a white male but explores how he may use his white privilege as a point of investigation and dialogue, considering whiteness in his teaching and scholarship. He comes from a scholarly background in rhetoric and composition and American Indian rhetorics. In this teaching and scholarship, Choffel strives to listen to stories, form relationships and avoid cultural appropriation of indigenous methods.

Storying Interviews, Constellating and Mapping Themes

Each of the interviews with these participants was conducted via Skype or google video chat. The interviews ranged from 1 hour to 2 hours in duration. The interviews were audio recorded. After each recording, I transcribed each of their storied interviews. The written copies of transcriptions were then sent to each of the individual participants, requesting their review and inviting their participation in editing or revising. I did this intentionally to ensure that their stories represented their accounts as they wished. Of the six participants, five made minor edits and corrected certain misspellings, provided additional information, and returned their revisions. After the participants returned the transcriptions to me via email, with their permission, I made each storied transcription available to all participants. I did this, specifically, to maintain transparency and to be accountable to all participants in the community. This way, all participants could read and reflect on each other’s stories, gain additional insights, build their own theories and practices, etc. I sought for these stories, knowledges, and theories to be openly accessible to all. Again, this was another intentional decision to learn from indigenous methods, specifically done to maintain respectful relationships with the participants, to treat their stories
with reverence, to see them as the theory-building, transformational units they are, and to acknowledge my own limitations in understanding and interpreting their stories. I also wanted to reinforce the notion that the participants are the holders and keepers of their knowledges; if I were to misunderstand or misinterpret their insights, then I encouraged their adjustments and would welcome their modifications to the transcriptions and, later, to this dissertation at large.\(^5\)

The above represents one of several carefully made decisions to shape and construct the parameters of this dissertation. I actively endeavor to engage in decolonial research, using decolonizing methodologies, which I understand to be instrumental in learning from and adapting to indigenous methods and epistemologies. After listening to the stories of the participants and constellating themes from their interviews, it became obvious that, even as educators and academics, we remain unable to escape our own subjectivities and embodied experiences. Heeding the words of indigenous scholar, Shawn Wilson, I aim to “recognize my own subjectivity and work with it” in order to “promote real change” (“Decolonizing Methodologies: Can Relational Research Be a Basis for Renewed Relationships.”)

This dissertation strives to theorize a settlers’ approach to doing decolonial research methodologies and to explore decolonial pedagogies used within Composition and Rhetoric classrooms through the constellations of emergent themes of the stories, using story as methodology. However, requiring additional guidance when mapping motifs from the stories, I elaborate on the methods that I used from situational analysis to map out data from the stories, outlining how themes emerged. I adapted Adele Clarke’s Situational Analysis (SA) approach, an expansion and development is of Grounded Theory (GT). The text, *Situational Analysis in*

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\(^5\) This was an intentional decision, made to honor indigenous epistemologies and research methodologies, that value relationships and prioritize reciprocity and accountability to the participants and the community at large. In other words, even though I acted as researcher or gatherer of stories, my intention was for the interviewees’ stories and wisdom to further the collective, shared knowledge, rather than regard it as guarded knowledge or claiming it as my own data (Wilson; Wilson & Mulrennan; Powell; Riley Mukavetz; Baird; MacKay).
*Practice: Mapping Research with Grounded Theory*, discusses the approach(es), which Clarke, Friese and Washburn contend are interpretive paradigms, ones that build on meaning, understanding and context (p. 37). Clarke, in her chapter, “From Grounded Theory to Situational Analysis,” explains that “SA both relies on and radically extents GT by pushing that method” by “taking into account other theoretical and methodological developments since the introduction of GT in 1967” (p.77). Further, SA recognizes GT, and acknowledges it to be its base and understands GT’s original aim: the need to deconstruct and challenge binaries that researchers and scholars who write about theories of methods and methodologies attempt to construct.

Rather, there are many coinciding factors that influence relationships, conversations, constructions of knowledges and interpretations of said knowledges during qualitative research (Genat, 153) that is acknowledged through this method. SA, however, differs in that, while this approach borrows from sociological theory, it also understands that structural processes inform research, rather than approaching it as structure and process exist separately. SA seeks to understand, or at least consider, how these two elements may influence the research process.

This approach also actively rejects EBR (evidence-based research) movements, which too often function as colonialist, when they “marginalize innovative interpretive approaches” (p. 40).

Additionally, SA informs the methods in organizing the constellated story themes. This approach understands GT’s good intentions to understand that structural processes inform research. However, at the same time, SA scholars also comprehend that GT approaches and methods are often laid out in linear, categorical and hierarchical ways, very colonialist in nature. SA scholars Clarke, Friese and Washburn also account for the “relations of power between researchers and those being studied have historically been particularly fraught in colonial and post-colonial sites with indigenous populations” (p. 43). They note how indigenous scholars are
now, finally, being recognized as scholars and that their efforts may undertake “research
differently, including understanding and legitimating radically different local epistemologies and
ontologies” that seek to “enhance epistemic diversity in research worlds and elsewhere” (p. 43).

Reflecting on this, the editors note that SA attempts to embrace other ways of knowing, or
epistemological diversity (p. 43) as an act as “a broader move to social justice” (p. 43). This
move of theirs, I would argue, is very decolonial in intent, seeing research as active resistance to
power structures in place and to as having the ability to move toward social development.

Interestingly, also in line with indigenous methods, one of the ways that SA differs from GT and
other methods is that they also consider non-human elements as intricate and elaborate and
worthy as subjects of research. Here, SA aligns with the relationality of people, positioned within
land, family, and relationships, while also presenting an inter-webbed understanding of how
knowledge(s) are interconnected, intertwined, interrelated, much like indigenous tenets and
common ways that indigenous epistemologies understand the world. In this way, SA, like GT,
represents a qualitative approach, but differs in that this one recognizes indigenous scholars, and
notes that relationality has become a concern and important point distinguishing itself from
grounded theory (Clarke 89). These are vitally important cultural differences, ones that help to
structure and shape the ways of approaching meaning-making, knowledges and research, all also
are ones I strive to enact in engaging in decolonial research, informed by indigenous
methodologies. Furthermore, I specifically embrace this type of Grounded Theory, of Situational
Analysis, because of its emphasis toward hybridization of approaches as it recognizes
“continuing variation as generative,” which is very decolonial in aim and effort (50). I also draw
from Clarke because of her emphasis in recognizing Foucauldian ideas of moving beyond the
knower, de-centering the subject to instead embrace the social construction of meaning. As I
write this and reflect on the importance of dialoguing, I hear the words of participant, Sundy Watanabe, who stated that, despite the titles of interview and data that formed our talk, when we began our skype interview, she reminded me that what we were really doing was holding a conversation, a dialogue, and developing meaning-making from our shared interactions and communications.

In the following section, Chapter Two, I will elaborate on premises of decoloniality, from Dr. Walter Mignolo and interweave stories and themes from the participants, working to provide a lexicon for discussing ongoing colonialism and efforts resist that, and to engage in decolonial ways of thinking and being and doing.
CHAPTER II DELVING INTO DECOLONIALITY AND DECOLONIAL THEORY,
PROVIDING A LEXICON FOR NON-INDIGENOUS EDUCATORS

How would you like to approach this, in a way that allows people to listen and allows them to practice both identification and disassociation, right?

~Dr. Christina Cedillo

When Dr. Christina Cedillo asked me this question during the interview, she invited me to consider how I would approach the array of readers of this dissertation and how I hoped to connect with them. She also highlighted the innate human need, that we all have, to identify and associate with others. True, while we ought to always listen for differences and seek to learn from one another, many people still require points of similarities to relate, a common ground, as a necessary foundation to building relationships. In other words, humankind needs to identify similarities amongst ourselves, the humanity and likeness in one another, while simultaneously, to allow for and respect unique, individual experiences and embodied differences. This balance is necessary because only then will growth and development happen, in individuals, helping people to establish respectful relationships. I would argue that the above is also key to engaging in research interests across disciplines and that this balance constitutes the hallmark of any solid education. More specifically, I see it as a necessary part to understanding the goal of decoloniality, important also to decolonial pedagogies.

I highlight Christina’s point here for two reasons. The first is because keeping this balance in mind, as we venture forward together, is crucial. Though a seeming contradiction and an apparent paradox, the whole idea of approaching decolonial theory, and this dissertation, rides on this premise: similarities and differences in interpretations of decoloniality and decolonial
pedagogical approaches must be allowed to co-exist if settlers and non-indigenous individuals may engage in decolonial service work, research and pedagogies. This is worth emphasis because I began this research seeking to understand if I, as a non-indigenous person, had any rightful place within decolonial pedagogy and decolonial research, especially when its methodologies were informed by indigenous epistemologies. I now understand that I do have a seat at a table but more important than that is the need for me to reframe this question. Learning from participant Phil Bratta, whom I now identify as a mentor and fellow companion in negotiating decoloniality, states:

   It’s only recently, I guess, where I really started to think and I mean like recently, like in the last 3-4 years, that to do decolonial work you don’t have to be a colonized person, I mean, as Mignolo and others kind of say, we’re all embedded in colonialism. So, to decolonize doesn’t mean that you have to be a colonized subject, right? There are ways that you could decolonize by still being in a body that represents a certain idea as well as often times has a lot of power.”

I take a lesson from Phil’s insight and reposition my focus: rather than questioning if I have a role and a duty to engage in decolonial pedagogy, I shift my research question to how a settlers’ approach may, or arguably even should, differ from that of indigenous mentors and scholars as well as others from other people of color and other marginalized groups. Instead of questioning my right to occupy a seat at the table, I instead ask how settlers can engage in a decolonial approach that is cognizant of indigenous-settler relations, while striving to examine and dismantle the ways that institutions of higher education are set up to sustain colonial imperatives (Powell, as qtd. in Davis). I further consider how settlers may join indigenous peoples in global efforts to delink from a colonial matrix of power, imagining and working toward a decolonial
future, and how such efforts may be translated to pedagogical approaches within a composition classroom.

Essentially, though messy and vastly expansive, scholarly conversations surrounding decoloniality and decolonization must take place in the discipline of Rhetoric and Composition. Decoloniality, and how we approach and understand these theories and theoretical terms, impact our epistemologies, our discipline, our pedagogical practices, ourselves, and by extension, our relationships with students. Following suit with the tradition of working class studies, critical theory, and feminist studies, decolonial theory is deeply aware that the classroom is not a safe or apolitical space. Rather, decolonial scholars are deeply aware that all of us are complicit in colonial rhetorical practices, and as such, must be self-reflexive of what we value as educators and how these values have deep connections to a euro-centered knowledge, specifically within Rhetoric and Composition curriculums.

As we move forward, please be aware, there will be an array of possibilities; options may even seem overwhelming and dizzying, but, I implore us: let us pause and sit with the options and consider them as they will address concerns in the variations of decolonial understanding and decolonial pedagogical approaches. When dealing with matters as vast, as varied and as complicated as colonialism(s) and then in the efforts to decolonialize them, the temptation becomes to simplify, to close off options, to accept cookie-cutter formulas that work for all, but failure to consider varieties is inherently problematic. I would even contend that attempting to

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7 I highlight this here to draw forth my understanding that many readers may be trying to absorb a quick and easy “how to do decolonial pedagogy,” and I contend that such efforts, even if well-intentioned, are mis-guided and will fall short of the genuine power of decoloniality. Even decolonial theorist, Dr. Walter Mignolo entitled part of his book, *Global Futures and Decolonial Options.*
present a “how-to-do decolonial pedagogy” is to, in effect, re-enact colonialism, as it seeks to provide some dominant narrative and general paradigm, one that can speak for all, as though such an endeavor is possible or useful, a lesson learned from participants, echoing decolonial theorist, Dr. Walter Mignolo (“Epistemic Disobedience, Independent Thought and Decolonial Freedom” p. 160). As Phil Bratta reminds us: “[To] just teach, ‘this is how to do things, to decolonize’, is problematic and nearly impossible… this is where context always matters, right?” I would extend Phil’s argument and contend that emphasizing contextualization and resisting universalisms is key in approaching decoloniality, whether through scholarship, research, or teaching. I will expand on this detail later as I move into detailing a few key terms of decolonial theory to guide us forward in understanding decoloniality.

Understandably, decoloniality is a new term for many of us settlers, or non-indigenous persons, in the discipline of Rhetoric and Composition and it may elicit questions. Therefore, perhaps, let us consider a connection in the interpretations of decoloniality as similar to those who study rhetoric: differing scholars and experts hold distinct approaches to understanding the word, the paradigm, the sub-discipline. However, despite these dissimilarities, there are still commonalities. In this chapter I aim to both articulate points of distinctions, due to embodied differences, and points of similarities in varying perspectives of decoloniality and what they may do. Using stories from interviews with teacher-scholars in Rhetoric and Composition, who have experience enacting decolonial pedagogy and decoloniality as a framework for their research, I will articulate both. As Phil Bratta, points out “a decolonial pedagogy brings to the forefront difference and voice and embodiment.” Not that there shouldn’t be solidarity but also there is

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8 Phil’s and Ezekiel’s stories again and again turn attention to the importance of body differences and embodiment in approaching these decoloniality; therefore, as a fellow non-indigenous person, also struggling to negotiate appropriate understanding and application of decoloniality and how to apply it to pedagogies, I frequently turn to the non-indigenous participants within this chapter.
difference and coming to at least first recognizing the difference opens up greater possibility for valuing that difference instead of not fetishizing it or not erasing it.” Through looking at both commonalities and similarities, we will see that rhetoric, like decoloniality, is not a neutral term, but on the contrary, a very politically charged one and one that must allow for similarities and differences, especially through embodied differences.\textsuperscript{9} Interesting and somewhat paradoxically, despite the ubiquity of the use of the term decolonial or decoloniality, few authors make the effort to clarify its parameters and/or their understanding of it, detailing which theorists they draw from, which concepts they refer to, and how their ideas regarding decoloniality fit into their subject-specific context. Indeed, such an occurrence is not a rarity in academia, as many common misunderstandings also occur with the overuse of critical thinking as a paradigm in academic scholarship and textbooks (Donelson-Sims, 2013).

The problem, however, when not providing definitions and parameters is then too often dominant groups determine mainstream narratives and are permitted to speak for all. Phil Bratta succinctly points out that “colonialism and colonial paradigms look for empirical universalisms and binary narratives.” When we allow for this to happen, even within academia, we embrace, or at least allow for, binaries to emerge. This is an important effect of colonialism and crucial to understanding how to then engage in decolonial efforts. More specifically, in addition to binaries, participants note how colonialism seeks to reinstate hierarchies and to eliminate differences from discussion. Phil explains that: “when narratives, relations, ideas, and bodies start to be enacted in binary ways, then that’s often times, not always, that’s a sign of colonialism being enacted.” He later adds that a “colonialism paradigm is just based on binary narratives, and on simple two-entity hierarchies, right? I mean in most binaries there’s a hierarchy.” He explains

\textsuperscript{9} In the section that follows, I will discuss more, at length, about bodies of rhetoric and embodied rhetorics, which I understand as key to understanding decoloniality.
that “if you can break that binary narrative, I think, that that’s a good start, to start to decolonize
the classroom, decolonize pedagogy.” I highlight this to help settlers to understand and consider
the difference in their use of this term from that of indigenous people who seek to decolonize
their lives, their scholarship, their classrooms, as they have vastly different needs, due to
embodied differences, from those of settlers. This is largely why decoloniality presents options
and paradigms, rather than definitions and categories. I seek here to refer settlers to an important
argument, though one that does not claim originality. As Mignolo informs us, “‘originality’ is
one of those basic expectations of modern control with subjectivity),” but instead, I aim to,
“make a contribution to growing processes of decoloniality around the world” (“Epistemic
Disobedience, Independent Thought and Decolonial Freedom” p. 4). In resisting claims of
originality, it is important to emphasize that similar arguments have already been made long ago
by scholars of color, Native scholars, and cultural rhetoricians. We may take a lesson from them
that key to understanding cultural knowledge is to look outside of academics and the academy to
local cultures and communities, first learning from them, and understanding that these are
important forms of rhetorical knowledge and meaning making practices (Powell; Riley
Mukavetz; Monberg, Baird).

This re-focusing and shifting, to a new epistemological lens, of not claiming new
knowledge but to looking toward cultural knowledges and rhetorics is another common thread
among participants’ stories. Dr. Christina Cedillo, like Phil, notes how colonialist efforts strive to
instill and to uphold binaries. She notes these binaries, but instead focuses on choosing not to
participate, instead arguing: “I don’t want to get it because my epistemology is different. Like,
why would I want to create binaries when we can create reconciliation of things—well, not
reconciliation because I think that’s a word that tends to obscure the fact of power dynamics, but
recognition, right, of mutual recognition.” She sees decolonial studies, like disability studies, as two areas that “wrestle with each other in some really productive ways” and that both can be “really beneficial, to disrupting the status quo and to see that there are potentials for other ways of seeing the world.” She further explains that “decoloniality tends to really, really understand the notion of difference rather than hierarchy.” A common thread in the participants’ stories is that they strive to understand association and connotations, common byproducts of colonialism. They work instead of instilling and upholding binaries, dichotomies, hierarchies, to rather challenge the status quo and allow for differences to establish mutual recognition among individuals and groups of people, as people, as scholars, researchers and educators. Though these two participants, Phil and Christina, share this understanding--that binaries and hierarchies are tied to colonialism and should be avoided--their points of entry into conversations surrounding decoloniality vastly differ, which is understandable, largely due to their differing lived, embodied experiences. Therefore, again, it is important to illustrate that these varieties must be allowed to exist. I delineate this as a goal for chapter two, taking a lesson from Jacqueline Jones Royster who challenges us in the discipline: “What might happen if we treated differences in subject position as critical pieces of the whole, vital to thorough understanding, and central to both problem finding and problem-solving? This society has not, as yet, really allowed that privilege in a substantial way” (p. 34). In order to make this happen, I must consider lived, embodied experiences and embodied rhetorics as fundamental to forming understandings of decoloniality and influencing decolonial pedagogical approaches.

In this chapter, in seeking to guide us to understanding decoloniality and consequently, decolonial pedagogies, I will draw from the stories of the participants and cultural rhetorics frameworks to discuss why non-indigenous scholars and teachers must investigate their own
meaning-making and research practices, before and during decolonial efforts (Powell, “2012 CCCC Chair’s Address: Stories Take Place: A Performance in One Act”). I aim to help readers understand a few key concepts of decolonial theory, what a decolonial pedagogical practice for a non-indigenous educator scholar may look like, and considerations that must take place for that individual, namely, how their role may or must differ from that of an indigenous scholar and teacher.10 Now, that established, please note that there is far more richness and insight in the participants’ stories than I could possibly present or analyze here. I also understand that much about their stories remain untold: consequently, these decolonial pedagogical theories remain incomplete, not a whole picture. Still, I come forward with a good heart, holding myself accountable to these participants, my mentors, and to members of the scholarly community at large. I ask that you remain cognizant that even though there is still, always, more work to be done and more stories, voices and theories than I can represent, still, there are decolonial pedagogical theories from their stories and I seek to honor them. I honor the storytellers’ bodies, their knowledges and experiences, and I endeavor to learn from them. I invite the stories, “the data” if you will, to emerge and to speak through me, for I reiterate: this is how theories are made. I invite you to do the same. Perhaps readers may find my authorial efforts repetitive, but I hope you notice, dear readers, I privilege a reflective and self-reflective style that make visible how I negotiate, question, and consider my role, my relationships with the material, and the participants. These moves are entirely intentional and reflective of decolonial theory and story as methodology as well as part of my efforts to learn from indigenous researchers, who value coming to their work with a good heart. Operating under universal narratives, including accepting definitions as absolute truths, limits us, and is one way that we further participate in

10 Chapter Four will discuss this point more at length, exploring how embodied differences are critical when seeking to understand decolonial options.
paracolonialist practices. Therefore, I engage in this participatory and reflexive writing, through a style that both honors the participants and strives to practice a culturally appropriate decolonial methodology, through writing and research practices, and later, as a non-indigenous, decolonial pedagoge.

Thus far, I've only gestured toward the relationship between colonialism, decoloniality, and institutions of higher education. In the forthcoming section, I provide a general overview of decolonial pedagogy and decoloniality. Using the stories from the participants, and other scholars, I attempt to constellate a multi-vocal definition of decoloniality and decolonial pedagogy that makes visible its nuances, complexities, and how subject position and relationships impact how one practices and theorizes decoloniality. To make this more intentional, I outline a few key terms related to decolonial theory: paracolonial; colonial matrix of power; epistemic shift and epistemic disobedience, zero-point epistemology, and decolonial thinking and doing. By directing our attention to these concepts, largely drawn from Dr. Walter Mignolo, I hope to provide a lexicon for settlers, so we may better approach discussions surrounding colonialism(s).

**Key Concepts and Terms of Decolonial Theory**

Drawing from Dr. Malea Powell in her CCC piece, “Rhetorics of Survivance: How American Indians Use Writing:” “**Paracolonial** is a term used to define a political, cultural or economic domination by a colonial group that reaches beyond colonization. Paracolonial is a state in which the provincial or the local is reduced or silenced, and the history of the state is inverted or rewritten by the colonial power” (399). Here, Dr. Powell also quotes Gerald Vizenor, considered to be the coiner of the term. Paracolonial may indeed be elusive and its practices vast and expensive. However, at the same time, the term also strives to highlight how certain cultures,
knowledges and epistemologies are valued over or at the expense of others. This point, significant to a cultural rhetorics approach, is also key to uncovering how colonialism continues, showing it not simply as a phenomenon relegated to the past. In that way this term can begin our lexicon for pedagogues and scholars who wish to facilitate discussions of the ways that colonialisit practices, or paracolonialism, continue to prevail. Therefore, key to understanding decoloniality, ourselves, and so we can hope to facilitate this understanding to our students, is a constant reflexivity, a reflection, on the ways that we all reside in a paracolonial space and to what degrees we are benefited and harmed from these paracolonial practices. Therefore, throughout this dissertation, I specifically encourage use of the term paracolonial over post-colonial. This is intentional: with post-colonial, using “post,” suggests that we live in a society that is finished with colonialism or exists after colonialism. Rather, paracolonial allows us to instead reframe the discussion, acknowledging that colonialist practices continue to take place. Ezekiel Choffel also reflects on paracolonialism when he notes, “I am not ever at a point of stable, non-colonization.” He adds that “colonization is still happening,” echoing the point made in the previous chapter, pointing towards settler colonialism, with the knowledge that all American universities are complicit in settler colonialism, an argument frequently made by Native American scholars and indigenous rhetoricians (Powell; Simpson). Phil Bratta echoes this, the idea that paracolonial practices still occur; he then presents the option that we have as educators: “We could perpetuate [that] colonialism or we could decolonize.” For Bratta and Choffel, as non-indigenous educators, to engage directly with these questions regarding settler colonialism, is crucial. They both shape their teaching approaches around these questions, demonstrating to us and to their students that we have a choice in how we approach our relationships with colonialism in institutions of higher learning: we may question unchallenged
colonialism, attempting to foster and build appropriate, respectful indigenous settler-relations, or not. I would argue that that effort and participation is indispensable to theorizing a settlers’ understanding of decoloniality, which again, is the goal and key first to then moving onto discussing settlers’ decolonial pedagogies.

Although the interviews were stories and open-ended, in each interview, I did request that the participants describe to me their understandings of decoloniality. Using their stories, insights and theories regarding decoloniality, I develop a larger framework, framing how settlers and non-indigenous folks may understand and begin to appropriately apply decolonial efforts in scholarship, research, and classrooms. Indeed, this endeavor is challenging, as participants frequently expressed hesitancy and reservations when asked if they would label their own approach as decolonial or classify themselves as a decolonial teacher. Dr. Christina Cedillo was the only participant to self-identify herself as a decolonial pedagogy or to name her practices as decolonial. Though the reservations and hesitancies are understandable, I still contend that these educators may be understood as engaging in decolonial teaching and that there is benefit to using these labels, which I will discuss at length below.

*Decolonization: Potential Meanings and Misunderstandings Through Metaphor*

In applying a universal understanding of decoloniality, it may result in attempts to metaphorize the term. A term, such as colonialism, carries such significant weight and implications, spanning centuries and cultures and millions of people, historically and presently, that using decolonization flippantly is tempting. Still, scholars of color contend that represents a poor choice, inappropriate and disrespectful to individuals and groups more affected by colonialism. In “Decolonization is Not a Metaphor,” authors Tuck and Wang note how frequently this metaphorization happens, arguing that many writers use the term decolonial or the
verb to decolonize to indicate progressive or worthy social justice endeavors. While they see efforts as indeed well-meaning, these authors argue that decoloniality should not be allowed to exist simply as metaphor, as a blanket or umbrella statement. They contend that when any author appropriates this term, decolonial, to fit their own agendas and do not clarify its meaning, it blatantly ignores indigenous concerns. Dr. Christina Cedillo, references Tuck and Yang, and cautions readers against using decolonial as a metaphor, as too often the “absorption, adoption, and transposing of decolonization [becomes] yet another form of settler appropriation” (2012, p. 3). She contends that “It is necessary to stress this point because there can be no mistaking what decolonization entails: recognizing the sovereignty and land rights of Indigenous peoples, and the rights to language and culture that have been forcibly, violently suppressed.” Consequently, decolonization must center “Native epistemologies and traditions, as well as the culturally specific rhetorics that transmit knowledges necessary to everyday life and liberation” (Cedillo). This point is important: decoloniality may be used as a form of cultural appropriation, specifically, settler appropriation, and ought to be considered and actively resisted when constructing a settlers’ theory of decoloniality and decolonial pedagogy.

Through their stories, the participants show how their lived, embodied experiences, educational backgrounds and subject positions again and again influence how they understand decoloniality. Dr. Gail MacKay, Assistant Professor at the University of Saskatchewan, draws from her ethnicity, as well as from her education in Indigenous studies and scholarship on indigenous methodologies. When asked to define decolonial, she immediately referenced indigenous people’s sovereignty, explaining that “it’s indigenous people striving to recover their self-determination, their sovereignty.” Similarly, Lecturer Sundy Watanabe, whose teaching centers indigenous pedagogies and indigenous research methodologies, claims she would not
describe her pedagogical approach as decolonial but as more land-based and place-based. Her own educational and personal background and lived, embodied experiences mold how she understands decoloniality, seeing it as “trying to establish definitions of some way of thinking about the terms of sovereignty and survivance, right?” Though she does acknowledge that “so many people are using them in so many different ways.” She explains that “For me, the idea of settler colonialism really has to do with context, right? And trying to bring the history that’s been erased back to the forefront and I guess that’s partly what I mean by indigenizing the academic space.” Sundy’s orientation to understanding colonialism and decolonialism is understandable, given her position, as a white, non-indigenous educator and instructor at the University of Utah, working with many indigenous students and striving to prioritize indigenous ways of knowing throughout her curriculums. Here, we see how, again, embodied experiences influence understandings and applications of decoloniality.

Also, likely because of this important distinction of embodiment and lived experiences, participant Ezekiel Choffel, a self-identified white male, notes his limitations in truly understanding the situation of indigenous peoples, and the potential contributions of his own subject position, by stating that:

Some of those ways that we see particularly, in indigenous communities, the means of sovereignty and the abilities to delink, some of the things aren’t like a possibility for me, right? And I don’t think they necessarily should be, right? Because, like, that’s not my culture, that’s not my lineage, that’s not my history, so I have to direct…I have to be willing to directly engage my history and my people’s history and try to change the future, you know?
Here, through Choffel’s quote, I hope to make visible that how non-indigenous peoples conceive of indigeneity, sovereignty and decolonization vastly differs from those of indigenous peoples. In acknowledging this, Choffel demonstrates a humility here, stating his inability to truly conceive of sovereignty, as an non-indigenous person, but at the same time, he exemplifies a commitment to holding these conversations surrounding colonialism from his own positionality and considering the point of view from indigenous persons. Consequently, I would contend that our ways, as settlers, of making sense of decolonization, must involve a different conversation, a self-reflexivity of how we have different relationships with paracolonialism and occupy a different space within the colonial matrix of power.

Appropriating and claiming of a term, is not one relegated to decoloniality. In drawing from her expertise in American Indian studies and indigenous rhetorics, Dr. Lisa King, also notes the malleability of decoloniality. From her work she makes an interesting parallel from decolonial to the term, sovereignty, an important term used to describe the situations of indigenous peoples and frequently used in American Indian scholarship and literature. Dr. King explains that, in indigenous work, “sovereignty” has become “this really malleable term that, depending on the situation and who needs it, at what point, for what purpose, it takes on so many nuances…it’s a flexible term.” She references American Indian scholar, Joanne Barker\textsuperscript{11} who notes that sovereignty “becomes something different, depending on who needs it, for what purpose, and what circumstance.” Lisa connects this malleability to the term, decoloniality: “I’m starting to think decolonial is the same way.” She reflects on how decolonization efforts have umbrellaed and expanded, ballooning outward until now: “we want to decolonize the mind, we

\textsuperscript{11} Barker, Joanne, takes up this discussion in the introduction of her recently published work, \textit{Critically Sovereign: Indigenous Gender, Sexuality and Feminist Studies}. 
want to decolonize our spaces, our food, our diet, our houses, our everything, our way of life. And to that I say: good luck.”

At this point during the interview, I laugh. She smiles and chuckles at the same time. But she also admits that she is only partly joking. Here, Dr. King shows us two things. First, she demonstrates that she understands that, like many academic terms, decolonial is often borrowed by academics, and appropriated for their own purposes. Second, she suggests that to attempt to decolonize every area of life, while perhaps an admirable endeavor, is to try to bring about some utopia. In short, it is an uphill and losing battle, and if we endeavor to do that, we will find ourselves defeated before even beginning. In seeking then to understand where to draw from, we may take lessons from cultural rhetoricians and scholars of color, who frequently note that guidance is available from grassroots and local cultures; these efforts may help us, non-natives, to understand decoloniality and may frame approaches to understanding settlers’ decolonial pedagogies.

We may also look to Dr. Walter Mignolo to better understand this important act of resisting, of drawing awareness to the matrix, instrumental to doing decolonial work. He employs the term delinking, which urges us to break from and/or resist, colonial practices or efforts (Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options, p. xxvii). His call to delink, this worthy goal, as Lisa showed us, seems to elicit images of some entire break, a complete separation or disassociation from colonialism. To set forth that goal as the only way to do decolonial work or to profess that as the goal, may be to misunderstand the colonial matrix of power and its ubiquitous presence in our lives and how we may move forward in decolonizing. Furthermore, this misunderstanding seems to limit our lexicon, our efforts and our discussion, surrounding how we may converse about decolonial work. For that reason, settlers who wish to
hold class discussions surrounding decoloniality must understand that delinking does not represent a total break from paracolonialism and that this also must be conveyed to students.

Delinking is a slippery term, and I would argue one that may be considered a threshold concepts\textsuperscript{12} of decolonial theory. Many participants used it, clearly indicating a base understanding of it. At the same time, few defined it, or they used it in combination with other terms related to colonialism. Mignolo reveals delinking to be “the reverse of ‘assimilation’” because “to assimilate means that you do not belong yet to what you are assimilating” (“Delinking” 462). Rather, he urges readers to understand de-linking as “a de-colonial epistemic shift leading to other-universality, that is, to pluri-versality as a universal project” (“"DELINKING: The Rhetoric of modernity, the logic of coloniality and the grammar of de-coloniality” 453). Mignolo’s emphasis here is on a shift, an active resistance, but he does not indicate that delinking means a break or disconnection from (para)colonialism. That is an important distinction and common misunderstanding of delinking and one important for scholars, educators and teachers, alike, to understand.

Ezekiel also noted this need to delink; he outlines it as a worthy, though perhaps unrealistic or unlikely, goal for all of his students across all contexts and classes. He explains that: “I would love to be able to get students at the end to delink and to really kind of consider alternative ways of still doing the things that students love, to find ways to delink from a capitalist system. But that really depends on the student, that really depends on the group of students of whether or not in 15 weeks I can even get to be able to have that conversation.” Still, though perhaps lofty, he returns to the point when speaking on behalf of those who engage in decolonial theory: “We’re all working towards the same thing—to delink from the decolonial

\textsuperscript{12}As Elizabeth Wardle and Linda Adler-Kassner remind us, threshold concepts are ones that once acquired, shift our understandings of a premise or concept and become difficult to discuss them without using these terms.
matrix of power.” I want to draw attention to this goal that Ezekiel highlights here. To accomplish a true break or delink from the colonial matrix is not a plausible end goal; it is not feasible. However, when we bring this term into the classroom and initiate this conversation with our students, we do two things. First, we provide a lexicon and it allows us re-frame the discussion. Then, the emphasis becomes on empowering and enabling students to be reflective and reflexive of their relationships to the colonial matrix of power. Such efforts seem to be important to understanding delinking at large, and specifically, may help settlers to re-negotiate their goals and relationship to delinking.

Bratta also makes visible this point that we can’t ever truly delink, or break free, when he explains: “You can’t ever decolonize because that would suggest that you’re operating outside the colonial system. Most decolonialists aren’t suggesting that. They’re not taking any kind of decolonial practices that are transcendental practice. It’s very much working in the material conditions, but it’s delinking, right? So you think about, if you delink, you just separated from this other thing, it doesn’t necessarily mean that you’re outside of the system.” Understanding this point is crucial; otherwise, scholars and educators and students, may misunderstand delinking and may further question use of decolonial efforts, becoming disillusioned that such efforts are fruitless, since the goal may never be actualized.

Phil Bratta claims that while we may be unable to truly break free from this structure or system, that that is not the goal. The goal is not to break free from the system; indeed, many understand such efforts to be fighting a losing battle, even a utopic vision. However, acts of delinking, taking measures to notice, is what it means to delink and that is key. Scholars, thinkers, academics, but also educators, can guide their students in delinking, which is to raise awareness, conscious thought-processes about our own intergenerational complacency in
colonialism, as settlers. A persistent questioning of these happenings and how they shape our realities is the point. When we pause to take note of how and where westernization is considered inherently beneficial or obviously superior, as the only culture or the only knowledge or rhetoric, this represents an active part, and a first step in the process of delinking.

Participant Phil Bratta also considers the implications and complications of Tuck and Wang’s argument that decolonization is not a metaphor. While he understands their claim, he also believes: “I don’t think that you can ever escape metaphor. I think some metaphors get appropriated inappropriately and some don’t reflect well on the actual system or practices.” He brings forth a valid point: metaphors in language, in any capacity and about any subject, are difficult to avoid as they are inherently part of our language and meaning-making. I would concur with Bratta, and add, especially when discussing something as vast as colonialism, it becomes difficult to avoid metaphorization with parts of language that seek to illustrate a small part of a global issue. However, perhaps the balance or the key to cautiously using metaphors then becomes to consider embodied identity, checking your own advantages and privileges, monitoring your own intergenerational complicity in colonialism, before flippantly applying decolonial in scholarship or research, as seen from Ezekiel’s self-reflection. Later, Ezekiel would also expand on that when he stories through his own process of self-actualization, “I become okay…and it didn’t bother me that I’m a straight white dude talking about colonial history and colonized persons’ experience, even though it’s still very limited.” Phil shares his experience in cultivating his settlers’ decolonial pedagogy: He explains, “I really…I’m never going to actually get it,” but to be a “non-indigenous person who practices decolonial theory, I think, yeah, it has to happen. I don’t think you have to be a colonized other to practice decolonial theory, because you can still, even if your body represents something, push back against the colonial system and
colonial paradigms. It might be limited. It might be limited, sure.” Here Phil taught me an important lesson that we need to embrace our embodiment and our own subjectivity, even as settlers, when working with decoloniality.

Above Phil and Ezekiel remind us, as non-indigenous educators who seek to use decolonial approaches, understand decolonial theories and enact decolonial pedagogical practices: we must embrace our positions and bodies and identities. True, we need to see similarities; we are all embedded in colonialism, though our roles in intergenerational complicity differ. But this must not come at the expense for recognitions that conditions of how colonialism affects indigenous peoples and other people of color is vastly different than our own. Our bodies, knowledges, rhetorics, histories and epistemologies have never been devalued or de-legitimatized through paracolonialism and settler colonialism. Moreover, we also may see another important theme here emerging: both Phil and Ezekiel, learning from indigenous epistemologies, do not claim or own knowledge. On the contrary, their efforts seem to focus on recognizing limitations, listening and learning. Although perhaps somewhat counter-intuitive to academics and to western education, the aim is not to assume knowledge or power, or to patent new ways of knowing. Therefore, perhaps a settlers’ approach to decoloniality may also involve intentional discussions and a re-orientation to how we think about knowledge and power, ones that we hope to cultivate in our own pedagogical approaches, training our students to note this new relationship to knowledge, as well.

Decolonial Doing and Thinking

If the effort is not on claiming knowledge or title, then the focus must shift to understanding the primary focus of decoloniality to be, “I am where I think and do” (Mignolo, “I Am Where I Think: Epistemology and the Colonial Difference”). Phil Bratta emphasized a
similar point, in the enactment of his pedagogy, when he explained: “Decolonial thinking and doing is where it’s at, right?” So, though he explains: “I wouldn’t necessarily…I wouldn’t consider myself a decolonial teacher. There are times when I attempt to enact decolonial pedagogy…” Here, in placing the focus on the actions of teaching rather than on the claiming or the labeling of himself as a decolonial teacher, Bratta draws attention to the work that must be done, the actions, and the contextualization, rather than the onus being on the naming:

“Would I ever call myself a decolonial pedagogue? I don’t know. I don’t think so. And I that being in the in-between is much more fruitful because then you don’t become complicit, just thinking you have this one approach. Instead, it requires you to look at specific instances: What’s the specific class you’re teaching? What’s the specific week? What’s the specific outcomes that you’re hoping for? Who are the students that are in the class? And how does that inform the way that you are going to approach the class?...I think that being in that in between space or just not committing to a title, this is how I do my pedagogy, then it allows one to say, “okay, then I need to be specific.”

I would argue that in addition to avoiding generalizations and contextualizing the specifics of the class, in this above excerpt, Bratta shows his attention to be more focused on the work, the self-reflexivity, and the action, of thinking and doing and being. Perhaps a bit ironic, I would also argue that a large part of how Phil enacts his approach as a decolonial teacher, is to remain dissatisfied with the title of being one; rather than operating under that label, instead he strives to do the work.13

Phil’s claims above also draw our attention to a few important points about decoloniality that are worth reflection. First, decolonial efforts are unavoidably large. If we stop to consider all

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13 This emphasis, on doing the work, is also one that will be explored in the final chapter, Rhetorical Listening along with a discussion of what it means to do the work of an ally.
associations of colonialism and all inherent goals of decoloniality, to claim or name our practices, scholarship, research and pedagogy as doing that, we may find ourselves fearful of not measuring up to such lofty ambitions, even paralyzed. Second, though all participants referenced perpetual colonialism, or paracolonial practices, on society, culture and students today, they also understand that in defining decolonial, though it may provide clarification, it also narrows its scope. As such, participants actively resisted doing this. Third, historically colonialism has engaged in the claiming, labeling and naming of others, attempting to categorize and dichotomize; then the antithesis of that, as Phil points out, in decoloniality, would be resisting paracolonialist practices, and to actively strive to avoid doing that. Mignolo has even argued that failure to allow options, but instead to categorize and dichotomize, is to allow paracolonial practices continue to thrive, a common occurrence under the colonial matrix of power.

*Colonial Matrix of Power*

Like Karl Marx’s notion of the superstructure or perhaps Gramsci’s premise of hegemony, Mignolo frames the colonial matrix of power as “a complex conceptual structure that guided actions in the domain of economy (exploitation of labor and appropriation of land/natural resources), authority (government, military forces), gender/sexuality and knowledge/subjectivity” (“Epistemic Disobedience, Independent Thought and De-Colonial Freedom, p. 178). Dr. Cedillo in her interview, took up the idea of this colonial matrix, when she pointed out that taking note of the matrix that we occupy, that influences and governs us, is an indispensable part of her decolonial teaching. Fostering that critical awareness, this lens, is one she hopes to cultivate in her students. In this way, Christina even draws attention to the colonial matrix of power to her students by telling them blatantly, “We live in a matrix.” She believes that doing so is productive to get students “to recognize that they live within these matrices of
rhetoric and power” because “They tend to be really, really invisible and that’s how they were meant to be.” She explains how this theme re-emerges throughout the semester: “I told you at the beginning of the semester, watch that movie, you’re going to get it! And so, I think it’s been productive because getting them to recognize that they live within these matrices of rhetoric and power, right, and they tend to be really, really invisible and that’s how they were meant to be” which then “allows them to really make strategic choices.” Here, again, Cedillo understands that key to doing decolonial work is resisting paracolonial practices, noting this colonial matrix of power, and moreover, teaching students to notice it. Christina sees that only through this awareness will her students be enabled to make more active, informed decisions on whether to participate or resist the matrix.

Colonialist Associations of Modernity

Some decolonial theorists contend that it is important to understand a common fallacy at work: there are unquestioned associations of modernity with colonialism (Quijano). This plays a crucial role in the over-reliance on western ways of knowing, again, a common critique we see made by Cultural Rhetoricians, American Indian scholars and indigenous folks in the field of Rhetoric and Composition and outside of academia. As Mignolo has stated, this resistance constitutes part of the epistemic shift and what he would later phrase as “epistemic disobedience” or over-reliance on western ways of knowing ("DELINKING: The Rhetoric of modernity, the logic of coloniality and the grammar of de-coloniality" 456). Prior to Mignolo’s claims about the darker side of western modernity, Peruvian sociologist, Dr. Anibal Quijano took up this weighted notion of modernity and theorized how modernity, too often used synonymously with rationality, has strong and inescapable ties to coloniality; therefore, rationality must inevitably involve dynamics and questions of power and knowledge expressed through political and economic
spheres (Quijano 177; Bhambra 117). To that end, scholars and educators have a role to question this uncontested idea that modernity, and by implication, that coloniality, is inherently liberatory and beneficial for all (Cheah). Mignolo would also draw attention to common (mis)understandings and (mis)perceptions of “modernity;” expanding on Quijano’s work on modernity, he claims that “the work of epistemic decolonization” is “necessary to undo the damage wrought by both modernity and by understanding modernity as coloniality” (Bhambra 118; Mignolo 463). In this way, both scholars Quijano and Mignolo understand that, historically and even presently, concepts of modernity are falsely believed to go hand in hand with rationality. This often un-questioned notion, obviously hits at the heart of the problem, because, as Mignolo points out, rationality or logic, is not always a product of modernity, nor does it only stem from western cultures or knowledges. However, if we fall prey to this line of thinking, to this common fallacy, then we are operating from what may be understood as a zero-point epistemology (Mignolo, “Epistemic Disobedience,” 161). Mignolo helps readers to understand zero-point epistemology as the premise that western epistemologies, knowledges, and cultures are the base of understanding, superior, and the obvious and inherent default. Despite understandings that colonialism still exists on some abstract or theoretical level, and even in very real ways, there are many ways that western epistemological frames of reference, in philosophy, education, and composition and rhetorical studies, that remain unquestioned. When this happens, when we fail to consider our point of entry into scholarship, our navigational origin, but allow it to perpetually default to western ways of knowing, then we reinforce that other cultural groups do not have knowledges of equal value (Olivar). Olivar’s point here speaks to the importance of the sub-discipline of cultural rhetorics and how indigenous epistemologies must be considered and re-evaluated as necessary to the discipline of Rhetoric and Composition. When dominant
cultures, even in academia, remain uncontested and unquestionably revered, it happens at the expense of colonized bodies and marginalized groups’ knowledges, cultures and rhetorics (Barker; Quijano; Mignolo; Powell; Cedillo). These marginalized groups and colonized bodies, and devalued cultural and rhetorical knowledges, are represented not only by our fellow educators, scholars and researchers, but by our students and their lived, embodied experiences and cultural knowledges. Therefore, part of what is key in developing a cultural rhetorics approach, and one that offers settlers’ decolonial pedagogical approaches, is to recognize this and not just theoretically.

If we truly aim to be critical pedagogues and empowering educators in our field, then we must not only remember this, but do active decolonial thinking and being, allowing it to transform our teaching practices and understandings of what constitutes valid knowledges. For example, in my Intermediate Composition class, when asking students to produce literacy narratives, I framed the discussion surrounding “what are literacies” to include any language and cultural knowledge, other technologies, and languages of expression beyond standard academic English. A reserved native Spanish speaking student, at first seemed hesitant that she was “allowed” to consider how her first language contributed to her literacies and cultural and rhetorical knowledges. After encouragement that such knowledges do have a place within her story and her literacies, even though this was an English Composition course, this student produced a literacy narrative that was rhetorically effective and beautifully illustrated her ability to code switch between different languages. She brought forth an example of how her Spanish literacy informed her relationships with her family and her person, providing a wonderful example, I would argue, of translanguaging, made possible by a decolonial approach to center and validate her language and cultural ways of knowing.
Through this active awareness of noticing whose knowledges are prioritized and pushing back against it, educators may make important acts of resisting, of thinking and doing decoloniality. To do this, settlers, as scholars and teachers must note how often, where, and when western ways of knowing are inherently privileged and presented as obviously, unquestionably progressive, contributing to the betterment of society. When such ideas go unchallenged, then we see paracolonialism happening and such is the matrix at work. Phil Bratta explained that part of understanding and doing decolonialism, for him, is “by understanding how to subvert or operate within a colonial system, within a colonial matrix.” He approaches this, in his class, by “pointing out the power dynamics and why it becomes problematic that certain languages get used or that certain bodies are seen or unseen, in certain ways.” Only when we start to take note of these occurrences, adjust ourselves and our own scholarship and discipline could we hope to find ways to epistemically shift, to challenge colonialist notions of modernity in our class discussions, enabling our students to cultivate this level of conscious awareness. These efforts are important ones that settlers seem to understand as decolonial moves and such practices clearly inform their pedagogical practices.

Again, while teaching a Decolonial Writing class, as we looked at modes and examples of possibilities in a rhetorical fieldwork assignment, I was able to hold specific discussions with the class. We explored and questioned whose knowledges were valued, by looking at historical representations of when places “were founded” on internet sites. We noticed that, despite local sites and places named from American Indian tribes, the historical representations and cultures of these peoples were absent, both from written historical accounts presented on the internet and from many cultural and community events that students attended.

Embracing Subjectivity: A Settlers’ Approach to Using and Understanding Decoloniality
In the examples above, readers may notice that I prioritize concepts and stories from Mignolo, Phil, and Bratta’s approaches to decolonial thinking. The decision to do this is intentional, not because the other indigenous participants do not discuss matters related to decoloniality, matters of paracolonialism, or the colonial matrix of power in their classrooms. They do converse about them, in very intentional and specific ways. However, because of their cultural backgrounds, educational orientations and pedagogical approaches, Sundy, Gail and Lisa privilege indigenous approaches and terminologies, providing a different lexicon in scholarship and in how they present it to their students. Their methods, stories, and insights are invaluable. However, I choose to focus on Phil and Ezekiel here, because they frequently turn to Mignolo’s lexicon to make sense of their own decolonial approach and to negotiate their role and positionality as educators who are non-indigenous. As I write this dissertation with settlers in mind and navigate through my own questions of how to resist intergenerational colonialism, challenge white privilege and avoid culturally appropriation, their subject position more closely resembles my own. Consequently, in this chapter, readers may notice that I frequently draw from their stories. This is intentional.

However, at the same time, I understand that I am not allowed to neglect the indigenous perspective. For me, to employ the terms decolonial to efforts or research or pedagogies, then I must first acknowledge that my experiences greatly differ from indigenous peoples. One way I may begin is to consider that I hold a different relationship to research that indigenous peoples have had. Scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith, author of *Decolonizing Methodologies*, notes that research is often considered to be the dirtiest word in the English language, because of what it has represented and continues to represent for many indigenous peoples. A large reason for this is because, historically, colonizers used the facade of research, professing to work toward
improving humanity, though just prioritizing their own agendas, enacting racism and exploiting indigenous persons, further perpetuating and attempting to justify colonialist acts. I highlight this to call attention to the many past negative experiences that indigenous persons have had with researchers and research projects. By actively drawing attention to this, involving and learning from indigenous scholars and indigenous methodologies and epistemologies to inform this research, I take a lesson from Linda Tuhiwai Smith: I intentionally seek to make efforts to acknowledge my embodiment and settler status, and work towards prioritizing indigenous and other non-western ways of knowing, thus decolonizing research methods and methodologies. I would further urge us, then, as non-indigenous scholars and teachers, to think more critically and reflexively about the methods and methodologies and we privilege, and which ones we value within the discipline. Such efforts encompass decolonizing work as a non-indigenous person, forming a settlers’ approach.

Participant Ezekiel Choffel also noted Smith’s statement during his interview in saying that “research is the most dirty word in Indians’ vocabulary.” Though a white male, a non-indigenous person, he considers the positionality of indigenous persons, reflecting on his conversations from participating in indigenous communities, listening to them, and forming relationships with these individuals and their relationship with research. When he drew my attention to this quote, he revealed that, even though he is not an indigenous person, he prioritizes their experiences and their embodied differences: noting how research appeared differently for indigenous peoples than it has, historically, for people, like himself, as a white male.

While I actively strive to revere and learn from indigenous methodologies and epistemologies in this study, I also recognize that I am unable to fully practice those values as my cultural base of understanding and embodied identity differs. However, I still strive for rightful and respectful use of indigenous methodologies, and I see those combined efforts as engagements with decolonial efforts in research and pedagogies.
Bringing the subjectivity to the front, in scholarship, relationships and teaching practices, inform a settlers’ approach to decolonial pedagogy. Positionality may not be ignored or glossed over. As Phil Bratta explains, “I bring my subjectivity and my identity to the forefront because in order to understand your lived and embodied experiences and how we’re embedded in colonialism and colonial matrix, you have to know the politics and view when you enter the classroom.” He explains this as a necessary part of how he understands decoloniality and his role as a pedagogue. Choffel also notes that his decolonial pedagogical role differs from that of his indigenous professor and American Indian mentors:

“I would later realize [this] was kind of what my work is, right? My work is to translate the function of decolonial pedagogy to people like me, like to white people because, like, as I see in my students and as I see in like other teachers, that come from complicated subject positions, you know, like, like other first generation students or like students of color, faculty of color, other first gen faculty, like a lot of them I don’t have to explain. So when it comes to people who are very set in what composition looks like, and are very determined that there are only certain models of composition, I kind of feel like that’s like my, like my conversation that I need to have with each and every single one of them. Because at the end of the day, what my assignments are doing, you simply use different words than what they were asking us to do. Like they wanted a literacy narrative, they wanted a rhetorical analysis, they wanted some sort of project, and then they wanted a final reflection. So I was doing all of those things but I was using different language and maybe slightly different angles of looking at these things.”

Ezekiel sees his role as a composition educator, mentored by indigenous elders, to initiate conversations regarding decolonial theory and options of storying as theory, key aspects that he
focuses on in his pedagogical approach. He strives to use his positionality, his subjective position, his power and privilege as a white male:

“The easiest way to explain it is…Mignolo’s white, right? And he finds a way to write about decolonial theory and do decolonial theory…And so then I was like, if this white dude could do it, then why couldn’t this white dude do it, you know? Why couldn’t I find a way to talk about how particular theorist of decolonial theory are embedded within this specific culture.” Ezekiel continues, reflecting on his work, asking: “what would a option for decolonial theory look like for a middle class white person? And is that an action that they would even want, right? You know? And so it’s kind of like a shift of audience, right? Because at the very least, even if I can’t come up with an action, if I can get more people to engage in the conversation I think I’m kind of successful, right? If I can get more white people to check their privilege, as I continue to try to check my own, right? And engage with what the colonial matrix of power does in terms of internal colonization and neo-colonial, then I think I’m heading in a way that would do those who have taught me proud, you know? But then also kind of prevents a re-inscribing of indigenous world views as my own. And prevents a way of culturally appropriating indigenous theory as my own, right?”

There is a parallel here, an interconnection happening. Ezekiel sees that his path in doing decolonial work as a scholar, thinker and researcher is inextricably linked to his ability to help his students and discipline critically examine their whiteness, while simultaneously self-reflecting on his own. Ezekiel furthers his idea and pedagogical and philosophical approach:

“There’s this whole lineage of white, internalized colonization that gets spoken to in terms of how it enacts violence but I don’t find as much writing or theorizing about how
to get people, like get white people to investigate their own internalized colonization, right? And so, like, that’s kind of what I want to do as a scholar is to kind of take the critical whiteness studies approach to decolonial theory and kind of get people to understand and to try to break away from this colonial system because they don’t benefit anyone but the super rich.”

Ezekiel’s stories show that even though he struggles and constantly has to self-check and renegotiate his role, purpose, intention, and relationships with this work and within these communities, he still engages. He puts forth the effort; as he puts it, he “shows up;” he does the work. He strives to use his white male privilege to initiate conversations in the discipline, and in composition programs, and among his students, about what colonialism means and how it functions. Though he also still struggles with questions of appropriate use and representation of indigenous methods, the act of self-checks, active relationships and membership in indigenous communities, guides him in his decolonial work. I would further argue that his continued actions of self-reflection of positionality and embodied differences, reveals how Choffel, like Phil, does the work of a decolonial pedagogue, even if he does not label under that title, as his effort remains on actions, thinking and doing. As I hear Ezekiel and Phil reflect on their roles in decolonial theory as settlers, I hear them asking questions like: how may I honor my indigenous mentors and perspectives from native peoples? Yet, how also may I be genuine to my embodied identity and develop a more authentic pedagogical approach as a settler? These questions demonstrate a lesson: settlers need to be both cautious and intentional, while placing themselves in discourse surrounding decoloniality and decolonization.

To that end, I urge us, settlers and non-indigenous folks in the field: be careful. When we fail to define or frame, decolonial, or when we fail to even consider the overarching effects of
colonialism on indigenous peoples in our work, then we risk cultural appropriation. Settlers must account for embodied identity differences among non-indigenous and people of color, considering how often this term is inappropriately applied as a catch-all phrase, not just on a theoretical level but in pedagogy and scholarship as well. However, at the same time, we are called to engage; we cannot dismiss the topic and ignore conversations about decoloniality. Much like discussions surrounding racism, we can’t allow fear of misunderstanding, revealing our ignorance, to silence us and seize our efforts. These discussions are too important not to have. They affect people in real ways, their cultures, their bodies, their experiences, their lives. The potential, therefore, the decoloniality holds, in guiding scholarly and pedagogical conversations forward, establishing better relationships with cultural knowledges and indigenous peoples’ concerns, is too vital to disregard.

Indeed, decoloniality should not be a free for all term, one that can be applied by anyone without consideration of its history, associations, embodied identities and experiences. It’s a huge concern; for, if even the participants of this research, who have relationships with indigenous peoples and communities, who highly revere and employ indigenous scholarship and methods, still hesitate to use these terms, then how much more would it be for settlers who are less acquainted with indigenous epistemologies and/or decolonial theory? At the same time, I fear the unintended, harmful repercussions of what happens when or if non-indigenous teachers, ones who desire to communicate about colonialism and make it a priority in their pedagogical practices, curriculums, and in scholarship, hesitate, or even stop themselves from doing so? While there are dangers when people appropriate and misunderstand terms, and speak about them from voices of authority, knowingly, yet incorrectly; however, there is also very real danger when pedagogues and scholars remain so fearful to use terms, not confident in how to
communicate about matters of colonialism, that they simply do not discuss them, for fear of facilitating tough conversations in the classroom. Mignolo laid a framework and provides academics with a lexicon for how we may discuss paracolonialism, the colonial matrix of power, delinking, epistemic disobedience and decolonial thinking and doing. When we combine these theoretical terms with attention to embodied differences and indigenous peoples’ rights, then we are making important strides to sensitive, appropriate usage of decoloniality.

Furthermore, as Phil and Ezekiel have shown us, settlers who wish to discuss colonialism and facilitate those conversations during their classes can instead turn to this above lexicon and their own stories and reflection on whiteness. Phil explains:

“You could talk about whiteness. But I would couch that in talking about it in terms of whiteness in the colonial paradigm, that colonialism enacted a certain epistemology and ontology of what whiteness is and what non-whiteness is. And so, still, again, laying that foundation for what colonialism attempted to do, what it did and what’s the aftermath of official colonialism. I think it allows certain kinds of conversations to not develop, such as a kind of fetishization, which could be an explicit or implicit assumption within an all-white classroom.”

As we have seen above, the magnitude of decolonial options are overwhelming. Maybe this vastness and critiques surrounding misuse of decolonizing are reasons why Rhetoric and Composition scholars to allow cultural rhetorics and discussions regarding decoloniality to continue to exist on the margins. They may be reasons, but they are not excuses. However, if we seriously take up Dr. Malea Powell’s call in her 2012 CCCC address, and answer her challenge, making it our priority to investigate, to theorize, to story out how to do decolonial work, then we must work together. Offering a lexicon coupled with careful self-reflection that allows for
distinctions and commonalities, diverse experiences with colonialism, and differences in embodied identities, is key. Perhaps, only then, can we really start to take up efforts to appropriately engage with and answer Dr. Powell’s call. Maybe then we can be equipped with the language, which will aid us in shifting to embracing non-western epistemologies in the Writing and Rhetoric discipline. This lexicon, perhaps, may also help us to avoid faux paus, like continuously resituating rhetorical tradition as beginning with the Greco-Romans. Maybe from these tools, we could finally start discussing decolonial work may be implemented within many sub-disciplines of Composition studies, and how decolonial can and should be used by indigenous and non-indigenous educators, albeit differently.

Perhaps if these things happen then we could really use decoloniality in the discipline, beyond unrealistic ideas of delinking as a complete return to pre-settler days. Ultimately, may we strive to make decoloniality exist beyond some elusive theory or a pollyanna idea, in unobtainable goal. Instead, let’s think it through, settlers: let’s hold the discussions, ignite the change. We will make errors but with right relationships and humble rhetorical listening, we can use these tools to drive forward our epistemologies, philosophies, and pedagogies. Let us not allow paracolonialist practices to continue and to thrive because we fail to hold conversations about decoloniality, for fear that we’ll be dichotomized, grouped into one of two categories--either using the term correctly or not. Let’s shift and learn, having constructive discussions. When the fear becomes greater than the motivation in answering the call to action, the conviction of furthering social justice, then we fail. When this happens, then we all—scholars and teachers and students—all suffer. And we limit ourselves.

15 In the fourth and final chapter, I will discuss rhetorical listening as instrumental to decolonial efforts, in scholarship, academic communities and in the classroom.
The balance, I will remind us again, though I realize I risk redundancy, but the point is too important: resist narrow definitions and categories. Decolonial efforts must be wide and encompassing, rather than, limiting. Instead, settlers, let us work towards stipulating and specifying what lexicon we may use and what specifications and differences need to be accounted for. As rhetoricians and writing teachers, we are keenly aware of the impact of words and their connotations and associations. We mull over them and discuss them extensively. These practices reflect our abilities to critically interpret and analyze discourse and are imperative to our work as scholars and teachers. It is work but there is benefit to such critical reflection and analysis. Still, we need a lexicon to establish a base to move forward in discussing decoloniality. This dissertation research seeks to move forward, acknowledging indigenous concerns, and addressing complexities of decoloniality, including appropriation of the word, yet, rejecting that it is simply too big and too complex to confront. Rather, I argue that it is too important to ignore.
CHAPTER III STORY AS METHODOLOGY: METHODOLOGY IN SCHOLARSHIP AND RESEARCH AND ATTITUDE

“When I say “story,” I don’t mean for you to think “easy.” Stories are anything but easy. When I say story, I mean an event in which I try to hold some of the complex shimmering strands of a constellative, epistemological space long enough to share them with you.”

~Dr. Malea Powell

“It can be an empiricized story because your data tells a story too, right?”

~Ezekiel Choffel

“Sometimes a substantive version of that knowledge might already exist, or to how it might have already been constructed, or to the meanings that might have already been assigned that might make me quite impatient with gaps in their understanding of my community.”

~Jacqueline Jones Royster

I wholeheartedly believe in the power of storying, in its transformative capabilities, and in its sheer, raw potential to bring about progress and to change lives. I hold this value so intensely that storying has become my religion, center to my own philosophy in life, which is to say that I believe in the power of stories to help in forming relationships, building community and providing otherwise unavailable opportunities. When, or if, sensitive, rhetorical listening is practiced, stories can and do build theory (Riley-Mukavetz; Powell; Maracle; Baird). Unfortunately, too often the “Theories” that we so revere within western scholarship and the academy are not recognized as involving or starting with stories (King, Gubele and Anderson;
Baird; Riley-Mukavetz; Powell; Maracle; Wilson). I want to acknowledge this occurrence while also rejecting it as a false but often perpetuated notion that theories are different than stories, even when cultures, education, and academia try so desperately to convince us otherwise. Furthermore, I see this perpetuated notion as colonialist in nature. I invite you readers, even those perhaps less familiar with Story as Methodology, and even for those who may disagree with this claim: please, pause with me, momentarily suspend judgment, keep an open mind, and learn from indigenous ways of knowing. Let us stop to consider all that stories could encompass, what they could mean, and what they could teach us. We may start this by revising our mindsets of rigid categories of labels, which so often place story as inherently or diametrically opposed to theory (Maracle; Mignolo). Let us instead view these two common groupings, theory and story, as fluid. To do so will be difficult, as it requires a constant resistance to colonialism, a push back against western education that denies that stories can exist as scientific, empirical research or researched, argumentative, scholarly writing (Mignolo; Maracle). Resistance of this magnitude also challenges the categories that humans create, even those from educated scholars and intellectual thinkers of academia. However, if we genuinely exercise critical thinking approaches, like those we profess to value in higher education, and the ones we desire to teach to our students, then let us at least consider what welcoming storying to theories may mean. In this chapter, I will explore what welcoming stories may mean for us, as educators, for our students, and for our research.

What it would mean for us, in the discipline of Rhetoric and Composition, to reject this often-uncontested notion that stories are the lesser, the easier genre to interpret and to produce, that they are obviously separate from arguments, from thesis-driven papers? Consider moreover, what would it mean to have that belief demonstrated through our scholarship and research? What
if more rhetoric scholars took an activist stance and asserted that stories do emerge from theories? What changes could happen if we considered stories as central to data of research and as guides in our research? What would this mean for those working towards the development of decolonial pedagogies, which, as later chapters will show, are vast and varied, subjective and embodied? Given the power and potential of stories, what if we asserted that we simply cannot ignore, minimize or marginalize stories any longer. Instead, what would happen if we made them integral to the work we do as Rhetoric and Composition scholars and educators, as integral as our foundation in upholding the Greco-Roman rhetorical traditions? To start to answer those questions, I will engage in the tradition of story as methodology to further practice what I theorize, but also to show you to use story as methodology.

A story:

Abepura, Papua, Indonesia

2012

I am on my second year of living and teaching in Indonesia and one of my responsibilities is to develop workshops for students and Indonesian community members. This time I am asked to present a workshop focused on the use of stories to offer healing and therapy. The workshop was entitled, ‘Storytelling as Trauma Healing.’

Papua is arguably one of the most remote areas of Indonesia, lacking in development and infrastructure compared to the rest of the country. As such, it is both geographically and technologically isolated. Those realities coupled with the land’s rich natural resources incited greed and abuse of power from the Indonesian government, desperate to keep the province

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16 I hold to the notion that accepting stories as theories is, itself, an activist stance.
colonized, despite this region being promised autonomy and independence by the Dutch imperialists. Because of both that greed and the unique linguistic situation and geographic location of Papua, many citizens who protest or resist this colonization are persecuted in inhumane ways, even enduring Human Rights violations such as unfair legal representation, torture and even murder. Those realities combine with other issues that often plague developing countries, such as lack of education, economic mobility, proper nutrition, and access to adequate healthcare. These compiling factors mean that many Papuans regularly face police brutality, government torture, alcoholism, domestic violence, HIV and AIDS, etc. Undoubtedly these realities create trauma and hardships for the individuals and communities, as well as dysfunction within families. These overarching problems, like many in other places in the world, are undoubtedly complex to understand and resolve, especially as social, economic, political, religious, racial components all knot together, intertwining the problems at hand.

Perhaps it goes without saying that, because of these significant issues, as one international volunteer/service worker, I felt rather powerless to enact any significant change or to provide substantial help, especially when the issues these citizens face seemed so overwhelming and all-encompassing. But, in my capacity as an educator, I understand that the one thing that I could do was to gather in community with these individuals, and to emphasize the importance and powers of storying by leading a workshop. I could lead by example to these students, providing a space, empowering them to share their stories and encouraging them to listen to one another’s stories. I could use my education, my white privilege and my American status to validate that their stories had power and they deserved to be told. Both through words and actions I could help these participants to believe that their stories had meaning, and that the content of their experiences was far more important than perfect grammar or their medium
(language) of delivery. I could teach this, and then, equally importantly, I could pause, shut up, and model quiet, active, attentive listening to the participants and their stories. Through those actions, I could validate them and show that I believed their stories, knowledge, experiences were important and had value. I could also emphasize that storying may be transformative and therapeutic and healing. While I did not try to suggest that storying could erase their pain or eliminate their hardships, I did clarify that it could provide a productive way of coping, serving as both a catharsis and a way to build relationships and community with others.

I present this story here because, as someone who has gone on from those experiences abroad, to study, research, write and teach, while claiming to value stories. But if I truly believe in this life-changing power of stories then storying should also represent a central focus of my research, my scholarship, and my pedagogy. Therefore, this dissertation, uses story as methodology, a system of methods in guiding the research forward. But I see a greater part of my career, as a scholar and educator, to advocate for the powers of storying, as taught to us by indigenous epistemologies (Baird; Powell; Riley-Mukavetz). Furthermore, if I hold to that principle then this work ought to be instrumental to my work and to my identity as a decolonial scholar, informing how I practice decolonial pedagogy as a non-indigenous person.

I need to stress this overt disclaimer, one central to my argument: the assertion that story holds power and may act as methodology is not a new one. I do not claim this knowledge, because I believe a part of doing decolonial work is recognize how certain, non-western epistemologies are devalued and claimed, despite their origins. For centuries indigenous peoples have long understood the power of storying to preserve oral histories, provide lessons, and inform cultures and contribute to rhetorics (Baird; King, Gubele and Anderson; MacKay, Riley-Mukavetz, Powell; Simpson). Only recently has western education and academics begun to pay
attention to storying capabilities within academics and research (Christienson; Newkirk). While important, I state this, specifically, to draw attention to this exploitation and to pay respect to the work and knowledge of indigenous peoples, cultures, scholars and researchers.

Considering the recent push for humanities to move towards a more interdisciplinary focus, we ought to first realize that storying as methodology is not one relegated to the English discipline. One participant in this research, Dr. Gail MacKay, reminds me of this as she yields from an indigenous education background and used storying as methodology to inform her own dissertation research. She explains the components of storying by highlighting its spiritual and metaphysical components, drawing from her indigenous roots and showing what it means to practice story as methodology:

“Storying requires an awareness of self as a spiritual being that is in relationship to others and to happenings. The storying is a metaphysical relationship, bringing conscious awareness to being and becoming, and affirming what is, and establishing and sharing the firm foundation of knowledge. Thus, the story as research method requires the researcher to present her most authentic self.”

In this quote McKay shows that spirituality and metaphysical components of being relate and ought to influence storying and how we approach it in research and scholarship. In making this claim and doing her research, she draws from extensive scholarship but also from her own indigenous roots, teaching us that embodied rhetorics, and cognitive or mental ways knowing are linked. She shows how storying as research can lead to awareness, being, becoming, and affirming on behalf of the researcher. Although she teaches in an education department, we may take a lesson here: if our discipline understands and accepts that stories may not be divorced from sharing and establishing knowledge, an important component of rhetorics, then we may
learn from scholars such as MacKay. We may come to understand that we cannot disassociate the study of stories from the studying and teaching of rhetorics. We also may not separate ourselves, our authentic selves, when approaching story as a research method. Dr. MacKay’s words highlight the difficulty of storying as research, echoing Dr. Powell’s challenge at the beginning of this chapter, let us re-visioning storying as anything but easy. I urge us to do the same: understanding that when we journey with stories, if we revere and honor them, then we may also see them as subject of inquiry, focuses of research, and as theory; doing so may reshape what we see as validated knowledge in our field and, as I will later, how we teach rhetorics.

For that reason, Rhetoric and Composition scholars can and should do story as methodology. However, doing this rightfully and respectfully requires that we consider how we approach this work. Those of us who are non-indigenous need to exercise caution, not to claim this work. I argue that we may only do this, practice this as decolonial work, and advocate for story as methodology, if we appropriately and respectfully recognize its indigenous roots. To fail to do so, I would argue, is cultural appropriation. If we do this, recognize its roots, only then, coupled with a thorough understanding that recognizes storying as methodology as embodiment, enacted or lived out cultural philosophy, and an activist stance against colonialism, can we conceive of story as methodology as decolonial work. Otherwise, we do not truly understand storying as methodology and we have no right to claim it as decolonial work.

Dr. Pauline Baird in her dissertation illustrates her understanding of how stories have a great sense of purpose in forming rhetorics. She astutely points out that when certain stories are eliminated that it conveys the message that certain peoples’ histories do not matter. She draws from these personal experiences and scholarly inquiry to drive forward her own research on the stories of Buxtonian women. We can learn from Baird’s doctoral work and translate this belief in
shaping how we approach students’ stories in our own teaching. If we communicate to our
students through our actions and our teaching that stories do not matter, and more so that their
stories do not matter, then we de-legitimize their knowledges and embodied experiences. Failing
to do so does not allow for accepting all options of rhetorics. Consequently, if we are serious
about doing using storying as methodology as decolonial work, esteeming non-western ways of
knowing, then we simply must work with stories and approach them as knowledge and theory.

I would further argue that if Rhetoric and Composition scholars are sincere in the
professed interests to collaborate, be inclusive and foster programs with interdisciplinary
focuses, then that means that we must do the work to make this possible, despite that it will take
effort. Moving forward with this goal requires that we in the discipline commit time, form
relationships, hold community with one another, listen and practice humility in order understand
other disciplines, to allow for cross disciplinary knowledge to happen. It’s not easy. This may
mean that we hold laborious conversations and learn from other scholars and readings from other
sub-disciplines. Sometimes this may require that we exercise humility in considering that
perhaps our own theory or premise, that we want to claim from our own research or from our
specific discipline, has already existed in some form prior to its trendy new label. It’s easy to
make claims and calls to action that we need to be more interdisciplinary and yet, it is a much
more challenging endeavor to undertake. In doing this in our discipline, I would also argue that
interdisciplinary efforts can and should involve listening to cultural rhetorics research, and
specifically, from indigenous ways of knowing and other marginalized or othered
epistemologies. I urge us to shift the focus from innovation and claiming knowledge to instead,
looking back, and learning from pre-existing knowledges, rather than desperately trying to patent
new approaches or intellectual property, very paracolonialist tendencies. Perhaps then we could
avoid presenting culturally appropriative claims that stories within academia and that storying as methodology is a novel concept (Johnson; Bradford).

Perhaps one of the reasons that storying as methodology is avoided and that its power is minimalized is because it is a difficult endeavor. It is subjective and emotional and embodied. In one of the interviews, Dr. Christina Cedillo references Dr. Andrea Riley-Mukavetz, explaining that sometimes you need to allow the story to emerge, to speak to you, through your body. As MacKay and Powell have also noted, this work requires time and patience. It requires sitting with the data of stories, reading and re-reading them, listening to them and re-listening to them, again and again.

Some academics or scholars within the field may argue with this claim. Perhaps some may contend that scholars and researchers in other fields of the humanities and other cross subdisciplines of our field do highly respect stories and see them serious work. Maybe some would contend that we understand how these stories exist as within research, worthy of study and analysis. The difference, I would argue, is that in understanding and applying an indigenous approach to storying as methodology is to consider a great deal more than stories as worthy as a part of a study. Often when stories are respected within Rhetoric and Composition, it derives from a qualitative methods approach where the researcher has conducted interviews and weaves in Narrative theory, historiography, grounded theory or perhaps postmodernism. This is done to justify the reason for seeking such interviews. Scholars will then catalogue the areas and tidy them into an order, demonstrating prior attention to narratives. These approaches, while seeking to involve stories, does not actually revere or sensitively regard storying as the powerful methodology that Cultural Rhetorics posits. Using storying as methodology appropriately

\footnote{17 I share these examples not to critique these scholars’ works, but to show how I see Rhetoric and Composition working with stories, but not using storying as methodology, a primary argument of this dissertation.}
requires a cultural philosophy, an embodiment and lived out practice that stories encapsulate enough richness, power and potential, that they should be a center, the focus of study. Stories do not represent merely a part of research, separate from more empirical forms of research, such as objective data analysis or literature reviews, but stories transcend boundaries; they flow among them, and they should be understood as such.

While this is important, to recognize the problem at hand, I would urge us to look at the root of why this happened and that it continues to occur, this patent infringement of knowledge, in a profession that normally self-praises for being educated, open minded, critical and cognizant of such occurrences (Johnson). Consider the larger, overarching questions here: why are indigenous epistemologies not recognized as the original promoters of this knowledge? How could this happen and be allowed to continue to occur? Why does the discipline, and academy at large, continue to promote the need for telling stories across humanities, and yet, is allowed package them under new titles? I would argue that this is because of systemic and perpetuated colonialism. I would also suggest that storying as methodology, the idea that stories can make theory and serve as research, is activism. It involves rejecting the colonialist idea that storying is a lesser form of scholarly, rigorous work. To do this activism is to reject paracolonialist practices and act subversively. To make this claim, as a settler, to live out the belief, I believe, is to make decolonial efforts.

So, what does it mean if we, as a discipline, start to recognize indigenous roots of storying, and practice storying as methodology? If Rhetoric and Composition scholars start to recognize and value storying, as holding the power that indigenous folks have long understood it to be? If we do this then we may find that we also expand our ideas of rhetorics. In turn, we may broaden our understandings of knowledge, of meaning-making, and the power of persuasion in
telling stories. If we do this, then we may finally start to recognize the area of Cultural Rhetorics not as some elective, alternative in the field, but as a central focus. Perhaps then we may see that the class ought to be developed into a mandatory, core course for students of Rhetoric and Composition. Only if we do this, or when we do this, will we start to take measures in working as decolonial advocates, thinkers and doers. Then can we operate under that title of decolonial scholars and advocate for it, rather than risk culturally appropriately and inappropriately using decolonial as metaphor (Tuck & Wang; Cedillo).

It may seem difficult to parse out these two areas, storying as methodology and decoloniality, and not conflate them, so I want to be clear: some may argue: what place does story as methodology have in decolonial work and in our pedagogy? I will explain, in further learning from indigenous ways of knowing, that the roles of scholar, researcher, and educator ought to be interconnected. I would also argue that although it is a challenging endeavor, that story as a methodology should not be limited or relegated to some scholarly or research realm. On the contrary, as teachers, and I would argue, as decolonial teachers, we must also demonstrate our lived-out beliefs of story as methodology and use this as a practice in our pedagogy. This is one way that we may enact decolonial pedagogy in Rhetoric and Composition classrooms. I would contend that we can do this by making space and encouraging stories within the classroom, both through compositions and class discussions at large.

As discussed in the previous chapter, a great deal of decolonial work involves avoiding limiting options and instead, seeking to consider all options. As Ezekiel acknowledges in our interview, this underlying point informs his own pedagogical approach in teaching writing: “I want them to be able to tell stories on their own terms.” Yet, at the same time, he intentionally does not want to “over-determine what stories look like and how meaning is made.” On the
contrary, he explains that “Not all stories are attempted to convey obvious meaning… and so I really wanted my students to be able to have the opportunity to experience telling stories for the sake of telling stories, whether it be amongst themselves, whether it be in writing.” In this way, Choffel, like cultural rhetoricians Riley-Mukavetz and Baird, understand how stories involve rhetorical knowledge and that they may exist in many forms, yet they are deeply connected to cultures. Choffel conveys this message to his students by assigning them Lee Maracle’s reading, “Oratory: Coming to Theory” that destabilizes common perceptions of theory. Choffel sees this as key to his approach. Choffel sums up that he sees his teaching emphasis to be “very heavily focused on stories as a means of finding connection, but still understanding that individual story itself.” He also sees storying as so crucial to his pedagogy that even though his approach has “started to shift a little bit,” he sees this as “one part of decolonial pedagogy that is consistent…I still have students tell stories.”

Phil Bratta also highlights the importance of storying in his teaching. Like, Ezekiel, he references how it is important to recognize the power of storying in uniting, establishing solidarity, but also in recognizing difference. He explained to me a bit about his own background coming from a blue-collar family. He shared this story as a white male, but when he relayed this story to his students, reflecting back, he observed how storying may have multiple effects. It may be used as both a point of identification as well as disassociation:

A black male student from Detroit loved this story and he came up after class and we chatted. And I think that that is great, but I also tend to point out or just do not forget the differences between the two of us. Yes, we could connect on this similarity, but I also tried to push him to understand that there is also radical indications that is racialized body
also factors into how his story changes because I got the sense that he was feeling like my story was like his story.

Phil proceeded to explain that while he was happy to have connected with this student through storying, in that moment, he also needed to be sure to “decolonize the idea of commonality which often times erases difference.” He expressed his concern when storying may serve as venue to “erase difference, flatten hierarchies and erase power dynamics and difference.” From Phil’s point, we may see that storying as a pedagogical practice inherently involves bodies or embodiment, which cannot be divorced from colonialisms. Colonialism, as discussed in the previous chapter, prioritizes that certain bodies and certain knowledges are recognized as superior to others and teaching and storying must be cognizant and reflect that knowledge.

I would ask us to pause here and reflect on Phil’s example, reminding readers, again, to note that storying is a powerful tool but to also recognize it as potentially and unintentionally dangerous. In its capacity it can be used to foster relationships and to build connections. Equally important though, is how sharing and connecting through stories can inadvertently cause breaks in human bridges as well. For example, if we don’t have a clear understanding of how colonialism continues to work and manifest, through instilling hierarchies and encouraging binaries, and being blind to racism and attempts to homogenize peoples, then these stories, sadly, can have a potentially harmful effect. Perhaps like listening with empathy, relating to one another’s stories can serve as a point of connection, but it can also serve as a barrier and further lead to oppression and division, especially if listeners only see stories as points of identification and relation (Code). We must understand, therefore, that embodied experiences mean that we only may understand and relate to specific parts of stories, and that does not mean that listeners
may comprehend entire experiences from simply feeling connected and practicing good listening skills and wanting to empathize. I would argue that these above points are true regardless of whether this storyteller is a teacher, a participant in research or a student.

Therefore, using storying as methodology in pedagogy, doing it as decolonial work, is to be respectful and accountable to the person behind the storyteller. As Phil Bratta explains, “part of the decolonial approach is…identifying the humanity in each person and having conversations about what it means to be humane, but then I also think part of it is allowing students to step into a space or not step into a space that I hope to create in which students can better understand themselves.” He explains this pedagogical goal after tying it to the need to recognize the students’ experiences and stories as well as where they are at this point in their lives. Therefore, recognizing individual’s humanity is key to doing decolonial work, and it may act as part of decolonial pedagogy, done through storying in the classroom. Again, these practices are all made possible because of the power behind stories and how storying—listening and hearing another’s story can make us more aware of the humanity of each other.

In her own stories, participant Dr. Christina Cedillo also highlights the importance of this balance in storying when she explains:

How would you like to approach this, in a way that allows people to listen and allows them to practice both identification and association, right? So, the idea is they need to see something of themselves in you so that they’ll listen. But they also need to see themselves as different so you have something new to say. How do we do that? How do we balance that? And how do we draw from our own everyday experiences to think about how we write and how we treat other people.
In this quote Dr. Cedillo provided me with suggestions in how I may approach the audience or readers of this dissertation in telling my story. However, interestingly, this quote also may guide practices in storying, allow professors to reflect on how they may use them, both through research and through how we approach stories in class. We may consider this balance whether listening to students’ stories, allowing them to relate to our own stories, or responding to their stories in compositions.

Dr. Cedillo expands on the need for this balance in emphasizing both individualism and collectivism. To offer an example she interweaves a story about the African concept of Nomo, which refers to a balance between collective understandings and reaching group consensus. She ties the story to its indigenous roots and urges us to learn from it, avoiding the temptation or emphasis to be strictly individualistic. She instead explains her interest in “rhetoric as a tool that we can use to encourage mutual respect and understanding even if there is distinctness, right?” Again, she highlights the need to see stories, or rhetoric, as one that can promote understanding and yet also establish difference. To further illustrate this balance Cedillo also references Qualipe, a female figure, a pantheon in Aztec culture. She explains that the figure is cut in half with two heads and she explains how this encompasses the idea of duality, unity and duality, at once. Cedillo explains, “everything’s connected” and the importance of recognizing “our intrinsic connection to the world around us.” Here, Cedillo references interconnection and relationality, important values in indigenous epistemologies. But I would also argue that highlighting this crucial balance in storying, whether it is through research, methodology, relationships, is key, especially for those of us who are non-indigenous, seeking to revere stories and use them. We need to understand differences between our embodied selves from those of people of color and non-indigenous persons. In this way this same cognizant of embodiment and
awareness not to culturally appropriate is important to keep in mind when practicing decolonial pedagogy (Cedillo).

Storying as methodology and as decolonial pedagogical practice, again, involves making space, a point that Dr. Cedillo makes and Phil and Ezekiel echo. She explains how making space for people, through their stories, is key. She emphasizes the need for balance by stating that a disclaimer should be made on behalf of the story-teller: “This is my story and if somebody would like to share theirs, I’m more than willing to listen.” However, at the same time, she explains that “sometimes empathy is just getting out of the way so that somebody can have that space.” She provides the example: “sometimes we just need to move aside, especially if we know that hierarchically speaking, we are in a more privileged situation.” I would argue that this could be true for storying, listening, and communicating in relationships, among scholars in the discipline and in the classroom with our students. Perhaps these practices represent one way that we may use storying as methodology to inform our decolonial pedagogy. We must make space for stories, but we must also recognize the hierarchies and privileges of certain bodies in these situations. In this way we must note who is telling the story, and how, because due to colonialism, certain bodies will have different stories and have perhaps a dissimilar embodied experience to our own, shaping what they have known and how they have experienced the world. If we listen, this will also influence and shape our worldviews, lenses, and epistemologies as well.

Dr. Lisa King also uses student stories as instrumental to the development of her Cultural Rhetorics course. She explains how students have a chance in that space to tell their own stories but also to learn lots of stories that they didn’t know before. And then to work out what their relationship is to those.” Dr. King draws from her own indigenous roots and knowledge,
grounding the work in indigenous pedagogies. She admits she does not label the approach as
decolonial but she does see the efforts as “a way to start challenging the narratives that students
think they know about this land.” She requests that the students share their stories but then also
provides them with “a broader base to work with” and she then “asks them to tell their own
stories in relationship to that.” Ultimately, she uses storying to “subvert—both the Euro-
dominant narrative but also the Greco Roman narrative in Rhetoric and Writing.” Interestingly,
King sees the change that she is making as important not only for her students, their education
and understanding of rhetoric. But moreover, King also notes that the experiences that students
have in this cultural rhetorics class has “created some pushback with some of my colleagues.”
She explains that “students will come out of my class and go to a different Rhetoric class and
note indigenous rhetorics or want to talk about how the Greco-Roman tradition is not the only
one. In this way, her efforts of using storying, cultural rhetorics and knowledge, has “forced
them (her department) to change up a little bit of what they do, so as to now embarrass
themselves anymore.”

Again, while King does not label her work as decolonial, I would argue that her moves
are decolonial in their efforts, in how this dissertation approaches the word, because they
challenge dominant narratives and make space for non-western ways of knowing. King does this
by starting with and using storying as a method of gaining access to having important
discussions. She explains how she uses this classroom space to “tell the stories that need to be
told,” stories that students “may not have heard before.” She outlines the goal for her students
when she says that “the class is meant to help you process” and what she wants is “respect—
respect for listening, but you all will have a chance to talk as well.” King sums up her focus on
stories in the Cultural Rhetorics classroom and how the students interact with them when she says:

So the class becomes a space to air these stories, to tell these stories, that they’ve had to keep so close and they’re burdened by and they need people to hear. They need people to listen. So, in a lot of ways, it becomes a listening circle, it becomes a place to tell these stories. Because I have the students present on all of their projects…so tell your story, as part of it. Or, you tell your research as a story and everybody gets to listen in and dig through what the implications are and how they connect to this.

King draws from indigenous ways of knowing and highlights “the rhetorical power of being willing to listen, of the desire to listen,” noting how “that makes all the difference, it really does. To create that kind of space.” King makes a clear connection between making space for stories, recognizing that storying as a method may work beyond research but also extend to a decolonial pedagogical practice as well.

Undoubtedly the reverence of storying already exists as key to many indigenous education curriculums (MacKay). Therefore, I do not present these two terms, indigenous pedagogy and decolonial pedagogy, as synonyms; undoubtedly there are distinctions. And one way that I may do this decolonial work is in recognizing that by using story as methodology derives from indigenous ways of knowing. I must see that and acknowledge that, as a non-indigenous person, since decolonial efforts involve actively thinking and doing (Mignolo), storying with and among my students, demonstrating that I revere stories, especially their stories. In stating this, I also not claim an indigenous approach or am trying to market a new branch of indigenous pedagogy that I may use and refer to it as decolonial pedagogy. Rather, I wish to recognize the origins of storying in indigenous epistemologies and admit my own embodied role
in learning from them as a non-indigenous person: I cannot claim these pedagogical practices as indigenous in roots, although similarities may exist. I cannot as I lack an indigenous cultural base; consequently, to do so would be to enact cultural appropriation and further perpetuate paracolonialist practices (Johnson). I strive to act in solidarity with indigenous peoples and other non-western epistemologies, revering their knowledges and learning from them in how I may practice research, do scholarship and teach. These practices are important ways that I may do decolonial work, whether through scholarship or pedagogy. At the same time, I aim to continue to honor stories and to focus on them as key to research in Rhetoric and Composition and in teaching writing.

Similarly, Participant Sundy Watanabe provides examples of how she draws from indigenous roots to inform her own scholarship and that it influences her teaching. Although not an indigenous person herself, she highlights how indigenous ways of knowing and studying indigenous methods have informed her approaches to teaching and valuing of stories. She draws from both Critical Indigenous Research Methods, noting how she learned that researchers must practice the 4 R’s of Indigenous Philanthropy: respect, reciprocity, relationship and responsibility. She extends this practice to storying and listening to her students in the classroom. She explains that “part of indigenous epistemology is respect” which means that you want “to make sure that voices are heard.” At the same time, she admits that “this is walking a fine line” because “You don’t want those voices to undercut the students of color that were in the classroom.” Here, Watanabe shows her understanding of the importance of recognizing voices, which I would argue is critical to sharing and listening to stories. She also notes and accounts for the embodiment of the storyteller, or in this case, perhaps, the student. By embodiment here I mean, again, how colonialist practices tend to prioritize certain bodies or knowledges, ways of
sharing history and theories, declaring certain ones as superior to others. I would argue that this happens in both the academic scholarship and in classrooms, as the colonial matrix of power overarches both of those realms. Such discussions inevitably involve conversations surrounding race, cultures, and, as Watanabe later points out, power. Watanabe, although she hesitates to use decolonial, does articulate her teaching goal as “trying to undo some of the ways of thinking. You don’t have think about them that way…we also need other ways of thinking. There are, you know, cultures that have other ways of thinking, that a Euro-western thought isn’t the only way to be and think and know and do and value.” Though Watanabe does not use the phrase, storying as methodology in her account, she understands and prioritizes storying and recognizes its ties to indigenous ways of knowing. She sees her work in focusing research, scholarship and the classroom on indigenous ways of knowing and pushing back against western methods as a decolonial frame. She provides one example of drawing from indigenous epistemologies to inform her pedagogy and how even though she is a non-indigenous person, she prioritizes storying in the classroom.

As previous chapters have explained, while is difficult to define or pinpoint efforts of decoloniality, of decolonial thinking and doing, as efforts to break away, to delink from colonialism is a huge endeavor and colonialism continues to affect society in so many ways. The participants of this research were also aware of the magnitude of doing decolonial work. Many admitted to this as they shied away from claiming themselves as decolonial teachers. Understandably, the large scope of colonialism and need for decoloniality can often make us overwhelmed or boggled with possibilities, certainly when attempting to translate this epistemology into teaching practices. Perhaps we feel that we are unable to truly delink, and because of that, that we continue to live in a colonial matrix of power. Consequently, we are
hesitant to label our efforts, whether through scholarship or pedagogy, as decolonial. I heed this warning, I understand its purpose and I intend to exercise caution, especially in labeling storying as methodology as decolonial work. At the same time, I also noted from the participants how in not talking about colonialism and aiming at decolonial efforts, we may also limit the conversations surrounding paracolonialism, however unintentionally. Fearing labels or categorization as they may create binaries or hierarches is important and admitting to embodied limitations and perpetual systemic colonialism is needed. However, I would argue that it is equally important to actively reject paracolonialist tendencies, in thought, in writing, in research and in teaching. I think that there is an importance in conversing about those goals and in labeling them as decolonial, or in this case, as resisting to colonialism. We may never truly break free from colonialism, but in intentional decolonial efforts, such as rightful and respectful use of storying as methodology, we may start to embrace non-western epistemologies and promote cultural rhetorics within the discipline.
CHAPTER IV THE ROLE OF RHETORICAL LISTENING AND AWARENESS OF EMBODIMENT FOR SETTLERS: INSTRUMENTAL TO STORYING AS METHODOLOGY, TO DECOLONIALITY, AND TO DECOLONIAL PEDAGOGY

“We need to listen and offer students the opportunities to listen to the stories of others—all others.”

~Krista Ratcliffe

In the previous chapter, I discussed how story as methodology is critical to decolonial efforts of research, writing scholarship, and teaching as well as fostering right relationships and respecting individuals’ stories whether in the classroom or in writing. In chapter two, we discussed a settlers’ approach to understanding decoloniality to involve a lexicon of Mignolo’s terms coupled with awareness of lived, embodied experiences and identities, necessary elements to constructing a settlers’ decolonial pedagogy. In this final chapter, I move to discuss how rhetorical listening acts as an indispensable element to decolonial efforts, specifically in a settlers’ approach to decolonial research and pedagogies. Drawing from the theories expressed in the previous chapters, specifically the relationship between storying, embodiment, relationality, I now move onto discussing the important role that rhetorical listening must have in settlers’ decolonial efforts. I would remind readers, again, that paracolonialism and decolonial efforts may not exist in a vacuum or as a uniform set of practices, approached in an objectified or homogenized way. Because of this reality, decolonial efforts and pedagogies often emphasize and prioritize story as methodologies, inherently requiring an audience, or a group of listeners, but demanding a specific kind of humbled, embodied rhetorical listening. Moreover, in cultivating right relationships among settler-indigenous relations, I argue that this type of
listening is necessary, as well as being conscious of embodied differences, an indispensable part of theorizing a settlers’ approach to decolonial pedagogy.

To that end, in this chapter I will draw from feminist scholars in rhetoric and composition and their stances on rhetorical listening. I will explain how rhetorical listening has previously been discussed in the field but clarify how I see it still as limited and differing from the humbled, embodied, rhetorical listening, instrumental to decolonial efforts and a settlers’ decolonial pedagogy. Krista Ratcliffe, feminist and rhetoric and composition scholar, is widely recognized for taking up the issue of listening, examining how it applies to our understanding and interpretation of rhetoric(s) and knowledge and meaning-making. In her book, *Rhetorical Listening, Identification, Gender and Whiteness*, she outlines rhetorical listening as “a stance of openness that a person may choose to assume in relation to any person, text, or culture” (p. xiii). Ratcliffe also takes up this topic in her piece, “Rhetorical Listening: A Trope for Interventive Invention and ‘A Code of Cross-Cultural Conduct’,” discussing how listening is an instrumental part of rhetoric. While she acknowledges that western approaches view listening as an instrumental to rhetoric, she also contends that it remains the least studied rhetorical element, taking a back seat to the more prioritized ones of reading, writing and speaking. Indeed, Ratcliffe’s attention to rhetorical has resulted in a lot of subsequent scholarship in the discipline surrounding rhetoric and listening. In the introduction to *Silence and Listening as Rhetorical Arts*, Ratcliffe and fellow feminist rhetorician, Cheryl Glenn discuss some of these works and how scholars in the discipline have built on the discussion of rhetorical listening to fit their disparate interests and focuses of study, including looking at rhetorical listening within the composition classroom and how it may inform pedagogy. Undeniably, because classes in the humanities, namely Composition courses, often involve facilitated discussions, led by instructors
with participation of students encouraged, then it stands to reason that, obviously, rhetorical listening is crucial as well. Undoubtedly Glenn and Ratcliffe have initiated scholarly discussions of silence and listening as necessary rhetorical knowledge and meaning-making, drawing attention to them as lesser studied aspects from Euro western ways of understanding rhetoric and from the Greco-Roman tradition.

While I note these feminist scholars’ contributions to discussions surrounding rhetorical listening, it is also important to note the contributions of other cultural rhetoricians in the field of Rhetoric and Composition. Other women of color have noted, like Malea Powell, and Terese G. Monberg have also made important contributions to discussions surrounding the importance of listening as rhetoric. Their scholarship helps us to see that when engaging in rhetorical listening, we need to re-focus the conversation, understanding both what rhetorical listening may include, listening for not just what is said and written, but also for the absences, which involves always considering and never discounting cultural knowledges and rhetorics, but centering them on rhetorical listening (Powell, “Listening for Ghosts”). In doing so, we must reframe the discussion on rhetorical listening. I would argue that if we fail to do so, that is, to refocus the epistemological frame, listening for exclusions and lesser esteemed cultural knowledges and embodied differences, then we may fall prey to what Mignolo refers to as the zero-point epistemology, again, defaulting to western preferences for understanding and studying rhetoric, treating all listeners as homogenous or as some unified group. In this chapter, I will examine how feminist rhetoricians have theorized rhetorical listening and the ways each have configured the role of race, power and imperialism in the discussion, while also noting the need to decolonize their take on rhetorical listening to allow for a humbled, embodied rhetorical listening to emerge, that is more decolonial in efforts and borrows from a cultural rhetorics orientation. I will then
draw from the participants’ stories and their insights into how to rhetorically listen in a more active thinking and doing, decolonial manner.

For example, before the publication of Ratcliffe’s *Rhetorical Listening: Identification, Gender and Whiteness*, Dr. Powell, in her 2002 piece, “Listening to Ghosts” drew our attention to how rhetorical listening may involve listening to ghosts, noticing the absent voices, also an instrumental part of listening. Powell further urged the discipline to “build a notion of rhetoric that ‘both listens and speaks’ differently to those included and omitted. Following suit, Terese Guinsatao Monberg took up Powell’s call, contending that, for Asian Pacific American rhetoric, listening is indispensable. She both theorized and enacted listening in her piece, recognizing it as “an emergent, diverse, often transcultural and transnational tradition” (p. 104). In drawing from her own culture and the oral history practices of listening and meaning making, Monberg sees listening as “both a method for uncovering and for making an Asian Pacific American rhetoric” (p. 103). Monberg guides settlers to understand that rhetorical listening plays an important role in valuing, esteeming and learning from other cultural rhetorics and knowledges and must also be an important aspect of settlers’ decolonial efforts.

Later, Gesa Kirsch and Jacqueline Royster Jones would also contribute to the conversation surrounding listening with their piece, *Feminist Rhetorical Practices: New Horizons for Rhetoric, Composition and Literacy Studies*, by offering terms of strategic contemplation and critical imagination, which I see, as fundamental aspects of what Powell was calling for: a critical awareness and mindful cognizance, a listening, of specific absences in the scholarly conversations. Though I admire the efforts of Ratcliffe and other feminist rhetoric scholars, as a cultural rhetorician and in making decolonial efforts, I see need to listen for cultural differences and the biases and injustice that their arguments were not as highly revered.
Therefore, indispensable to this conversation is also the importance of considering embodiment and learning from inter-cultural relationships, learning to listen across cultural divides. By extension, I would argue that humble, cross-cultural rhetorical listening is a critical aspect of engaging in decolonial work as a non-indigenous person, in terms of participation in the discipline and in scholarly conversations, forming relationships across ethnicities and cultures.

We may look to other research and projects of cultural rhetoricians as examples for how they approach listening. For example, Dr. Riley Mukavetz in her doctoral research, focused extensively on listening to the stories and lived experiences of American Indian women, seeing them as theories, using them to constellate themes and construct a framework. Likewise, Dr. Pauline Baird, in her project, engaged in a cultural rhetorical listening necessary in hearing stories from Buxtonian women. Although Baird identifies her methodology as a collaborative, communal approach to “asking,” what we see from both her and Dr. Riley Mukavetz’s work is that rhetorical listening is instrumental to research on cultural rhetorics. We may look to these pieces, as well as Monberg and Cordova, as specific examples in how rhetorical listening is practiced within cultural rhetoric approaches. I also see this to parallel this decolonial pedagogical research, since listening is an instrumental part of storying, and in using storying as a methodology, in research, in scholarship and in the classroom, and to build theory. In these above pieces by Monberg, Riley Mukavetz and Baird, we should note how rhetorical listening, coupled with fostering inter-cultural relationships, cultural sensitivity and self-reflexivity, is not simply one component, but inter-related and residing at the center of what it means to rhetorically listen.

For that reason, I would also contend that listening is also fundamental to rhetorical effectiveness for any teacher, in any classroom setting, but arguably, even more to constructing a
settlers’ approach to decolonial pedagogies. We must listen with cultural sensitivity, self-reflectively; doing so is to act as humbled, rhetorical listeners and aware of embodied differences. In previous chapters I have discussed how an instrumental aspect of decolonial pedagogy must involve story as methodology, as a research method, writing tool, and pedagogical practice. I further argued that storying must be reconceived as a theory, acting as a tool, as methodologies, applied across research contexts and classroom communities. However, while some may find it assumed, it is worth noting that to consider storying as methodology, we also must strive to consider the role that listening plays in storying. Therefore, rhetorical listening must be understood to have an important presence when storying and using storying as methodologies, indispensable for a settlers’ approach to decolonial work and decolonial pedagogy.

Indeed, Ratcliffe makes important strides in acknowledging the importance of cultural components to rhetoric, knowledge building and meaning-making when she points out how “learning occurs not only when we listen to the claims in other people's stories but also when we listen to their cultural logics, or rather the competing cultural logics that stories expose” (214). I see Ratcliffe highlighting differences in cultures, but more importantly, what her argument misses is that there are sound and solid reasons for doing things that exist across cultures. There are various cultural logics and reasonings, ways of doing things and understanding the world, across cultures even if or when they may appear foreign, confusing or baffling to certain vantage points, which is when we need to reserve judgment and listen to understand, not to inform. Perhaps similarly to literary theories, commonly defined by critical lenses, that influence how we see and make sense of the world, academics in Rhetoric and Composition ought to learn from this, and from cultural rhetoricians, paying more attention to how these cross cultural differences
play out in communication, meaning making and rhetorical knowledges. Then we may start to see those who practice cultural rhetorics, or more specifically, American Indian rhetorics, Chicana rhetorics, indigenous rhetorics, etc, among others, as vital to the field. I would argue that rhetorical listening for cultural differences is increasingly more significant in the Humanities at present, with increasing interdisciplinary conversations and transdisciplinary approaches ballooning outward, impacting research and scholarly discussions. Also, within the FYW, we see how globalization, cultural varieties and multi-lingualism in our classrooms make the intercultural communication and cultural sensitive even more important to consider how we frame our pedagogical approaches to teaching Rhetoric and Composition. Ratcliffe outlines rhetorical listening as an interpretive invention, but more specifically, she looks at how it functions as a code of cross-cultural conduct, drawing from terms coined by Dr. Jaqueline Jones Royster. Ratcliffe clarifies that rhetorical listening exists as “another way of helping us continually negotiate our always evolving standpoints, our identities, with the always evolving standpoints of others. It is also another way of helping us recognize that our standpoints are not autonomous points of static stases but rather complex webs of dynamically intermingled cultural structures and subjective agency.” (p. 209). Her quote above shows how listening helps in formulating our own opinions on matters and in helping us to understand our own selves. However, I would argue that assumed within this statement, is the implied, but vital component that the rhetorical listener must exhibit humility and an open-mindedness, a willingness to allow his/her/heir standpoints to shift, allowing for a re-negotiation of identity. Even more complex, perhaps, is that role of listener is not constant, and certainly, within rhetorical conversations we are constantly shifting from orator to listener. Because of these shifting roles, and the open-mindedness required, truly mindful and humbled rhetorical listening is difficult. It is a skill that
must be continuously practiced and monitored, re-checked and re-adjusted, especially in the case when cultural differences further muddle meanings. To do this humbly, actively and with our bodies and awareness of embodied differences, is to do decolonial rhetorical listening.

Now that I have analyzed rhetorical listening in Rhetoric and Composition scholarship, I turn our attention to the participants’ stories, insights, learning how to do decolonial rhetorical listening. Though Ratcliffe attempts to encapsulate gender and racial elements and intersections in her discussion surrounding rhetorical listening, I would argue that there is a great need to unpack regarding the cultural component. There is a great deal more to be said, and listened to, regarding cultural varieties of communications, rhetorical listening. Culture is not one component of listening, but it may completely reshape or redefine how listening is practiced and regarded. Cultural rhetorics approaches can aid us in further developing these approaches and understanding our lack of neutrality, especially as a discipline, in how we view “cultural varieties of communication” and how it affects our understanding(s) of rhetoric, as knowledges and meaning-making. Perhaps one way that we may genuinely participate in rhetorical listening as an interpretive invention and crossing cultural codes, as Ratcliffe describes it, is by listening and learning about cultural differences, rhetoric differences, and others’ embodied experiences and putting that at the center.

But, this begs the question: how do we listen if we don’t understand, if we have such a different cultural base and epistemological frame of reference from other speakers, scholars, students? How do we listen and really hear intended meaning, especially if we lack cross-cultural experience or understanding, as white people? And as non-indigenous folks? Moreover, if we are not able to do this, then how do we expect to guide our students to doing it? This is where cultural rhetorics has an important role in the field of Rhetoric and Composition studies. By
extension, we may envision rhetorical listening as indispensable to decolonial work, whether that work involves decolonial research or decolonial pedagogy. I advocate for settlers to listen to cultural rhetoricians and listen for their work, paying attention to the absences as well, since they act as important voices to scholarly conversation. They also are instrumental to esteeming non-western epistemologies, to doing decolonial work, specifically if we aim to revision rhetorics as important knowledge and meaning-making practices and culturally dependent.

In engaging in this listening, there are many factors to consider; Ratcliffe takes up Jacqueline Royster Jones’ call to translate listening into language and action. She points out the need to work within the balance of allowing for differences and commonalities to both exist, while also seeking not to erase them or attempt to minimize them. As I discussed previously, in chapter two that looked at decoloniality, listening for both commonalities and differences, is important, but I would also contend that it is only part of the picture. I turn to the participants, decolonial scholars and educators, seeking to understanding how they understand listening in their role as scholars, community members, researchers, and educators.

Decolonial Rhetorical Listening—Rhetorical Listening Across Cultural Divisions

Rhetorical listening may be a vital component to engaging in decoloniality and decolonial pedagogy. Christina explains her take on it, seeing that decoloniality may “teach us about our connections to people and having respect for all others that doesn’t necessarily have to hinge on them being in the same culture, or speaking the same language or anything.” While Cedillo recognizes this potential of decoloniality, she also points out how this requires or assumes a specific kind of rhetorical listening. She notes that this rhetorical listening involves treating others with respect, but she moves beyond a simplistic proverb, noting the need to not assume objectivity for all. She explains, “We can all agree that if we want to be treated well we have to
treat others with respect as well, but that said, what does respect look like when different people need different things?” For this reason, she explains, that one of the things that we have to do, while considering varying cultures and different embodied experiences, is “to practice rhetorical listening.” She sees that along with this rhetorical listening, that a significant part of it is to resist the urge in “wanting to be empathetic” so much so that it becomes paralyzing or that “we can’t express empathy.” She explains that rhetorical listening entails allowing a person to tell his/her own story, but then not claiming objectivity, that “nobody gets to speak for everyone.” She repeats this, to emphasize the point, and adds that “in order to be empathetic and to recognize others humanity,” then instead of saying “this is how it is,” that all you can do is say “this is how it is from my perspective—what’s it like from yours?” Here, I see Christina as acknowledging subjectivity, rhetorical listening and cultural differences, however, even more, she also turns the question back on the one enacting empathy. Perhaps this comes down to intention, and it highlight the need for the listener to have a genuine desire to really listen, to learn, and to understand, rather than to overly relate and to identify with the speaker. While it is important to make connections, it is also important to be humble about learning and differences, simply allowing stories with their commonalities and variations, to just be, without seeking to homogenize them. Cedillo states this next, when she explains: “you don’t get to blanket statement everybody.”

In this way, Cedillo illustrates that rhetorical listening plays a vitally important part of being accountable to others, to forming relationships with them and building community with others. We simply must listen to one another’s stories and experiences, while not evaluating other’s experiences, judging them from our own different cultural viewpoint or embodied experiences. In this way, settlers may take a lesson from Christina, understanding this as
Cedillo illustrates the need to avoid this homogenizing and objectifying, oppressing empathizing with a story from her class. She shares a story from her class when a white woman student tried to liken her own experiences in facing marginalization as largely similar to the experiences of a younger black male student, also in the class. Cedillo recounts: “I remember years ago I had this one older, white woman who basically turned to a younger black male in the class and basically said, ‘well, you know, because I’m a woman…I feel like I know where you’re coming from…you know what oppression feels like and therefore, I think our conditions are the same.” She recalled her own reservations in hearing this dialogue take place in the classroom between students and reflected on this experience, by stating, “The thing is, unfortunately, as long as you’re claiming to understand, you can’t.” Here, Cedillo reminds us of the need to be actively listen, to try to understand, but to couple it with a humility and awareness of embodied differences. I would argue that this is the way that Christina she teaches us how to decolonize rhetorical listening.

Listening for differences is important, and we ought to consider both commonalities and differences in identifying with others. Dr. Cedillo notes this important distinction when she articulates that, “the claim that ‘we’re all suffering under colonization’ enacts erasure by ignoring the fact that some people suffer under settler colonization and colonialism and some derive privilege.” While an important part of decoloniality is to understand that none of us are truly immune from the throes of colonialism, the unfortunate reality is that that too often gets conflated with attempts to homogenize experiences, a—however unintentional---paracolonial practice, which we need to actively resist doing. In this way, I would argue that active rhetorical
listening and rejection of binaries and hierarchies or homogenization is decolonial rhetorical listening, especially vital for the work of settlers. I would further contend that awareness of this, checking our own privileges and undue advantages, awarded to us through colonialism, is also an instrumental to doing settlers’ decolonial work.

Christina shows us again, that the point in listening to stories of others, is not to solely identify or relate, as even empathizing may place re-center the listener. But the focus ought to be on learning from the other person, understanding that a story-teller, whether it is a student, colleague, or writer, holds different embodied experiences that we do not have or are never able to truly understand. Moreover, such humility and cultural sensitivity in rhetorical listening, I would argue, is an important part of practicing decolonial pedagogies, vitally important to allowing variations, or decolonial options, in experiences to exist. Through this story Cedillo suggests how there is more fruitfulness in focusing on the listening and allowing of differences to exist rather than jumping to, once again, homogenize experiences. She provides us further advice when she advocates that there is a great need to be overt in showing that, “this is my story and if somebody would like to share theirs, I’m more than willing to listen.” Here, we see a balance of storying and listening as key to decolonial work and settlers’ decolonial pedagogies. I would argue that this, balancing inter-cultural, humbled rhetorical listening about embodied differences, is how we make space for decolonial options and allow those conversations to take place. It is also instrumental in settlers’ decolonial pedagogies, making room, providing a platform for stories to be told, coupled with a specific, humbled kind of rhetorical listening.

The humility comes into play when we listen to try to understand, not to identify or speak for or on behalf of others. As Cedillo reminds us, it is important to know that “sometimes we just need to move aside, especially if we know that, hierarchically speaking, we are in a more
privileged situation.” Again, Cedillo draws our attention back to the paracolonialist realities of hierarchies and power imbalances in society, coupled with an awareness of embodied identity differences and individual privileges. Humbled, rhetorical listening, therefore, in a settlers’ decolonial pedagogy also must require a vigilance of embodied differences as well.

Role of Settlers in Efforts to Decolonizing Rhetorical Listening

Part of this interconnection and interwoven nature of rhetorical listening is that it requires that we engage in this type of listening while wearing multiple hats or in our many roles that we hold, as scholars, educators, community members, in relationship with one another. Phil Bratta, a white male, reflected on the importance of practicing rhetorical listening in relationships to others when discussing his role, or rather, his work as what others may deem an “ally.” He suggested that this rhetorical listening and forming of relationships are both key to practicing decoloniality and doing the work that others may identify as that of an ally. He articulates that, in his capacity as a white male, “I am required to listen and maybe try to understand but know that I will never fully understand, because a lot of time, you know, [because of] those lived experiences.” In this way, Bratta understands the role of humbled, rhetorical listening to also involve noting his own limitations of embodiment and differing embodied experiences. In highlighting that he is required to listen, Phil also puts forth his positionality, and his responsibility in listening, as a white male. In this way, he demonstrates his relational accountability in action, as he sees himself as accountable to his mentors and community of marginalized peoples. Not only does he listen, but he learns from other experiences, then self-adjusts, adapting how he communicates, listens and teaches and interacts with people of different bodies and cultural knowledges. This flexibility and adaptation also serves as an important part of humbled, rhetorical listening, since it cannot be divorced from an awareness of embodied
differences of differing relationships with paracolonialism and an acknowledgment of that. This humility and constant self-reflection are also instrumental to settlers’ decolonial efforts and ought to help to inform our settlers’ decolonial pedagogies as well.

Dr. Gail MacKay, drawing from her extensive knowledge on indigenous epistemologies, methodologies, and pedagogies, help others revision the notion of humility and ground it for non-indigenous people. She understands that humility must consider positionality and is foundational in forming relationships. She explains: “Humility is being able to listen to others and to understand and respect the limitations of our own knowing.” She takes time to specifically define and clarify this:

“We can all carry something away with it, that edifies us, but the situation has changed. So, I think, you know recognizing when we’re talking about positionality, recognizing the place that we occupy and share, that is absolutely integral. How are we in relationships to each other? To our own past experience and knowledge? What is it that we’re bringing and how do—and then all of these things come into play, like, oh, yes I’ve read all these books but maybe I don’t need to tell you everything I know. Maybe it’s important that I show a sincere curiosity about what else you’ve learned and then, you know, how does that fit together. And so it becomes an interesting construction, I think, you know, how does that fit together. And so it becomes an interesting construction, I think, you know, understanding our own positionality, being in place, being committed to a common purpose, being respectful listeners, having humility, but also having courage, you know, the opposite of humility is having courage because you not only say, oh no, I’m still learning, I can’t say anything. No! You have to say what your experience is. That’s your responsibility; you have that---you’ve been gifted with that experience.
You’ve been gifted with carrying that information forward, so when the time is right, so you have to be courageous and say, I can share this, right? But how people share it is everything, I guess.”

I quote Dr. MacKay at length here because she highlights significant but competing factors that must be balanced in a settlers’ role: the need to show sincere curiosity and humility, along with active, rhetorical listening with one another. Yet, at the same time, this decolonial work, as settlers, also demands a responsibility, a requirement to participate in active storying and listening. Perhaps this is what is so difficult about effective teaching, balanced relationships, and ultimately, a settlers’ approach to decolonial pedagogy. It involves navigating through and balancing competing roles and calls of duty. As a non-indigenous person, I have struggled to have a sense of ethos and confidence in sharing my own experiences and knowledge about indigenous epistemologies, for fear of culturally appropriating or speaking over others, or at the expense of someone else. This is a large part of the reason why I needed to shift my research question and reframe the approach to my rightful place and position as a decolonial teacher. However, as Gail teaches me, we also need to re-consider storying, participating and sharing, and humbled rhetorical listening as responsibilities. She teaches me that humility may come in the form of sharing and listening, necessary components of building of relationships, across cultural divides, scholarly conversations and within our classrooms.

Humbled, Rhetorical Listening in Decolonial Pedagogies

American Indian scholar and cultural rhetorician, Lisa King also uses the classroom as a space for storying and listening to take place, enacting her own approach to valuing cultural knowledges and individual stories and experiences, which I understand as her approach to enacting decolonial pedagogy. She explains how rhetorical listening functions within this setting:
“The class becomes a space to air these stories, to tell these stories, that they’ve had to keep so close and they’re burdened by and they need people to hear. They need people to listen. So, in a lot of ways it becomes a listening circle, it becomes a place to tell these stories. Because I have the students present on all of their projects as part of it. So you tell your story, as part of it. Or, you tell your research as a story and everybody…gets to listen in and dig through what the implications are and how they connect to this. And, you know, what does it mean that they didn’t know. And what does it mean that they know now?”

In this example from her own classroom, Lisa, like Christina, highlights the need to listen, learn something, but also to self-reflectively consider the implications of what was not known before the story was shared, which I see as humility and acknowledgment of embodied differences. Embedded in her classroom anecdote is an important consideration of a cultural rhetorician: whose knowledge and cultural epistemology gets referenced? Whose history is told or prioritized? Lisa continues her reflections on how this happens in her class, by saying:

“I kind of wish everybody would take a class like this that would, sort of, provide a space to listen and to think and to deeply invest yourself for a while in these questions. At the same time, if you require that then people begrudge you. They don’t want to—they feel like it’s being put upon them and so that’s willingness. I think what they don’t understand—they don’t understand the power, the rhetorical power of being willing to listen, of the desire to listen. That makes all the difference, it really does. To create that kind of space where people want to be there.”

Here, Lisa beautifully articulates how being willing or wanting to listen to others contains a certain rhetorical power. I see a connection to indigenous peoples’ understanding of power and
knowledge here, that you cannot take or give power; instead, it just is, and it must be understood as such, just allowed to exist.

Within these participants’ stories is important advice for settlers: We need to attend, to participate and to listen. This specific type of humbled, rhetorical listening is important to the foundation of any cross-cultural relationships, but especially for ones that strive to make genuine, respectful decolonial efforts. In providing insight into the role that settlers play in this, King explains:

“…it really, really matters, a lot, is to build relationships and I told Zek (Ezekiel) this before. And I know other people have told Zek this before. You show up. You do the work. You listen. And the kind of self-reflexivity that gets touted a lot in Critical Pedagogy circles, that’s really important too. But it’s not just self-reflexivity on its own, but it’s self-reflexivity in relationship to the community that you want to support. So, you’re always thinking, I don’t think that there’s ever a point at which you think, okay, there’s never a point at which, I think, and this goes for me because I kind of think I straddle both, both, sort of—coming from both heritages, I, you know, as much as I would like to fully identify as indigenous that doesn’t…. I mean, all the stories need to be told. And so, for me this is a kind of self-reflexivity that I have to keep coming back to, that my experiences are not the same as other indigenous folks’.”

Here, settlers may take a lesson from King and remember the importance of listening for differing stories and experiences of indigenous peoples, rather than seeking to homogenize them. King, herself, identifies as both American Indian and European descent. However, rather than merely claiming identification with one of her ethnicities and cultural base, even though indeed there may be similarities, she instead seeks to be self-reflective and to consider variations and
differences. Essentially, she seeks to rhetorically listen and humbly engage in cross-cultural variations. In this way, she shows us how we may do decolonial rhetorical listening.

In turning to Ezekiel’s account, he also sees relationships as taking time, but that having active membership in a community also requires humbled, rhetorical listening of one another:

“…other relationships, like, working at community centers, those relationships are built over time and you have to continually show up and do the work in order to maintain membership within that community, right? And that was something that I learned from participating in Native American and Indigenous caucus, the one who shows up and raise my hand and say a couple things here and there. I had to be willing to listen. And I had to be willing to just be in this space, right? And so if somebody needed something I could help them. If somebody wanted to ask me something, I could engage with them, you know. If I had the time, before the meeting, it was getting down to the meeting early and setting up the chairs in a circle.”

Active, rhetorical listening for settlers, as scholars, researchers and educators, also entails carefully framing a piece or curriculum in such a way that allows colleagues and students to be able to rhetorically listen. Ultimately, I strive for this both in this dissertation and in a decolonial approach within the classroom. Being given opportunities to “listen to” indigenous scholars and reflect on power dynamics and imbalances and racial dynamics, even in writing/quotiting, may guide readers in what they ought to “listen to.” Christina teaches this to me, after addressing some of my fears, that I would culturally appropriate, unsure of how to approach those in the discipline of Rhetoric and Composition, engaging them in these cross-cultural, interdisciplinary conversations with indigenous epistemologies.

Here, Christina shares from her own experiences in balancing listening and sharing:
“For me it was very much about, this is me wanting to signal actively that this is why I’m doing this because I want to center this and this approach to rhetoric that has deliberately been obscured, because of the racial dynamics and the power dynamics of our society, point blank. For me it became this thing, it became this thing like, no, you’re going to listen to what the scholar has to say, right?”

Similarly, Sundy who also prioritizes indigenous epistemologies, research methodologies and readings in her curriculum, also sees listening as an act of making space. She requires that students “listen to” readings from indigenous authors and to the indigenous speakers that visit her class. From there, these readings and topics are prioritized in class discussions, requiring additional engagement and rhetorical listening. She admits that due to her whiteness, she is constantly negotiating this identity. She explains:

“It’s a continual struggle, I think, for me. And it depends on the space that I am in. When I am with the Indigenous caucus at C’s, right, I feel very at home. I feel like they know my work. I can contribute. Not so much in other spaces, right? And so I feel more questioning from other white people about whether I’m appropriating than I do from the…my colleagues who are doing similar work. And perhaps it’s because those colleagues understand some of the difficulty but they also know our history, that we’ve established, that I’ve established through work, through my scholarship, and so, you know, it’s a matter of also being, for me, a little more rhetorically aware and figuring out and practicing. That is one thing I would say to you is practice the kinds of ways of being in different spaces. So that you can be a strong voice in multiple spaces, not just, like me when I’m surrounded by other indigenous scholars.”
Such efforts are difficult, yet she points out to us, again, that there is a balance in
listening and storying as both very important but sometimes competing skills. The need to listen
and share are in constant flux, changing and shifting depending on our audience, our
relationships to those members in our community.

Listening in the Scholarly Community, Awareness of Embodiment

Bratta also understands the act of listening and storying, to involve doing the work, and
that the focus has to also involve serving, on action. He explains that this has affected how he
sees the role of being named as an ally. As Phil is someone very active in Indigenous
communities and the American Indian caucus, I asked him how he negotiates his role in that
group, as a white, male. He explained:

“I can’t really call myself an ally…I don’t think I’m in a position to judge whether or not
I am an ally. If those who are dealing with much more oppressive systems…those are the
people that I would let make that assessment of whether or not I’m an ally. And I say that
because….to be an ally you have to know, who your allyship is with, and what they want.
And that kind of feels like a colonizing act, for me to know what the other wants and
what they so desire. Does that mean I don’t listen to others? No. I try to ask questions and
listen to gain a better sense of the decisions I should make and not make.”

Here Bratta subverts the discussion and places the emphasis again on decolonial work, the
thinking, doing and being, rather than on assuming a label.

He continues by explaining: “If some don’t approve, and don’t want to call me an ally,
then I’m actually more receptive to hearing that than whether or not I’m considered an ally…I’m
much more interested in being called out for when I’m not an ally because then I am required to
listen and maybe to understand, but know that I will never fully understand, because…I can’t get
out of my body and get into someone else’s body. So, a lot of it is listening and making adjustments.” I had previously mentioned that this quote could be understood as efforts to do decolonial thinking and doing, and true, it is. However, what I also notice from these two stories is how Bratta places a larger emphasis on the work of rhetorical listening, and then adjusting. In short, the participation, the talking, the actions, the claiming of a title or in naming, are just not as important or should not be as important in a settlers’ approach to decolonial rhetorical listening. Moreover, the balance also seems to be vitally important in participating in the role, perhaps not as a self-determined ally, but perhaps as a co-conspirator, acting in solidarity.

Though I understand a settlers’ decolonial efforts entails a great number of factors. Indeed, there is a lot to consider, to think about, to monitor. As scholars of rhetoric, we understand rhetoric to involve many components, and cultural rhetorics and awareness of embodied differences make it undoubtedly even more complex. And though it seems strenuous, and entails extending conversations in discipline, still, as articulated by American Indian and Cultural Rhetorics professor, Dr. Malea Powell, the need is great, and listening is vital. Though Powell does not use the verb listening, she illustrates how we must listen for silences and ghosts, commenting on the need to both “unveil the logic of coloniality and the prospective task of contributing to build a world in which many worlds coexist” (as qtd in Powell “Stories Take Place: A Performance in One Act” 392). Powell goes onto to explain that for academics aiming to do decolonial work, it means that we must strip western epistemology of “the pretense that it is the point of arrival and the guiding light of all kinds of knowledge” (Mignolo, as qtd in Powell, “Stories Take Place: A Performance in One Act 392). She clarifies that these actions, that this shift is “of epic proportions where our job as teacher is always to deframe” (402). For Rhetoric and Composition scholars, she invites all to be “a part of de-linking and de-
chaining…from imperial designs” (Powell “Stories Take Place: a Performance in One Act” 394). Dr. Powell clearly implies that before decoloniality can be done in the field and done within the classroom, an understanding of decoloniality must occur. I would also argue that if we are to truly take up Powell’s call, then we must reconsider humbled, rhetorical listening as decolonial thinking, being, and doing, listening to all bodies, stories and differing experiences. And that such decolonial efforts must be also the role of settlers, within the academy, within the field, and within the classroom.

I conclude this dissertation with a chapter that discusses humbled, rhetorical listening because, while it is critical for anyone hoping to engage in effective teaching, I would contend that it is especially imperative to consider when theorizing a settlers’ approach to decolonial pedagogy. When we practice rhetorical listening that is humbled, and aware of embodied differences—the notion that since people have different bodies that they also will have varying relationships to colonialism—then it paves the way for us to have a greater awareness and acknowledgment of realizing our white privilege. Only then can we make important strides in pushing back against and resisting generational complicity in colonialism. As Phil Bratta reminds us, we cannot get out of our bodies and experience life from another person’s experiences, but through that constant reflection, acknowledgment and awareness, coupled with humbled rhetorical, listening, then we are more likely to learn from others’ experiences. That is the path to forming accountable, genuine relationships with colleagues and students, being accountable to others and to ourselves, important to doing settlers’ decolonial work, whether through research, relationships or in the classroom.
EPILOGUE: CARRYING FORWARD: MAKING SPACE FOR ALL THE STORIES

I conclude by celebrating the change in direction of this research. I want to highlight that this dissertation will conclude by focusing on a different research question than the one with which I began. Such revisions, as we teach our students in writing classes, are not only permitted, but they are necessary and may serve as points of growth, if we allow them to do so. As scholar Shawn Wilson points out, in Research is Ceremony, if your research does not change you, then you’re not doing it right. My research inquiries changed shape and focus, molded and re-directed from the stories and theories that emerge from participants and my own growth and evolvement, the product of emotional labor and mental homework. I understand this now to also act as an indispensable aspect of using storying as methodologies; as indigenous scholars have taught me, carrying these stories and knowledges onward in my body means that I have a responsibility. It requires a change in me, as a settler, through my epistemologies, shifting the entire research project and how I understand decoloniality and decolonial pedagogies.

I sought out to understand how I would do decolonial pedagogy; I now understand that I may engage in a decolonial pedagogy, but as Phil pointed out, our settlers’ versions may look different; they may be limited. But they are still stories and we still have a role; we must actively participate. I want us to say to us, as settlers and mainstream Rhetoric and Composition scholars, in moving forward, understand that we are called to act, but we are not allowed to act alone or to allow these efforts to remain stagnant. We are not expected to complete decolonial work, nor are we allowed to speak for all, offering some textbook definition or formula for how to do decolonial work, narrowing the scope to a single version of a settlers’ decolonial pedagogy. But neither are we allowed to abandon the work. If we are serious about interdisciplinary
conversations and social justice in academia, if we really strive to both be and to build critical thinkers, working toward a more democratic society and a more just and global world, then we are required to meditate on the implications of settler colonialism in our discipline, in our classrooms, in American universities. We must esteem non-western rhetorics and actively learn about their role in meaning making and knowledge making, which requires attention to indigenous epistemologies and a greater engagement with relationships of indigenous peoples and other peoples of color.

Furthermore, now cognizant that western ways of knowing are unfairly privileged and unquestioned, silenced and spoken over, we must actively strive to understand the role(s) that other cultural rhetorics play. We must seek to learn from what scholars of color and cultural rhetoricians do in helping us to reshape our understandings of cultural knowledges and the roles that they have in our teachings of rhetorics. We must strive to learn about and esteem how different cultures have varying knowledges, meaning making practices, and rhetorics, and then, as we learn, we must adapt. In this globalized and culturally diverse world, the academy and first year writing classrooms, we must evaluate how we approach and frame rhetorics, learning from the cultural rhetorics, and incorporating them. We must work at how we see them as viable, as rhetorics that inform our lives, cultures, communities, relationships, as well as our field, our individualized research methods, our scholarship, curriculum development, pedagogies. When we do this, actively strive to push back because we see paracolonialism at work, we may start to revere storying as methodologies and as the foundation for building theories. We may begin engaging in, forming and maintaining right relationships where we humbly and rhetorically listen, not only similarities, but for embodied differences as well. Then, if we do not ignore, silence or turn a blind eye, we instead may relearn, readjust and resist, then we start to do
genuine decolonial work as settlers. Indeed, these roles are challenging; the elements are interrelated and they are difficult, but all are necessary for our own growth and development, in our scholarly and personal relationships. Only then can we move forward in productive ways, further theorizing and practicing settlers’ decoloniality and settlers’ decolonial pedagogies. Perhaps it still seems paradoxical, but only after these processes can we proceed to formulate the practices and classroom assignments, curriculums and approaches of settlers’ decolonial pedagogies that so many of us hunger for.

Through the process of writing this dissertation, I have learned that it can be an important part of the process, in understanding decoloniality from a settlers’ perspective, and theorizing a settlers’ decolonial pedagogy, to allow my point of focus, my critical inquiry, to shift and to change directions. It was not always comfortable; it required me to be flexible and humble, resisting my western notions of what I understand “good research” to be, to always keep on with a set forth, pre-established research question and to answer those question(s). I began this dissertation project striving to understand how I could do decolonial pedagogy that was somewhat indigenous. I now understand and accept that settlers’ versions of decolonial pedagogies will have to be different since our identity politics and our relationships with colonialisms are also different. However, though difficult and in constant states of flux and active adjustment and readjustment, I am not allowed to ignore the work or to abandon the cause. I am called to engage, required to do so. In doing decolonial efforts, whether through research or scholarship or pedagogies, as a settler, requires mental and emotional labor and homework, coupled with an active, engaged and ongoing process of self-reflection and self-awareness. I must constantly work with and strive to balance rhetorical listening and storying. I must balance listening and sharing. I must serve the community of Cultural Rhetoricians and be accountable to
American Indian scholars, scholars of color, and all the intellectual elders. To do this means to consistently examine and re-examine the webbed knots of my own entangled relationship with modernity and colonialisms, other paracolonial practices and my existence with settler colonialism, always striving to learn from others’ stories and from differing embodied and lived experiences. I urge you all to do the same: even when we cannot understand, still we must not discount others or speak over them. Rather, we must acknowledge and admit to the limitations of our own cultural base, while still learning from indigenous epistemologies, honoring them and making space for them.

The participants have taught us through their stories and theories, that claiming decoloniality and striving for a total break from the colonial matrix of power is not possible, nor is it the goal. Such efforts are not what it means to delink. As Dr. Lisa King points out, the power is in the act of resistance and the awareness from decoloniality. In acknowledging that power and potential, we must engage in efforts to resist, to push back against paracolonialism, drawing attention, through scholarship, classroom readings, and classroom structure, to the many the ways that Americans, the academy, and the field of Rhetoric and Composition unknowingly participates in intergenerational complicity in colonialism. When we leave colonial practices unquestioned and unchallenged, we allow them to be upheld, to continue to exist, even to thrive. We are, as novelist Peter Carey reminds us, “beneficiaries of genocide,” and we must never forget that (as qtd in Convery). Instead, we must wrestle with that; it is part of our duty, part of our embodied reality, part of what it means to be white in 2018, to have benefited from colonialism and be given unfair and undue white privilege. We must consider epistemologies of bodies—our own and how they differ from other bodies. At the same time, part of the emotional homework involves reflection and dialogue on how that reality and paracolonialism affects not
only ourselves, but our field, whose rhetorics we value and whose knowledges we prioritize. Once we start to adapt this critical lens, spotting this unjust and undue over-privileging of western rhetorics, the unquestioned supposed superiority of western epistemologies, and how it affects our discipline and our writing styles, will we adapt a critical lens of decolonial efforts. Once we see this, and unlearn it, it becomes hard to un-see. Only after these extensive processes can settler scholars work at listening, engaging with people of color scholars and adapting, which will then allow us to form more right relationships in moving forward. When we have epistemically shifted and developed such critical lenses, these efforts also will guide us forward in settlers’ decolonial efforts, in crafting curriculums with indigenous epistemologies, constructing reading lists with works by other scholars of color and other cultural rhetoricians.

Perhaps, theorizing this framework and naming these processes will help guide us forward, as settlers. Then maybe we may no longer allow ourselves to be idle, to sit silently, but, instead, we’ll have conversations with students, with members of the discipline, across disciplines. To quote and to honor Dr. Malea Powell and her all her relations in the 2012 College Composition and Communication piece, “Take these stories. They are yours now. Do with them what you will.” We, settlers, are accountable.
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