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Decolonizing Ecology Through Rerooting Epistemologies

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**Decolonizing Ecology
Through Rerooting Epistemologies**

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Environmental Analysis and International & Intercultural Studies

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Acknowledgments

I first want to recognize that this project was carried out on Tongva land, so I give my gratitude and thanks to the Indigenous peoples to which this land belongs, as well as to the non-human living beings on this land, with which I was able to develop different relationships through this experience.

I am endlessly grateful to Barbara, who welcomed me into her life with kindness and welcomed me into a space that is very meaningful to her. I thank her for her immense knowledge and her willingness to share it with me. I want to show deep gratitude to Kat for her openness and for sharing her vast knowledge, stories, and beliefs with me. I thank both Barbara and Kat for allowing me to learn from them in a traditionally Indigenous way by teaching me while working with living things.

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I want to thank my mom for her love.

And I want to thank Daniel for always reminding me to believe in myself.

Introduction: Arriving

Plains Cree and Saulteaux scholar, Margaret Kovach, reminds us that it is important to evaluate your own purpose for the research and the way it is being conducted (Kovach 2009). She says that, “as with non-Indigenous researchers, its significance may depend upon their life context and how they engage with culture. This commentary defines cultural grounding as the way that culture nourishes the researcher's spirit during the inquiry, and how it nourishes the research itself” (Kovach 2009, 116). For me, this project has been about a process of decolonization. Therefore, I believe it is important to first look into my personal journey of how I arrived at this project and this way of thinking about the project.

I have had one previous experience conducting ethnographic research. During my semester abroad in Nepal, I researched women's roles in agriculture and domestic work through interviews and participant observation. I had intentionally decided to conduct my Independent Research Project in Tikathali—the community where my host family lived, the place where I had spent the previous four months. This was a conscious decision because I felt uncomfortable with the idea of entering a community where I would be a stranger, start asking them questions, and leave after three weeks, like many other students in the program do. So I continued to live with my host family in Tikathali and conducted my research project there. Even with these considerations, upon returning to the United States, writing my paper, and turning it into the study abroad office, I realized that none of the research went back to the community in Tikathali or benefited them in anyway. I simply observed my host family live their lives, wrote it down, and reduced their relationships with their families and their food, to a mere thirty pages. Something felt unsettling about that, but I didn't see a clear alternative way of approaching ethnographic research.

At the start of this semester, I came back to campus with plans to get involved with a food justice project that Pitzer students were in the process of getting started. The Pitzer in Ontario program had found a corner-store market that was willing to be converted into a market that sold fresh, organic, locally sourced produce. I hoped to use this project as a way to connect to the local community and planned on writing about it for my senior thesis. I aimed to investigate the ways in which people in Ontario had been marginalized by the globalized food system. I made the assumption that the community would be passionate about organizing themselves and fighting for food justice through gaining the access to fresh produce in local markets. However, after working on the project for a couple of weeks, it became clear to me that it was a Pitzer student initiative, but it wasn't necessarily a community-based grassroots effort. After spending some time speaking with the workers at the store, I realized that I had projected a romanticized notion of how all people in Ontario had a vision of food justice. I came to understand that this wasn't a project in which I wanted to be involved.

Through this realization, I remembered experiences I had had with community members who were *already* engaged with food practices that resisted the colonial/capitalist food system. These thoughts pointed to Mark Acuña, a Tongva Elder, and his work with the native plant garden on Pitzer's campus. He had given a tour of the garden to Pitzer students in a class called Resistance to Monoculture, and showed us the plants and described their practical, medicinal, and food uses. The Tongva are the Indigenous tribe of the Los Angeles Basin. I also remembered my interactions with Barbara Drake, a Tongva Elder, who I met through an Environmental Education class. In this class, Pitzer students taught 6th graders environmental education at the Bernard Field Station. Each year, Barbara Drake is invited to lead the classes, give the 6th graders a tour of the native plants, and teach the students about how the Tongva tribe use(d) the plants.

Upon this reflection, I decided I wanted to shift my project to focus on the local practices surrounding food that were already taking place in the community.

Following the writing style and methodologies of Opaskwayak Cree scholar, Shawn Wilson, I attempt to build a stronger connection between you, the reader, and those who have shaped this project. Wilson (2008) suggests that relationships are the key to Indigenous research paradigms, so I will tell you how those relationships with Indigenous Elders began. I contacted Barbara Drake and reintroduced myself to her, telling her that I wanted to write my senior thesis on Indigenous peoples' relationships to food and the environment. I asked if I would be able to speak with her about this topic, adding that I was happy to volunteer time in her garden as compensation. Barbara contacted me and invited me to meet with her at the community garden in Upland, which is called the “People and Their Plants” garden. I began working with Barbara each week in the garden throughout the semester and that is where we had conversations with each other, as well as where she taught me about native plants and their uses. I also attended a Native foods dinner event at the Haramokngna American Indian Cultural Center in the San Gabriel Mountains, where Barbara cooked with the Chia Cafe. The Chia Cafe is a group of people from the Tongva tribe as well as other tribes who get together to cook with native food ingredients. I offered to help at the event and I was able to spend time preparing food with other Indigenous Elders and members of the community. Here I met Kat High, a Hupa Elder and leader at the Haramokngna Center. A few weeks later I went back to the Center and spent some time talking with her and gathering acorns together. I knew that working with Indigenous communities was not simple or straight forward, given the history of colonization between Indigenous peoples and settler/colonizers. Therefore, decolonization has been at the heart of this project, allowing me to continue even when it has seemed impossible.

Here I outline several objectives for my thesis. First, through this project, I hope to learn of Tongva ecological relationships through the processes of learning difference, autoethnography, and by building relationships *with* the Tongva community, rather than through the *study of* Tongva people. Secondly, to provide a background for my exploration, I aim to understand how colonization of Indigenous peoples affects collective and individual relationships with land and food. The inspiration for an analysis of the colonization of land and food comes from Barbara's People and Their Plants garden because it represents a five hundred year living history—designed to show the changes in the ecological landscape of Southern California caused by colonization—by including native plants, plants brought by Spanish colonizers, plants used during the rancho period in California, as well as during the citrus period. The third objective of this project is to explore Tongva knowledges revolving around food practices and alternative economies that lie outside of the capitalist food system. This is linked to colonization by the way the food system and economy are normalized through a colonial ideology. The act of practicing Tongva foodways—foodways meaning the cultural as well as economic practices and worldviews surrounding food relationships—can be considered an act of decolonization because it resists colonizing epistemologies that work to erase Indigenous ways of knowing. The fourth objective is to build a reciprocal relationship with the Tongva tribe, by giving back to the community in a way that is useful to them, in this case, what is *useful* will be defined by the community itself.

My project is centered around the People and Their Plants garden and how it works within the decolonization framework. I saw that this community garden project was based on the tradition of gathering and harvesting food, and partly initiated because of the difficulties gaining access to land that the Tongva tribe encountered. Barbara and other members of the Tongva tribe

have built their own gardens in order to foster their relationships with native plants and use the plants in Indigenous ways for food, medicinal, and practical purposes. There are economic relationships within these practices that lie outside of the system of capitalism.

Underpinning these objectives for my thesis is the overarching process of decolonization. This process refers to decolonizing research methodologies, self-decolonization, as well as the broader movement of decolonizing food. The epistemological purpose of this thesis is to write about the topic at hand and simultaneously write about the politics of knowledge production regarding this topic. I aim to achieve these objectives through the exploration of several topics, including the colonial/capitalist food system, decolonizing food, ecological relationships and knowledges, reconnecting through gardening as a way of relearning history and sharing knowledge. These topics are guided by issues, ideas, thoughts, and concerns I have encountered through conversations with Barbara and Kat. It is an epistemological choice for me to not explicitly detail my conversations I had with Barbara and Kat. I refer to my interactions, which are based on my memories, in order to provide context for what I have learned from them and for my autoethnographic writing. The line between this and stealing knowledge that they have chosen to share with me is very thin. Throughout the paper, I attempt to find this balance.

In my thesis, I draw from the writings of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars. Although I do adopt methodologies from Indigenous scholars, I am not pretending to be Indigenous, and I am conscious of not claiming beliefs and values that do not belong to me as my own. Therefore, I attempt to consider difference in a way that destabilizes cultural binary oppositions.

Initially, I thought this paper may be for the Tongva tribe, but through this process, I have realized that I do not need to, or for that matter have anything to teach the Tongva community.

When thinking about this project, I thought about how “...one of the major complaints that Indigenous people have about the social sciences (and science in general)—[is] that researchers come from outside the community to 'study' Indigenous problems” (Smith 1999 qtd in Wilson 2008, 16). This has influenced me to focus this project on strength within the community— such as the profound ways in which Barbara, Kat, and others are working to revitalize ecological relationships.

Kovach explains, “from a social justice standpoint, Indigenous methodologies require methods that give back to community members in a way that is useful to them. Giving back involves knowing what 'useful' means, and so having a relationship with the community, so that the community can identify what is relevant, is key” (Kovach 2009, 82). So when I thought about what my thesis paper would mean for the Tongva community, I realized it would matter very little, because the Elders *already* know about their own histories and food/ecological relationships. I knew that the local Tongva community did not need my “help,” and therefore this project has been an act of resisting that learned impulse to want to “help” those who do not come from the same position of privilege that I do. However, I wanted to challenge conventional western academic research by having my project actually be useful to the community. I attempted to produce something that would not “teach” but would help support Barbara's work in the community. While working in the garden with Barbara one day, she mentioned that she was interested in creating some material about the garden. The next week I asked her if she would be interested in working collaboratively to co-author a project about the garden. She was enthused and began brainstorming ideas for the project, which would include photos of the plants in the garden as well as their histories to be used for educational purposes in the local community. This project culminated as a brochure combining text written by Barbara and photographs taken by

me. Barbara will use the brochure to spread awareness and encourage people to visit the garden.

These methodologies are also guided by the value of reciprocity, which is discussed in several Indigenous scholars' research paradigms. I believe it is my role to speak with my own non-Indigenous community and my academic peers—which are the intended audience for this paper—about the history of research in Indigenous communities, how we can reconsider the epistemologies we use in research, and how to reframe our methods in order to work within an anti-oppressive research paradigm.

Language

When examining the politics of language and the histories that contextualize their meaning and relationships with one another, it becomes an important task to specify how I think about and use certain terminology in this paper, especially because it is contested language.

Colonization

Assigning a stable definition to colonization is limiting, therefore I perceive the term to encompass multiple dimensions and effects. Indigenous scholar, Sandy Grande asserts, “‘colonization’ refers to a multidimensional force underwritten by Western Christianity, defined by white supremacy, and fueled by global capitalism” (Grande 2004, 88). This conception of the term extends beyond the physical occupation of a space to include economic, political, and cultural forces. Maori scholar, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, offers Nandy's conception of colonization. She explains the different phases of colonization:

“... from 'rapacious bandit-kings intent on exploitation, to 'well-meaning middle class liberals' intent on salvation as a legitimation of different forms of colonization. These phases of colonization, driven by different economic needs and differing ideologies of legitimation, still had real consequences for the nations, communities and groups of indigenous people being colonized. These consequences have led Nandy to describe colonization as 'shared culture' for those who have been colonized and for those who have colonized. This means, for example, that colonized peoples share a language of

colonization, share knowledge about their colonizers, and, in terms of a political project, share the same struggle for decolonization. It also means that colonizers, too share a language and knowledge of colonization” (Tuhiwai Smith 2012, 45).

Therefore, I treat the concept of colonization as a “shared culture” for both colonized and colonizer. It is also important to mention that power shapes and reshapes colonization. Joyce Green explains:

“Colonialism is both a historic and a continuing wrong. A term that encompasses economic and political practices, it refers to the appropriation of sovereignty and resources of a nation or nations, to the economic and political benefit of the colonizer. The practices by which colonialism is normalized and legitimated include racism, which is encoded in law, policy, subordination and immiseration of the colonized are understood as the inevitable consequence of their deficient civilization, lack of technological development and innate moral and intellectual incapacity” (Said 1979, 1994; Blaut 1993; Green 1995; Anaya 1996, 20 qtd in Green 2007, 143).

Thus, colonization continually impacts colonized communities and colonizers themselves in complex ways.

Decolonization

I consider decolonization in terms of a *process*—carried out by colonized peoples, and also as a process that extends beyond formal independence of a country—because for Indigenous people, these are still colonial times (Tuhiwai Smith 2012). According to Paulette Regan, a European-Canadian woman, decolonization can apply to non-Indigenous peoples as well. She states that decolonization is “a paradigm shift from a culture of denial to the making of space for Indigenous political philosophies and knowledge systems as they resurge, thereby shifting cultural perceptions and power relations in real ways” (Regan 2010, 189). Although the idea of “making space” can be problematic, it is important to recognize the need to shift from a paradigm of denial to truth-telling, while also rethinking power and how it has worked to shape Indigenous-colonizer relations.

Settler/Colonizer

I have adopted this term from Regan's work. She argues that there is a need for non-Indigenous people “to examine what it means to be a colonizer and our own need to heal and decolonize” (Regan 2010, 112). She explains:

“The image of colonizer as abusive perpetrator is at odds with the peacemaker myth, in which we tell ourselves that our settler ancestors, and by extension we ourselves, have always treated Indigenous people fairly, with a just and generous approach to resolving their problems...The power of dominant-culture hegemony lies in its very invisibility – violence that is masked in neutral dispute resolution processes in which we claim Indigenous peoples can find justice” (Regan 2010, 114).

Violence is masked through this invisibility. Settler/colonizers feel that they can continue to deny facing history and confront their own complicity in a framework of systematic violence. Through my writing, I examine my settler/colonizer identity and work towards self-decolonization through that process.

Indigenous

I have chosen to use the term, Indigenous, throughout this paper, however I do want to problematize and destabilize it as well. Tuhiwai Smith explores the use of the term. She says “the term 'indigenous' is problematic in that it appears to collectivize many distinct populations whose experiences under imperialism have been vastly different” (Tuhiwai Smith 2012, 6). She also notes that, “for many of the world's indigenous communities there are prior terms by which they have named themselves. There are also terms by which indigenous communities have come to be known, initially perhaps as a term of insult applied by colonizers, but then politicized as a powerful signifier of oppositional identity...” (Tuhiwai Smith 2012, 6). In this paper, when referring to a specific Indigenous person, I introduce them by their specific tribe, rather than trying to collectivize or essentialize them. Tuhiwai Smith writes about how the term originated

and how it is used as a tool of cooperative international empowerment for many Indigenous peoples:

“‘Indigenous peoples’ is a relatively recent term which emerged in the 1970s out of the struggles primarily of the American Indian Movement (AIM), and the Canadian Indian Brotherhood. It is a term that internationalizes the experiences, the issues and the struggles of some of the world’s colonized peoples. The final ‘s’ in ‘peoples’ has been argued for quite vigorously by indigenous activists because of the right of peoples to self-determination. It is also used as a way of recognizing that there are real differences between different indigenous peoples. The term has enabled the collective voices of colonized people to be expressed strategically in the international arena. It has also been an umbrella enabling communities and peoples to come together, transcending their own colonized contexts and experiences, in order to learn, share, plan, organize and struggle collectively for self-determination on the global and local stages” (Tuhiwai Smith 2012, 7).

Wilson addresses how the term is being reclaimed as a means of oppositional identity:

“The term Indigenous itself is in the process of being reclaimed by Indigenous people. In this respect, Indigenous differs from ‘small I’ indigenous, which is sometimes used to indicate things that have developed ‘home grown’ in specific places... As Indigenous people have become more active politically and in the field of academia, the term Indigenous, as an adjective, has come to mean ‘relating to Indigenous people and peoples.’ The word Indigenous carries political implications. The first peoples of the world have gained greater understanding of the similarity that we share... Indigenous is inclusive of all first peoples—unique in our own cultures—but common in our experiences of colonialism and our understanding of the world” (Wilson 2008, 16).

Therefore, I recognize the political implications of the language and use the term, Indigenous *peoples*, in order to acknowledge differences between Indigenous cultures as well as collective experiences with colonization.

Knowledges

Kovach says “in referencing *Indigenous knowledges*, I use this term in the plural” (Kovach 2009, 20). I also pluralize knowledges in order to refuse essentialization of *Indigenous knowledges*, and to instead recognize multiple knowledges and different forms of knowledge.

Kovach adds that, “*Tribal knowledge* refers to a specific tribal way of knowing (e.g., Nehiyaw);

the term *Indigenous knowledges*, however, acknowledges both the shared commonalities and the diversity of many tribal ways of knowing” (Kovach 2009, 20). I use the terms, *Tongva knowledge* to refer to the Tongva's specific way of knowing, and *Indigenous knowledges* to acknowledge both commonalities and diversity between tribal knowledges.

Epistemologies

Wilson defines epistemology as “the study of the nature of thinking or knowing. It involves the theory of how we come to have knowledge, or how we know that we know something. It includes entire systems of thinking or styles of cognitive functioning that are built upon specific ontologies” (Wilson 2008, 33). Kovach explains that “within research, *epistemology* means a system of knowledge that references within it the social relations of knowledge production” (Kovach 2009, 21). As a settler/colonizer, I found it to be particularly important to examine epistemology and how the production of knowledge in the western academy informs ways of thinking and knowing, as well as acknowledging the importance of rejecting disbelief of Indigenous epistemologies.

Methodologies

Wilson defines methodology as “the theory of how knowledge is gained, or in other words the science of finding things out” (Wilson 2008, 34). In this paper, I aim to use methodologies that have decolonizing and anti-oppressive qualities.

Paradigms

Wilson defines research paradigms as

“... labels that are used to identify sets of underlying beliefs or assumptions upon which research is based. These sets of beliefs go together to guide researcher's actions. Any research represents the paradigm used by the researcher, whether the researcher is conscious of their choice of paradigm or not. Paradigms are thus broad principles that provide a framework for research. As paradigms deal with beliefs and assumptions about

reality, they are based upon theory and are thus intrinsically value laden” (Wilson 2008, 33).

Part of decolonizing methodologies is to consider the beliefs and assumptions that ground your research actions. Therefore, I wanted to be conscious of how I framed my “research” and how the politics of knowledge worked to inform the context of the research. I draw from both Indigenous and traditional academic paradigms, and strive to be aware of how these construct the values expressed in my writing.

Food Regime

I use the term, food regime, as a way to encompass the growth of the colonized/globalized food system, and the Eurocentric/capitalist ideology that accompanies it. Madeleine Fairbairn describes international food regimes as “the political and economic structures that undergrid successive periods of stability within the world food system” (Fairbairn 2010, 15). This idea was developed in order to link “periods of capitalist accumulation to the international relations of food production and consumption that accompany them” (Fairbairn 2010, 16). I use the term, food regime, to frame my analysis of how food systems, capitalism, and colonialism are intertwined.

Ideology

The way I frame my use of the term, ideology, follows Linda Tuhiwai Smith. She writes, “the negation of indigenous views of history was a critical part of asserting colonial ideology, partly because such views were regarded as particularly 'primitive' and 'incorrect' and mostly because they challenged and resisted the mission of colonization” (Tuhiwai Smith 2012, 29). Kovach also writes, “... there has been little systemic shift in the ideology of knowledge production. From an Indigenous perspective, the reproduction of colonial relationships persists

inside institutional centres” (Kovach 2009, np).

Discourse

Arturo Escobar defines discourse as “the articulation of knowledge and power, of statements and visibilities, of the visible and expressible. Discourse is the process through which social reality inevitably comes into being” (Escobar 1996, 46). Lisa J. Cary explains that Homi K. Bhabha “aims to disrupt the epistemological assumptions of the hegemonic discourse that silences and raises issues of race from any discussion of culture” (Cary 2004, 76). Gibson-Graham writes, “in its current hegemonic articulation as neoliberal global capitalism, capitalocentric discourse has now colonized the entire economic landscape and its universalizing claims seem to have been realized. (Gibson-Graham 2006, 55).

Guide

This thesis is intentionally organized differently than many academic research papers. It is not organized by sections that describe first, how I conducted my research, followed by fieldwork or interviews, and ending with my findings and conclusions. Instead, this thesis is a two-part project. In Part I, I aim to examine several decolonizing methodological approaches and weave those approaches into the project's praxis—so as I describe a certain methodology, I support it with theoretical writings, and include reflections or references from my own experiences and describe how the methods were used concretely. This section problematizes research and ethnography as well as examines the politics of knowledge, language, history, and ecology. It discusses several topics that arise when thinking about Indigenous-colonizer relations in academic contexts, such as authenticity, positionality, difference, and appropriation. More broadly, this section explains how incorporating alternative paradigms in academic writing, such as autoethnography, can work towards decolonization. In Part II, I provide an analysis of how my project is connected to colonialism, gender, and capitalist food systems by looking at resistance to colonial/capitalist food systems, alternative economic practices, and efforts to decolonize food. This leads into my explanation and analysis of a community-based brochure project about The People and Their Plants garden that I worked on with Barbara. I end by reflecting on the effort towards decolonization and my experiences throughout the process of this thesis.

Part I: Methodologies and Praxis

When beginning this project, I carefully tiptoed into it, approaching it with nervousness and uncertainty. I knew that research was a dirty term in Indigenous communities (Smith 2012), and I was worried to step into the role of imperialist researcher. While becoming aware of the history that contextualizes the relationships between white settler/colonizers and Indigenous people, I soon realized that self-decolonization was going to be a significant part of this project. In the beginning stages, I knew what I *didn't* want to do. I knew I didn't want the project to reinforce colonial/imperialist legacies, I knew I didn't want to occupy a “benevolent” role to *help them*, I knew I didn't want to essentialize or reduce Tongva culture through a western perspective, and I knew I didn't want to briefly address positionality as a “disclaimer,” then act as though I had the authority to appropriate Indigenous peoples in my writing. However, I didn't yet understand what that would look like in practice or in the final text. This thesis project has been a constant process of questioning and rethinking. I have been confronted with interrogating my assumptions and my positionality as a white European-American settler/colonizer. There were times when I felt that I couldn't move forward because I wasn't sure which direction to move or how to get there. I learned to trust myself and the Elders with whom I was interacting, and to accept that I could allow myself to make mistakes.

The methodologies I use are multiple. I use a decolonizing knowledge methodological framework. I examine and interrupt settler/colonizer positionality by looking at histories of colonization in order to analyze power. I incorporate Indigenous epistemological paradigms, which are grounded in the work of Indigenous scholars, but I also attempt to approach this work with Tongva knowledges in particular because of what I have learned from my relationship with Barbara. Additionally, I use an ecological approach to frame my work throughout the project.

Questioning Research and Ethnography

As I mentioned previously, when I began thinking about this project and the implication of methodologies, I thought about the claims I had heard of mainstream research as being inherently imperialist. As Tuhiwai Smith asserts, “the term 'research' is inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism” (Tuhiwai Smith 2012, 1). The more I investigated the stories of data collecting, invasiveness, exploitation, appropriation, and reductionism involved in research on Indigenous communities, the more I became disillusioned with the pursuit of research.

Several Indigenous scholars have brought forth ways for other Indigenous academics to conceptualize and carry out research within their communities. Because I am not Indigenous, I have continuously struggled with the idea that non-Indigenous academics have no business being a part of Indigenous research in the first place. This is something that I continually question and reevaluate, but I argue that those who are non-Indigenous can listen to those critiques, and incorporate those suggestions and Indigenous perspectives on research paradigms in their own work. Being a European-American settler/colonizer has affected my methodology because it asks me to look at power critically and examine how being a settler/colonizer has reinforced and maintained my own privilege. I want to note that I do not choose to label this project as “research.” I have conducted research on the existing literature on these topics, but I intentionally distance myself from “research” during my interactions with Elders. Therefore, I do not consider our relationships to be research. I consistently work to refuse to exploit the stories, knowledges, and gifts that Barbara and Kat have shared with me. Instead of research, I see my project as *listening to and creating relationships with Elders as well as practicing alternative foodways/economies and other ways of learning and knowing.*

Since ethnography is conducted within the fields of the social sciences, it is the type of work I am expected to do as a student of social science. Tuhiwai Smith addresses how “this collective memory of imperialism has been perpetuated through the ways in which knowledge about Indigenous peoples was collected, classified and then represented in various ways back to the West, and then, through the eyes of the West, back to those who have been colonized” (Tuhiwai Smith 2012, 1). She points out the act of *collecting* knowledge has been practiced through often unethical and invasive means. Ethnographic representation has had a significant effect on the objectification and stereotyping of Indigenous peoples, and has also had a reflective effect on Indigenous communities through internalized colonization. In other words, the idea that western researchers believe that they have the authority to *collect* knowledge about Indigenous peoples is in itself an imperialist act. Furthermore, how that information is communicated—for example, “these peoples lived like this,” and how that information is communicated to those already colonized, “this is how *you* lived”—is an imperialist act. In *The Predicament of Culture*, James Clifford explains the process of ethnography and its implications:

“In analyzing this complex transformation one must bear in mind the fact that ethnography is, from beginning to end, enmeshed in writing. This writing includes, minimally, a translation of experience into textual form. The process is complicated by the action of multiple subjectivities and political constraints beyond the control of the writer. In response to these forces ethnographic writing enacts a specific strategy of authority. This strategy has classically involved an unquestioned claim to appear as the purveyor of truth in the text. A complex cultural experience is enunciated by an individual” (Clifford 1988, 25).

Ethnography has served to authorize western scholars to represent non-western peoples through the lens of the western ideologies imbedded in the researcher/writer. Clifford asks us to consider, “who is actually the author of field notes?” (Clifford 1988, 45). These comments problematize the notion of *truth* and highlight the multiple subjectivities that ethnographers carry with them in

their interactions with Indigenous peoples and in their research and writings. I reconsider how my writing may work to reproduce knowledges, which are rooted in violent histories, if my writing is appropriating, or if it is an act of stealing Indigenous knowledges.

Based on these critiques of ethnography and counter methodologies of decolonizing research, I decided to attempt to reject conventional ethnographic methods. Although Elders, such as Barbara and Kat, are in fact comfortable with interviews, I am challenging this type of ethnography because research has a history of being invasive in Indigenous communities, and often serves the purpose of extracting information, and using Indigenous peoples and cultures as objects of study. Barbara and Kat have also expressed appreciation that I am taking the time to learn in traditionally Indigenous ways, rather than aiming for *efficiency*. This means that I learned while gathering or working with plants, which Barbara and Kat told me was a traditional way of learning ecological knowledge in Indigenous communities. There were moments when I thought this methodology would put me at risk of essentializing their opinions and perspectives in my writing, but I came to the position of writing *about* their ecological knowledges through a method called autoethnography.

Margery Wolf highlights that “some postmodern critics question the very possibility of ethnographers representing the experience of another culture, and others question the ethics of even attempting to do so, seeing the process itself as an exercise in colonialism (domination). The questioning is important, the answers less so” (Wolf 1992, 5). This gives rise to the pursuit of questioning ethnography, which is the framework of this self-reflexive thesis. In Lisa J. Cary's essay, *Always Already Colonizer/Colonized: White Australian Wanderings*, she responds to the effort to historicize ethnographic claims by asserting that researchers must “highlight the way power works in research... [and] challenge the metanarratives that surround ethnographic

representations (Clifford 1986, 1997, Marcus and Fischer 1986, Van Maanen 1995 qtd in Cary 2004, 77). Later, I explore self-reflexive ethnography further. Cary goes on to say that, “by questioning the ethnographic canonical assumptions of truth and reality, traditional practices may be altered and new ethnography (postmodern ethnography) may arise” (Cary 2004, 77). This exercise of reconsidering research and ethnographic assumptions is what I attempt to do by highlighting the politics of knowledge.

Politics of Knowledge: Whose History?

In *The Color of Violence: The Incite! Anthology*, Haunani-Kay Trask, a Native Hawaiian, writes about the means through which settler/colonizer society maintains cultural hierarchy. She says, “colonialism began with conquest and is today maintained by a settler administration created out of the doctrine of cultural hierarchy, a hierarchy in which European Americans and whiteness dominate non-European Americans and darkness” (Trask 2006, 83). Tuhiwai Smith examines the need for analysis of knowledge production within research methodologies:

“While it is more typical (with the exception of feminist research) to write about research within the framing of a specific scientific or disciplinary approach, it is surely difficult to discuss *research methodology* and *indigenous peoples* together, in the same breath, without having an analysis of imperialism, without understanding the complex ways in which the pursuit of knowledge is deeply embedded in the multiple layers of imperial and colonial practices” (Tuhiwai Smith 2012, 2).

I aim to analyze the politics of knowledge in order to begin to understand how to incorporate decolonizing methodologies. In *Monocultures of the Mind*, Vandana Shiva critiques the homogenizing character of Western knowledge systems, which provides a context for thinking about the attempted erasure of Tongva ecological knowledge by colonial powers. Shiva provides an overview of the reasons for the disappearance of local knowledges:

“The Western systems of knowledge have generally been viewed as universal. However, the dominant system is also a local system, with its social basis in a particular culture,

class and gender. It is not universal in an epistemological sense. It is merely the globalized version of a very local and parochial tradition. Emerging from a dominating and colonizing culture, modern knowledge systems are themselves colonizing...The first level of violence unleashed on local systems of knowledge is to not see them as knowledge. This invisibility is the first reason why local systems collapse without trial and test when confronted with the knowledge of the dominant west... When local knowledge does appear in the field of the globalizing vision, it is made to disappear by denying it the status of a systematic knowledge, and assigning it the adjectives 'primitive' and 'unscientific'" (Shiva 2000, 9-10).

The violent function of western knowledge systems is not new to Tongva communities. This globalized, "universalized" system of knowledge has negated and delegitimized Indigenous ecological knowledges by *evaluating* them within the framework and structures of western knowledge systems.

I draw from Tuhiwai Smith's writings on the effect of colonizing knowledge systems on Indigenous knowledges. She explains,

"As Fanon and later writers such as Nandy have claimed, imperialism and colonialism brought complete disorder to colonized peoples, disconnecting them from their histories, their landscapes, their languages, their social relations and their own ways of thinking, feeling and interacting with the world. It was a process of systematic fragmentation which can still be seen in the disciplinary carve-up of the indigenous world..." (Tuhiwai Smith 2012, 29).

Tuhiwai Smith echoes Shiva's argument that western systems of knowledge are colonial systems that have worked to fragment Indigenous peoples and Indigenous knowledge systems. In my conversations with Kat, she explained that Indigenous peoples have been uprooted, and that restoring cultures and relationships with the environment can be fostered through reconnection and rerooting to those histories, landscapes, and epistemologies.

This brings notice to the issue of the recognition of the politics of history, which asks us to consider the question, *whose history?* Tuhiwai Smith addresses the issue of history as being written and told through colonial perspectives. She writes, "...Indigenous groups have argued

that history is important for understanding the present and that reclaiming history is a critical and essential aspect of decolonization. The critique of Western history argues that history is a modernist project which has developed alongside imperial beliefs about the Other” (Tuhiwai Smith 2012, 31). Critically analyzing history in this way, or in other words, *coming to know the past*, is part of the process of decolonization (Tuhiwai Smith 2012, 36). At the Haramokngna Center, Kat talked with me about education and how in the United States they teach an altered history, which has created an erasure of Indigenous peoples' history and their agency. For example, the mission period and California gold rush are glorified. She reminded me that people such as Toypurina, a Tongva medicine woman, who led the resistance movement against the Spanish mission system in 1785, are not typically discussed in schools. Decolonization encompasses relearning history in order to see the dynamics of power at work in the production of knowledge and its subsequent erasure of Indigenous histories and ways of knowing. Tuhiwai Smith highlights the exploitation and commodification involved in the production of knowledge:

“... ideas about the nature of knowledge and the validity of specific forms of knowledge, became as much commodities of colonial exploitation as other natural resources. Indigenous peoples were classified alongside the flora and fauna; hierarchical typologies of humanity and systems of representation were fueled by new discoveries; and cultural maps were charted and territories claimed and contested by the major European powers” (Tuhiwai Smith 2012, 62).

Appropriation of Indigenous cultures led to the marginalization of Indigenous knowledge systems. Tuhiwai Smith adds, “imperialism and colonialism are the specific formations through which the West came to 'see', 'name' and to 'know' indigenous communities” (Tuhiwai Smith 2012, 63). Understanding the structures of the politics of knowledge is an aspect of decolonization, which asks us to consider the writing of history as an imperial and colonial project.

In *Indigenous Methodologies*, Margaret Kovach addresses the question, “What knowledge do you privilege?” (Boyd, 2005: 1). This question seeks to unmask the personal choice of epistemology” (Kovach 2009, 75). By recognizing the effects of settler/colonizer ideology on Indigenous knowledge systems, I aim to decenter the privileging of western academic knowledge systems. Kovach outlines the ways in which Indigenous knowledges have not 'fit' into typically reductionist western knowledge paradigms, and have therefore been excluded from those systems of thought. She uses Vine Victor Deloria to explain that “because Indigenous people did not separate reason and spirit, and because they did not espouse an evolutionist theoretical perspective, their beliefs have been viewed as superstitious” (Deloria 2002 qtd in Kovach 2009, 77). Understanding how the politics of knowledge production has worked to systematically marginalize Indigenous knowledges and define it as illegitimate knowledge, allows us to interrogate white privilege, particularly within academia and knowledge production. Kovach notes, “as E. Steinauer (2002) suggests, the increasingly common response is to equate Indigenous knowledge with a cultural exoticism and thus relegate them to the periphery of the 'real' work of knowledge construction” (Kovach 2009, 78). Although Indigenous knowledges are commonly recognized, they are marginalized through the *othering* of those knowledges, which inversely maintains western privilege. Kovach urges scholars to interrogate ways of knowing in order to reimagine research paradigms. Therefore, “imagining a new approach requires a specific analysis of the past that complicates 'us-other/ other-us' dynamic of Indigenous-settler relations that equates this relationship to one of simple dominance” (Kovach 2009, 157). By including a critical analysis of the politics of knowledge, I am seeking to actively refuse to abide by the confines of western/settler/colonial research paradigms. For Cary, thinking about the production of knowledge is an integral part of a decolonizing framework:

“Mills (1997) talks about the legitimization of knowledge and 'truth' as occurring from a position of dominance when she says, 'Colonial power enables the production of knowledge, and it also maps out powerful positions from which to speak' (p. 115). If we then further complicate this with the conceptualization of power as discursive and fluid, using the work of Foucault (1980) and Serres with Latour (1995), we may produce a 'text' that highlights the messy and dangerous construction of subject... (Mills 1997 qtd in Cary 2004, 77).

This work and this way of thinking about the topic and the politics of knowledge that construct it helps us consider how the production of knowledge affects who speaks and who is heard in research. This analysis highlights the construction of the study of Indigenous peoples' relationships with their environment.

What is a Plant? Problematizing the Study of Indigenous Ecological Knowledges

In Fikret Berkes's book, *Sacred Ecology*, he highlights ethical considerations of conducting research on Indigenous knowledges, however his work could be pushed further to include an analysis of the politics and ideology imbedded within *the study of* Indigenous peoples' relationships with the environment, which would further complicate ways of knowing. Berkes cites the historical emergence of the study of Indigenous peoples' and their environments. He writes, “the study of traditional ecological knowledge begins with the study of species identification and classification (ethnobiology) and proceeds to considerations of peoples' understanding of ecological processes and their relationships with the environment (human ecology)” (Berkes 2012, 5). Berkes's work is grounded in the notion that Indigenous ecological knowledges are something to be studied by outsiders and his ideas are still founded in the western scientific framework. He is not considering the relational quality of Indigenous ecological knowledges and divides them into sequential processes in order to be studied. Berkes claims that these knowledges can be broken down into levels of analysis. However, based on the Indigenous paradigm discussed by Shawn Wilson in *Research Is Ceremony*, Indigenous

knowledges cannot be analyzed in the same way that western scientific knowledge is analyzed, or even analyzed at all. Berkes states that “the study of traditional ecological knowledge, like the study of Western science of ecology itself, begins with the identification and naming of species: ethnobiology” (Berkes 2012, 54). Although this is part of learning about Indigenous ecological knowledges, I would argue that these knowledges cannot be divided into steps. The traditional way of learning is through lived experience, which Berkes notes in his book, however he still manages to operate within the western science paradigm by employing a reductionist lens of Indigenous ecological knowledges. In *Research Is Ceremony*, Wilson describes that when using an Indigenous research paradigm, it becomes clear how this learning of knowledge is relational, rather than isolated (Wilson 2008). Berkes description of ethnosience reveals the politics imbedded within the act of naming plants according to western scientific thought. In ethnosience, the Indigenous name(s) are often ignored because the western models cannot comprehend these forms of knowledge. As non-Indigenous people, we must be careful and cautious in our analysis of Indigenous knowledges because it is not our place to define or analyze how they can be broken down. Wilson argues that Indigenous knowledges should instead be viewed as cyclical (Wilson 2008).

Another way that Berkes fails to challenge the western academy is that he puts forth the notion that traditional ecological knowledges should be considered as science. This acts to “legitimize” Indigenous ways of knowing on the terms of western science, rather than those ways of knowing being determined by Indigenous tribal nations themselves. For example, he “legitimizes” Indigenous knowledges through instances of how Indigenous societies have been able to carry out controlled experiments. He treats Indigenous knowledges as a subset scientific theory that can be assimilated into the western scientific paradigm. Berkes suggests that “...we

need a framework to distinguish between empirical kinds of indigenous knowledge and ways of life; between information and ways of knowing” (Berkes 2012, 16). If the writings of Indigenous scholars concerning the topic of research *on* Indigenous communities are considered, we can see that separating information and ways of knowing is contradictory to Indigenous epistemologies. Berkes objective is to find out the usefulness of Indigenous ecological knowledges to scientific ecology, or in other words, how scientific ecology can exploit these knowledges. It also attempts to make Indigenous knowledges applicable to contemporary problems. This approach doesn't advocate for the revitalization of those Indigenous cultures, but rather what can be extracted to assist scientists in contemporary problem solving. This approach also doesn't acknowledge why these problems are here in the first place, meaning, it doesn't consider or historicize colonization.

Politics of Ecology

Arturo Escobar expands on the idea that nature is socially constructed through an analysis of poststructural political ecology. He asserts that “the constructs of political economy and ecology” are “specifically modern forms of knowledge, as well as their objects of study,” and they “must be analyzed discursively” (Escobar 1996, 46). He goes on to write:

“It is necessary to reiterate the connections between the making and evolution of nature and the making and evolution of the discourses and practices through which nature is historically produced and known... From a certain poststructural perspective (Foucaultian and Deleuzian in particular) there cannot be a materialist analysis that is not, at the same time, a discursive analysis. The poststructural analysis of discourse is not only a linguistic theory; it is a social theory, a theory of the production of social reality which includes the analysis of representations as social facts inseparable from what is commonly thought of as 'material reality.' Poststructuralism focuses on the role of language in the construction of social reality; it treats language not as a reflection of 'reality' but as constitutive of it. That was the whole point, for instance, of Said's (1979) *Orientalism*. For some, there is no materiality unmediated by discourse, as there is no discourse unrelated to materialities (Laclau and Mouffe 1985). Discourse... is the articulation of knowledge and power, of statements and visibilities, of the visible and expressible. Discourse is the process through which social reality inevitably comes into being” (Escobar 1996, 46).

Escobar approaches his study of political ecology through a poststructuralist lens. In his article, *After Nature: Steps to an Antiessentialist Political Ecology*, Escobar asks, “could it be because the basic constructs with which modernity has equipped us for this task—including nature and culture but also society, culture, polity, and economy—no longer allow us to interrogate ourselves and nature in ways that might yield novel answers?” (Escobar 1999, 1). Escobar's question asks if the constructs of modernity allow for reflexivity. Escobar brings forth Marilyn Strathern's argument:

“... we cannot interpret native (nonmodern) mappings of the social and the biological in terms of our concepts of nature, culture, and society..."culture' does not provide a distinctive set of objects with which one manipulates 'nature.' . . . nature is not 'manipulated" (pp. 174, 175)... 'Nature' and 'culture' thus need to be analyzed not as given and presocial but as constructs if we want to ascertain how they function as devices for cultural creations from human beliefs to gender and the economy (MacCormack & Strathern 1980)” (Escobar 1999, 8).

Strathern's argument suggests that we are not be able to be reflexive within the constructs of modernity and therefore unable to interpret Indigenous knowledges under “modern” terms. She offers the idea that nature and culture should rather be analyzed as constructed concepts. Escobar continues to explain that “the cultural models of nature of many societies do not rely on a nature-society (or culture) dichotomy...This continuity—which may nevertheless be experienced as problematic or uncertain— is culturally established through rituals and practices and embedded in social relations different from capitalist or modern ones” (Escobar 1999, 8). Escobar advances the notion that “nature,” as a removed category, separate from culture and society, may not exist in Indigenous epistemologies. Therefore, it is helpful to interrogate assumptions imbedded in how settler/colonizers, speak about “nature.” He states, “the new thinking helps to debunk the nature/culture dichotomy that is fundamental to the dominance of expert knowledge; accordingly, the common view of distinct domains of nature and culture that can be known and

managed separately from each other is no longer tenable” (Escobar 1999, 9). Escobar offers this new thinking as part of *Steps to an Anti-essentialist Political Ecology*. I incorporate this into my methodology by debunking this assumed dichotomy, and decentering the privileging of expert knowledge, and therefore work towards personal decolonization and decolonization in my academic writing. Escobar argues that meanings/uses in cultural modes of nature “should be situated in the larger contexts of power and articulation with other nature regimes and global forces more generally” in ethnographic documentation (Escobar 1999, 10). Isolating these considerations, along with constituted meanings/uses, leaves an incomplete text that reduces analysis to modern constructions. This suggests a shift in epistemological strategies, bringing forth a new type of inquiry for the social and ecological sciences (Escobar 1999, 15). I aim to situate meanings/uses within power constructions, which helps me to interrogate these “nature regimes” that uphold colonization, as I work to rethink ecological relationships. By analyzing my positionality—my place in race/class/gender/sexual orientation hierarchies—I can reveal how I fit into discursive regimes and colonial structures. I then name my agency actively in order to reject and interrupt these violent hierarchies, unequal power/knowledge relations and dehumanizing behaviors, which are part of colonized/colonizer relations and knowledge production in the western academy.

Who’s Authenticity?

I interrogate my own settler/colonizer assumptions about authenticity regarding Indigenous peoples by unpacking learned stereotypes qualified by western ideals. Tuhiwai Smith explains that “at the heart of such a view of authenticity is a belief that indigenous cultures cannot change, cannot recreate themselves and still claim to be indigenous. Nor can they be complicated, internally diverse or contradictory. Only the West has that privilege” (Tuhiwai

Smith 2012, 77). For me, questioning the construct of *authenticity*, is something that has become an integral part of the decolonizing praxis. It asks you to interrogate your previous assumptions about what it means to be an authentic Indigenous person. Therefore this question has asked me to look squarely at whiteness and the position from which I am writing. This position is one that is founded in the idea that settler/colonizers are those who have the privilege of changing, recreating themselves, being diverse and contradictory. Yet, even inadvertently, this privilege has blinded me from seeing that I had held on to notions of authenticity when thinking about and talking about Indigenous cultures. The time I've spent with Barbara and Kat has most significantly assisted in the challenge of unpacking these assumptions about authenticity. In *Red Pedagogy*, Sandy Grande writes that the debate over Indigenous purity, which “ultimately diverts attention away from the more pressing issue of exploitation – both cultural and environmental. Specifically, exploitation manifests through the marginalization and exclusion of the voices of indigenous peoples, through the singular focus on the 'White man's Indian,' and through the preoccupation with 'pre-contact' Indians” (Grande 2004, 64). This teaches non-Indigenous peoples working to become allies with Indigenous peoples to reject essentialist obsessions over what it means to be Indigenous. Through the effort to decolonize myself, it has become clear that it is only the role of Indigenous peoples themselves to define and determine these meanings. Grande argues that the stereotype of the Indian-as-ecologically-noble-savage “functions mainly as a homogenizing trope that negates the complexity of indigenous peoples” (Grande 2004, 65). Additionally, she rejects “the whitestream logic that 'we are all the same,' arguing that it not only denies the 'difference' of indigenous cultures and belief systems, but also tactically reduces indigenous peoples to the status of whites-without-technology” (Grande 2004, 65). Therefore, I attempt to write in a way that refuses homogenization, while recognizing the *difference* of

Indigenous peoples.

Non-Indigenous peoples may resist the settler/colonizer urge to try to claim how Indigenous communities should or should not represent themselves. Grande argues that,

“American Indians do not exercise essentialist tactics in order to establish hierarchies of 'authenticity,' but rather as a means of resisting wholesale appropriation of Indian culture and identity. Specifically, indigenous peoples work to fend off the global capitalist forces that crave indigenous cultures at the same time such forces operate to destroy all that sustains indigenous communities (i.e., land bases, natural resources)” (Grande 2004, 107).

This raises questions about the use of *strategy* in order to refuse appropriation. This use of essentialist tactics can be seen as acts of resistance against colonizing forces. In my refusal to appropriate Tongva culture, I see that Indigenous cultural actions can be performative political strategies to confront and resist further domination. Escobar offers the notion of hybridity. He says that “hybrid natures might constitute for these groups an attempt to incorporate multiple constructions of nature in order to negotiate with translocal forces while maintaining a modicum of autonomy and cultural cohesion. They might allow social groups to introduce some diversity into their political strategies for engaging with the dominant” (Escobar 1999, 13). This provides a way to think about the refusal of viewing culture as singular and essential. Additionally, this notion allows the imagination to see cultures as embodying diversity, autonomy, and incorporation of multiple constructions. Clifford also highlights the issue of authenticity:

“I began to see such questions as symptoms of a pervasive postcolonial crisis of ethnographic authority. While the crisis had been felt most strongly by formerly hegemonic Western discourses, the questions it raises are of global significance. Who has the authority to speak for a group's identity or authenticity? What are the essential elements and boundaries of a culture? How do self and other class and converse in the encounters of ethnography, travel, modern interethnic relations?” (Clifford 1988, 8).

This gives rise to the idea that the time that I spend with Barbara and Kat is an informative process, it is not all encompassing, nor necessarily representative of Indigenous cultures. A

decolonizing methodology allows for a decentered, antiessentialist, fluid and shifting perception of culture, which is more so informed through the acknowledgement of social and historical contingencies. By refusing to unify or attempt to check off qualifications of “Indigenous” characteristics, I try to see things as in a constant state of change. For example, there are “contradictions” that reject the “Indian-as-ecologically-noble-savage” stereotype—native plants might be complemented by non-native plants, the environment changes, or peoples themselves are shifting and fluid. Clifford uses the writings of Aimé Césaire to talk about the notion of “interculture.” He explains, “the roots of tradition are cut and retied, collective symbols appropriated from external influences. For Césaire culture and identity are inventive and mobile. They need not take root in ancestral plots; they live by pollination, by (historical) transplanting” (Clifford 1988, 15). This idea asks us to consider culture not as a rock that is immovable or static, but responsive to ebbs and flows. This is particularly important when questioning the idea of Indigenous *authenticity*. Clifford addresses this by stating that “throughout the world indigenous populations have had to reckon with the forces of 'progress' and 'national' unification. The results have been both destructive and inventive. Many traditions, languages, cosmologies, and values are lost, some literally murdered; but much has simultaneously been invented and revived in complex, oppositional contexts” (Clifford 1988, 16). This discussion acknowledges and remembers the colonial histories of genocide of Indigenous peoples. It also coincides with notions of the rerooting and complexity of culture, and this can be seen in the particular context of the reinventiveness of Indigenous relationships with the environment.

Who Am I?

Incorporating theory of the decolonization methodology into practice allows questions of researcher identity and positionality to arise. I aim to be a non-Indigenous ally in my

relationships with Indigenous communities. Kovach addresses the idea of non-Indigenous scholars' desire to incorporate Indigenous methodologies into their research. She says that “many non-Indigenous young people are attracted to Indigenous approaches as well, because, I believe, it has to do with a generation seeking ways to understand the world without harming it” (Kovach 2009, 11). Non-Indigenous scholars hope “to move beyond the binaries found within Indigenous-settler relations to construct new, mutual forms of dialogue, research, theory, and action... The infusion of Indigenous knowledge systems and research frameworks informed by the distinctiveness of cultural epistemologies transforms homogeneity” in research (Kovach 2009, 12). Kovach advocates for a reworking of relations in order to interrogate dualistic thinking and produce new dialogue, which reflects a belief in the transformation of research in Indigenous communities.

Kagendo Mutua and Beth Blue Swadener advocate for a reframing of the field and actively work to “decenter the Western academy as the exclusive locus of authorizing power that defines research agenda. Working with this sort of reframed field, the researcher, whether foreign or indigenous, can never be permanently located at either the emic or etic pole” (Mutua & Swadener 2004, 4). This works to disrupt binary assumptions of insider/outsider roles. Linda J. Rogers and Beth Blue Swadener (1999) explain that an “‘allied other,’ draws from ‘an anti-oppressive, feminist alliance model’ (Swadener 1998). Framed broadly, none of us carries only ‘one’ colonized/colonizer subjectivity/identity...” (Rogers & Swadener 1999 qtd in Mutua & Swadener 2004, 4). This methodological approach asks us to rethink identity as a researcher. So in thinking about this research within more broadly framed social justice efforts, we can see this identity as a non-Indigenous ally, which stems from a feminist, anti-oppressive, anti-racist approach. Dakota scholar, Angela Cavender Wilson sees this ally relationship as standing in

support of one another (Cavender Wilson 2004). Within this decolonizing praxis, I am able to locate my positionality, question it, and relocate myself as a non-Indigenous ally. I incorporate Indigenous research paradigms into my decolonizing methodology designed for a non-Indigenous person hoping to stand in support of these epistemological reworkings.

Decolonizing Praxis

Swadener, a white scholar, states, “the need to decolonize the Western academy that privileges Western knowledges over indigenous epistemologies is a clearly needed function of the decolonizing project” although it is not an easy task considering traditional western academic research standards (Swadener 2004, 10-12). Using this decolonizing methodology and working through the assumptions imbedded in western academic research paradigms is challenging in the way that it asks me to unlearn a *deeply learned* privileging of western knowledge. Wilson cites, Jiman and Bundjalung scholar Judy Atkinson's guiding principles for Indigenous research:

“Aboriginal people themselves approve the research and the research methods; A knowledge and consideration of community and the diversity and unique nature that each individual brings to community; Ways of relating and acting within community with an understanding of the principles of reciprocity and responsibility; Research participants must feel safe and be safe, including respecting issues of confidentiality; A non-intrusive observation, or quietly aware watching; A deep listening and hearing with more than the ears; A reflective non-judgmental consideration of what is being seen and heard; Having learnt from the listening a purposeful plan to act with actions informed by learning, wisdom, and acquired knowledge; Responsibility to act with fidelity in relationship to what has been heard, observed, and learnt; An awareness and connection between logic of mind and the feelings of the heart; Listening and observing the self as well as in relationship to others; Acknowledgement that the researcher brings to the research his or her subjective self” (Atkinson 2001 qtd in Wilson 2008, 59).

Wilson offers Métis scholar Cora Weber-Pillwax's foundational principles of Indigenous research:

“All forms of living things are to be respected as being related and interconnected...The source of a research project is the heart/mind of the researcher, and 'checking your heart' is a critical element in the research process... Indigenous researchers ground their

research knowingly in the lives of real persons as individuals and social beings, not on the world of ideas... Any theories developed or proposed are based upon and supported by Indigenous forms of epistemology... Indigenous research cannot undermine the integrity of Indigenous persons or communities because it is grounded in that integrity” (Wilson 2008, 60).

I have aimed to incorporate these values into the methodologies for this project. Through my relationships with Barbara and Kat, I have learned that Indigenous Elders may teach these principles through their daily interactions. In terms of my own responsibility, however, I had to learn to quiet my assumptions, and live in these relationships with awareness and respectfulness, and listen with my heart. Because this is often discouraged in traditional western academic standards, it required me to let go of deeply held expectations. One time at the Haramokngna Center, Kat took out a piece of paper and drew a picture on it. She drew a circle of connecting “i’s,” with a larger “I” in the middle. Kat explained that this is how Indigenous communities work together and are connected. She said that the linked “i’s” are connected and have a dynamic where they rely on one another in order to support the whole community. Together they push a person into leadership, but because they are interconnected, they are all interdependent on each other for survival, including the leader. Then, Kat drew a picture with a big “I”, a circle, and a couple of separated chains of little “i’s.” She asked me to hold her hands and have each of us pull a little bit. She leaned forward and we both lost balance, then she pulled more forcefully and we both lost balance. Kat told me this is what has happened with colonization. I saw this as what happens in a colonial/capitalist system of leadership. Kat explained how it causes greed and an imbalance of power and therefore causes the whole system to fall apart. She advocates for getting back to the place of interdependence.

In *Research Is Ceremony*, Wilson explains that, “an Indigenous research paradigm is relational and maintains relational accountability” (Wilson 2008, 71). He says that because

knowledge itself is relational, “knowledge is shared with all of creation. It is not just interpersonal relationships, not just with the research subjects I may be working with, but it is a relationship with all of creation. It is with the cosmos, it is with the animals, with the plants, with the earth that we share this knowledge” (Wilson 2001 qtd in Wilson 2008, 73). The concept of sharing knowledge with non-human living beings would often be considered irrational in the western academy. In order to decolonize academic thinking and writing, I worked towards interrupting and interrogating my learned impulse to delegitimize other knowledges, such as the idea of sharing knowledge with a non-human living being. Because my thesis topic is surrounding the idea of ecological relationships, I found this epistemology regarding relational knowledge with the earth to be of particular importance. When working in the garden with Barbara, she speaks to the plants when they are harvested—she thanks them and shows respect for them—and she asked me to do the same. Embodying this relationship with the non-human living world has helped me think about relationships to knowledge. Wilson discusses knowledge relations in Indigenous research paradigms:

“We can extend this thinking—of viewing objects as the relationships we share with them—on to how we see concepts and ideas. The concepts or ideas are not as important as the relationships that went into forming them. Again, an Indigenous epistemology has systems of knowledge built upon relationships between things, rather than on the things themselves. Indigenous epistemology is more than merely a way of knowing (Meyer, 2001). It is important to recognize that the epistemology includes entire systems of knowledge and relationships... They thus include interpersonal, intrapersonal, environmental and spiritual relationships, and relationships with ideas. Indigenous epistemology is our cultures, our world views, our times, our languages, our histories, our spiritualities and our places in the cosmos” (Wilson 2008, 74).

These epistemologies have challenged me to significantly shift the way I view knowledge. Instead of only seeing the “final product” or *piece of information*, I have learned to critically think about the process by which I learned about that knowledge. This is challenging because

throughout my life, I have been taught to tease through information and pick out the *important* ideas. This eliminates the knowledge gained through the journey of learning those ideas. So I attempt to confront and challenge those ways of knowing that devalue the journey of learning.

Writing About Difference

Figuring out *how to write* on this topic was difficult given the examination and contextualization of western research and ethnography on Indigenous cultures, the politics of knowledge and its historical implications, as well as considerations of Indigenous epistemological paradigms. Escobar cites Katherine Hayles's (1995) argument “that we need to acknowledge that we are always positioned observers and that our observations always take place in continuous interaction with the world and ourselves” (Escobar 1991, 15). Therefore in my writing, I recognize that I am in a position of continuous interaction with the world, and my observations are informed by *that world*. Cary suggests bringing together theorizing and subjectivities “together in work that addresses the regimes of truth and the technologies of power while interrupting hegemonic practices and highlighting the way the historical colonial project shapes the spaces we find ourselves inhabiting today” (Cary 2004, 70). Therefore, I attempt to write in a way that reflects how colonization has shaped my ways of knowing.

A goal of mine in this project is to refuse reductionist thinking that is often used to talk about cultural binaries, but the question for me is then, how do I write about culture? Kovach states that “the purpose is not to propagate unhelpful binaries, but to point out that Indigenous approaches to seeking knowledge are not of a Western worldview, a matter that colonialism (and its supporters) has long worked to confuse” (Kovach 2009, 21). Therefore I aim to highlight *difference*. Cary discusses how in *The Location of Culture*, Homi K. Bhabha (1994) points out,

“... the reinscription of hegemonic discourse through the relativistic discourse on diversity. He suggests that by highlighting the hybridity of cultural performance we may move beyond essentialist discussions of race and culture. Culture, according to Bhabha, is developed performatively through discursive processes. Bhabha aims to disrupt the epistemological assumptions of the hegemonic discourse that silences and raises issues of race from any discussion of culture. He especially highlights the need to focus on difference rather than on diversity that has become a culturally relativistic position—a white solution to the black problem” (Cary 2004, 76).

Concretely, this takes the form of scholars writing about performative culture rather than race—to write about difference would be to write about performing culture. Therefore writing about difference is to write about the hybridity of cultural performance as a discursive process.

Perceiving culture as performative is a place where disruption of “the colonizing mentality of Western knowledge” may occur (Cary 2004, 76). Clifford offers the idea that that this type of writing is “a state of being in culture while looking at culture, a form of personal and collective self-fashioning” (Clifford 1988, 9). The departure from viewing culture through a culturally relativistic approach, and rather through a framework of difference, allows my writing to disrupt the notion that researchers are objective writers who write from outside of the performative nature of culture. Cary notes that “the wistful assumption of 'one place, one people, once culture' no longer holds the ethnographic imagination in check...Therefore, postmodern ethnography is about living within the tensions of the 'messiness' of the social text. Ethnography in this light is seen as cultural translation and never fully assimilates difference” (Cary 2004, 78). This type of ethnographic methodology rejects the notion of a culture being pure or static. Along these lines, part of understanding is to accept never being able to fully understand. Allowing myself to accept that the objective of this type of ethnography is to be within the tensions and unknowingness of this cultural *difference*. Cary offers ways in which to see this postmodern ethnographic methodology:

“By conceiving of time and space as fluid, with fluctuating boundaries and edges, the new postmodern ethnography may move beyond simplistic representations and respond to the ethnographic crisis. The epistemological transformation requires a state of flux philosophy, such as described in the work of Michel Serres. Destabilizing and disruption essentialist assumptions provide possibilities for other ways of knowing. Bringing together time and 'networks of knowing' challenges ethnographers to an increased awareness of the fluctuation and bifurcation of cultural understanding. In this way progressivist notions of culture that have been immersed within linear time analyses are deconstructed and search for an authentic truth is interrupted (Serres with Latour 1995 qtd in Cary 2004, 79).

This shift in research paradigms allows the refusal of working within the confines of seeking authenticity and truth.

Decolonizing methodologies allows learning about difference from the Other, as opposed to only writing *about* the Other. I argue that writing about difference and writing about the Other can be seen as being mutual constitutive if not identical to each other. However, this is dependent on the methodology praxis. By listening to how Barbara and Kat shape their relationship to plants and other non-human life forms, I am learning about difference from them. They are helping me see the environment in ways that differ from my experience with western ways of thinking and knowing, by seeing food and medicine as alive and spiritually active rather than dead resources used for consumption, seeing non-human life forms as our partners in this life, as something that deserves our respect and gratitude when we harvest it, not simply as products for sale to gain a profit. Learning about difference from Elders helps me rethink their relationship to land, plants, and animals, which rejects the mainstream views of settler/colonial society, which often simply sees Indigenous peoples as part of the natural world and creates an erasure of their status as fully human. This denial of recognition is informed by the efforts of society and the state to deny claims to having a history and therefore claims to humanity (Tuhiwai Smith 2012, 4). By learning how Barbara and Kat thank and talk to plants and animals, I can see that this act

rewrites humans' relationship to non-human living things, and thereby rejects the settler/colonizer hierarchy that says animals and plants are less than human. This hierarchy has been used by colonizers to dehumanize Indigenous peoples by saying they too are less than human. Redefining relationships to plants and animals—by giving them respect—refuses the settler/colonizer assumption of what it means to be “part of the natural world” and interrupts the erasure of Indigenous peoples' status as fully human. Furthermore, by learning difference, I can look at Indigenous relationships to the environment in a way that refuses to abide by the assumptions of a globalized food system which privileges the government, corporations, and property owners' claims to land that does not *belong* to them.

Autoethnography

When writing about difference in a theoretical framework, it is important to consider the method of autoethnography. Paulette Regan writes about issues that arise when non-Indigenous scholars write about Indigenous peoples. She discusses how “we are still overly focused on researching, analyzing, and interpreting Indigenous experience. What is missing is a corresponding research emphasis on understanding our own experiences as the descendants of colonizers and the primary beneficiaries of colonialism” (Regan 2010, 33). This method of autoethnography asks for an understanding of my own experiences as a white European-American who benefits from unearned privileges that come with that colonizer status, as well as the epistemological implications of settler/colonizer ways of knowing. This methodology of self-reflexive ethnography has encouraged me to consider these implications. I have wondered if autoethnography is self-consumed, patronizing, or compromising. However, it became clear after reading the literature of Indigenous scholars, that Indigenous communities were tired of seeing their cultures through a settler/colonizer perspective. While including the voices of Indigenous

peoples, still white European-American ethnographers often represent Indigenous cultures according to their own discretion. Erica Meiners articulates this through her methodology as well:

“Academic research that prioritizes the voices and the experiences of those impacted may simply reinscribe academic constructs of the knower and the known, and experience may become simply, as feminist historian Scott notes, 'evidence for the fact of difference, rather than a way of exploring how difference is established, how it operates, how and in what ways it constitutes subjects who see and act in the world'” (Scott 1999, 82 qtd in Meiners 2007, 13).

It became clear that what was needed in ethnographic literature was a self-evaluation of settler/colonizer ethnographers and how they fit into the research paradigm which tended to essentialize cultures and refused to confront the violent history embedded in the study of Indigenous peoples. Furthermore, I argue that this methodology can be adopted across the board in ethnographic work.

Kovach uses this method as a way of incorporating narrative by relying upon the first-person voice; “it has the additional benefit of keeping me grounded” (Kovach 2009, 22). It is clear that I have combined a narrative style, using first-person voice, within my analytical writing. I do this in order to keep me grounded as well, as a means of not allowing myself to be disconnected from what I am writing and also to name my agency actively. Kovach adds that “Indigenous methodologies prompt Western traditions to engage in reflexive self-study, to consider a research paradigm outside the Western tradition that offers a systematic approach to understanding the world. It calls for the non-Indigenous scholar to adjourn disbelief and, in the pause, consider alternative possibilities” (Kovach 2009, 29). This is why I engage in a self-reflexive ethnography—in order to approach multiple ways of knowing.

This method asks the writer to consider how “the supposition of subjectivity and the interpretative nature of qualitative research imply a relational approach to research,” or in other words, “reflexivity is the researcher's own self-reflection in the meaning-making process” (Kovach 2009, 32). It asks the writer to bring together “the study of self (auto) in relation to culture (ethnography)” and considers a move “beyond field notes to having amore integral positioning within the research process and the construction of knowledge itself. As Gergen and Gergen state, 'rather than giving the reader pause to consider the biases, here the juxtaposition of self and subject matter is used to enrich the ethnographical report' (2003: 579)” (Kovach 2009, 33). Regan suggests that “auto-ethnographic methodologies incorporate textual and performative components as embodied research in which 'researchers use their own thoughts, feelings and experiences as a means of understanding the social world’” (Regan 2010, 30). Autoethnography is a method of self-reflection in order to produce critical analysis. This draws on feminist methodology that relies on reflexivity, which allows me to analyze my own subjective experiences within the research context (Kovach 2009, 33). Autoethnography is performative and through this process I aim to rewrite the self. I am able to perform my own identity through the writing process. This critical reflexivity “purposefully gives space for the political examination of location and privilege (Herising, 2005: 136)... [and] acknowledges the politics of representation within Indigenous research” (Kovach 2009, 33). These “postmodern approaches use self-location to illustrate multiple truths. Through autoethnographies and autobiographical narrative inquiries, researchers reveal how the intuitive and experiential work constructs knowledge... [and] location ensures that individual realities are non misrepresented as generalizable collectives” (Kovach 2009, 111). By focusing on autoethnography, I am able to use reflexive writing to think about the politics of knowledge production and the environment,

ecological and cultural integrity, and food justice. Adopting this methodology allows me to simultaneously write about both, and helps me to think about it in a way that allows them shape each other.

“Knowing” a Culture

These methodological considerations ask questions surrounding the idea of fully “knowing” a culture. Tuhiwai Smith writes, “it galls us that Western researchers and intellectuals can assume to know all that is possible to know of us, on the basis of their brief encounters with some of us” (Tuhiwai Smith 2012, 1). Regan also problematizes the notion of fully knowing a culture:

“More recently, some scholars have pointed out that even those researchers who attempt to know the Other empathetically run the risk of simply perpetuation an imperial belief that their status as researchers entitles them to acquire such knowledge. A more preferable approach, they say, is one in which non-Indigenous researchers fully embrace the uncomfortable epistemological tension that comes with the realization that they can never fully know the Other; nor should they aspire to do so” (Regan 2010, 26).

Therefore, I do not aspire to “know” Tongva culture and my theoretical grounding reflect the belief that to do so is an impossibility. Throughout my relationship with Elders, I assumed the position of not-knowing and my actions reflected my belief that I will *never know* all that is possible to know about Indigenous peoples. For Cary, postcolonial theory has influenced her research by interrogating her “own desire for claims to authentic knowing/experience within colonizing projects... Everything is in danger of colonizing—everything is suspicious. I call this researching postcolonial/ity or postcolonial/ly. It's all about power and colonizing in research and reducing Others (research participants) into knowable subject positions” (Cary 2004, 77). I disrupt urges to *know* culture and try to embrace the tensions and discomfort of unknowability.

Appropriation

Culture is often appropriated in ethnographic work. Clifford references Said and Hountondji to “suggest that while ethnographic writing cannot entirely escape the reductionist use of dichotomies and essences, it can at least struggle self-consciously to avoid portraying abstract, ahistorical 'others'” (Clifford 1988, 23). Decolonizing methodologies gives rise to disrupt the urge to *represent* culture in my analysis. Appropriation is defined by Said (1978), “as the means by which the experiences of the 'colonized' are interpreted by a (more) dominant group to sustain a particular representation or view of the 'other' as part of an ideological stance... Said argues that language cannot be regarded as a transparent, truthful medium through which the world is simply apprehended as it is but, instead, that it is fully implicated in power relations” (Said 1978 qtd in Opie 2008, 364). It is important to recognize how power is imbedded within language and therefore how representations of culture risk appropriation. Additionally, Clifford notes that “...there is a frequent tendency in fictions of dialogue for the ethnographer's counterpart to appear as a representative of his or her culture—a type, in the language of traditional realism—through which general social processes are revealed. Such a portrayal reinstates the synecdochic interpretive authority by which the ethnographer reads text in relation to context, thereby constituting a meaningful 'other' world” (Clifford 1988, 44). Through my relationships with Barbara and Kat, I have been self-conscious to not view them as representatives of their cultures in any essential sense, as well as to not provide a *portrayal* of Indigenous cultures in my writing.

Speaking With

Speaking for others can be considered a moment of appropriation. Chandra Talpade Mohanty gives rise to a critique of western feminists who aim to *give voice to the voiceless*

(Mohanty 1988). In *Can The Subaltern Speak?*, Spivak concludes that the subaltern cannot speak. She isn't referring to speaking as the ability to utter sounds, but rather the capability of being heard by institutions, including local or academic institutions. Furthermore, “the subaltern (as woman) describes a relation between subject and object status (under imperialism and then globalization) that is not one of silence—to be overcome by representational heroism—but aporia” (Morris 2010, 13). The idea that settler/colonizers can continue to be as we are, and yet be in touch with the speaking subaltern comes from eurocentric forms of reason. This stems from western ideology and is colonizing because it only *makes sense* in a colonial mind frame. Spivak explains that by attempting to understand the subaltern, you make generalizations, because subaltern is out of reach. Therefore, speaking for others can be an imperialist act that may lead to misrepresentation and reinforcing one's own authority and privilege (Alcoff 2008). I am not suggesting that Barbara or Kat are subalterns, however this argument is still relevant in the consideration of learning to *speak with* Indigenous Elders. It asks us to consider how the need to *understand* Indigenous peoples is in itself an imperialist act. By refusing to speak for Indigenous peoples, I can resist appropriation in my writing. Linda Martin Alcoff uses Foucault to provide a way to speak *with*, through “rituals of speaking”:

“Rituals of speaking are constitutive of meaning, the meaning of the words spoken as well as the meaning of the event. This claim requires us to shift the ontology of meaning from its location in a text or utterance to... a space that includes the text or utterance but that also includes the discursive context... [Thus] meaning must be understood as plural and shifting... Not only what is emphasized, noticed, and how it is understood will be affected by the location of both speaker and hearer, but the truth-value or epistemic statuses will also be affected” (Alcoff 2008, 487).

I attempt to inform the meaning of speaking as plural and shifting through including discursive context. Alcoff argues that, “the formulation of the problem with speaking for others involves a retrograde, metaphysically insupportable essentialism that assumes one can read the truth and

meaning of what one says straight from the discursive context” (Alcoff 2008, 489). Therefore I aim to disrupt essentialist assumptions by refusing to desire finding truth and meaning. Alcoff uses Spivak's work in *Can the Subaltern Speak?* to further investigate the issue of speaking for others:

“... [Spivak] criticizes the self-abnegating intellectual pose that Foucault and Deleuze adopt when they reject speaking for others on the grounds that it assumes the oppressed can transparently represent their own true interests. According to Spivak, Foucault and Deleuze's position serves only to conceal the actual authorizing power of the retreating intellectuals, who in their very retreat help to consolidate a particular conception of experience (as transparent and self-knowing). Thus, to promote listening as opposed to speaking for essentialized the oppressed as nonideologically constructed subjects. But Spivak is also critical of speaking for others: that engages in dangerous representations. In the end Spivak prefers a 'speaking to,' in which the intellectual neither abnegates his or her discursive role nor presumes an authenticity of the oppressed but still allows for the possibility that the oppressed will produce a 'countersentence' that can then suggest a new historical narrative” (Spivak qtd in Alcoff 2008, 491).

So rather than concealing the authorizing power as a western academic by refusing to speak at all, I adopt the practice of listening, coupled with what Spivak calls “speaking to,” which refuses to produce a *declaration*. This requires listening for a *countersentence* or an “*other*” narrative.

Alcoff summarizes her advocacy of *speaking to and with*:

“In rejecting a general retreat from speaking for, I am not advocating a return to an un-self-conscious appropriation of the other, but rather that anyone who speaks for others should only do so out of a concrete analysis of the particular power relations and discursive effects involved... The impetus to speak must be carefully analyzed and, in many cases... fought against... the impetus to *always* be the speaker and to speak in all situations must be seen for what it is: a desire for mastery and domination. If one's immediate impulse is to teach rather than listen to a less-privileged speaker, one should resist that impulse long enough to interrogate it carefully... We must also interrogate the bearing of our location and context on what it is we are saying, and this should be an explicit part of every serious discursive practice we engage in... Speaking should always carry with it an accountability and responsibility for what one says. To whom one is accountable is a political/epistemological choice contestable, contingent, and as Donna Haraway says, constructed through the process of discursive action. What this entails in practice is a serious and sincere commitment to remain open to criticism and to attempt actively, attentively, and sensitively to 'hear' (understand) the criticism... we need to

analyze the probable or actual effects of the words on the discursive and material context” (Alcoff 2008, 492).

I aim for *listening* in my relationships with Elders, so rather than speaking for, I listen to their narrative. With this comes the need for openness to criticism along with self-criticism of my own positionality. It has also shifted accountability in my relationships with Elders—I must be accountable for what I say. I also carry accountability in what I write, so this has changed the act of writing for me because I have had to practice resisting the settler/colonizer urge to be the speaker and therefore refuse to speak for Indigenous peoples.

Experience

Because I am using autoethnographic methodologies, it is important to critically examine *experience*. Joan W. Scott analyzes the foundational discourse of history and asks us to consider the historicization of experience. She offers an approach to writing about experience by asserting that

“... we need to attend to the historical processes that, through discourse, position subjects and produce their experiences. It is not individuals who have experience, but subjects who are constituted through experience. Experience in this definition then becomes not the origin of our explanation, not the authoritative (because seen or felt) evidence that grounds what is known, but rather that which we seek to explain, that about which knowledge is produced. To think about experience in this way is to historicize it as well as to historicize the identities it produces. This kind of historicizing... implies critical scrutiny of all explanatory categories usually taken for granted, including the category of 'experience'” (Scott 2008, 273).

When I write about my experience, I “seek to explain” not only the experience itself but also the production of knowledge which informs that experience. This contextualizes my experience along with the production of identity and knowledge in a historical way. Scott further examines how experience can be historicized and de-essentialized by interrogating the ways in which identity is tied to notions of experience. Scott uses Spivak's terminology to “make visible the

assignment of subject-positions,' by taking identity not as inevitable or determined, not something that was always there simply waiting to be expressed, not something that will always exist in the form it was given" (Scott 2008, 277). This asks us to see experience as a way in which to explain something while interrogating the "process of their creation" and while reconfiguring the role of the writer (Scott 2008, 280). Examining experience allows me to analyze power imbedded within my writing and the epistemologies that inform that writing.

Cary examines experience by problematizing the notion of "common sense," so that she can "move away from a realist focus on authenticity and experience in research: 'This does not mean that experience does not exist or that it is not important, but rather that the ways in which we understand and express it are never independent of language'" (Gavey 1997, 51 qtd in Cary 2004, 77). She examines regimes of truth in order to "shift the focus away from the critical realist interpretation to a more complicated study of the formation of the subject/culture by looking at the way we live out our lives in this contested terrain of contradictory positions and symbolic exchanges" (Lather 1996 qtd in Cary 2004, 77). By looking at my experience within the messiness of decolonization, I can complicate ways of learning and knowing.

Decolonization

Through decolonizing methodologies, I confront the question—what does decolonization mean? Who decolonizes? And how? Spivak asks these questions and urges us to think "of the ethical relation as an embrace, an act of love, in which each learns from the other, is not at all the same thing as wanting to speak *for* an oppressed constituency" (The Spivak Reader 1996, 5). This shows that decolonization of the colonizer and colonized are not necessarily isolated efforts. So rather than colonizers simply being sympathetic to colonized peoples and speaking *for* them, colonized and colonizers may consider embracing what Spivak calls structures of responsibility.

In *Can The Subaltern Speak?* she writes, “it seems to me that finding the subaltern is not so hard, but actually entering into a responsibility structure with the subaltern, with responses flowing both ways: learning to learn without this quick-fix frenzy of doing good with an implicit assumption of cultural supremacy which is legitimized by unexamined romanticization, that's the hard part” (Spivak 2010, 293). I use Spivak's analysis as a model for working to decolonizing relationships with Indigenous peoples. In my relationships with Elders, responses flow both ways by creating reciprocal listening. This contrasts with occupying the role of benevolence, which does nothing more than reinforce colonizer-colonized/ knower-known relationships. Decolonization through structures of responsibility can build relationships of accountability, which refuse denial and reject the role of benevolence.

By learning about the efforts of Indigenous peoples to decolonize, non-Indigenous allies can better understand how to shift our assumptions, which are traditionally informed by unacknowledged colonization. Cavender Wilson asserts that “a reaffirmation of Indigenous epistemological and ontological foundations... offers a central form of resistance to the colonial forces that have consistently and methodically denigrated and silenced them” (Cavender Wilson 2004, 71). This analysis of colonization illustrates how colonial forces have produced an *othering* of Indigenous knowledges. Thus, she goes on to say that “the recovery of our traditional knowledge is deeply intertwined with the process of decolonization because for many of us it is only through a consciously critical assessment of how the historical process of colonization has systematically devalued our Indigenous ways that we can begin to reverse the damage wrought from those assaults” (Cavender Wilson 2004, 72). Therefore revaluing those knowledges is an integral part of decolonization. She discusses how distinguishing which knowledge can be used in the academy is something “that simply cannot be defined by non-Native people” (Cavender

Wilson 2004, 74). For this project, Barbara and Kat share with me the knowledges about medicinal and food uses of plants that they determine to be appropriate. Cavender Wilson explains that revitalizing Indigenous knowledges “offers a potential basis for rebuilding our Indigenous communities” (Cavender Wilson 2004, 74). Along these lines, Tuhiwai Smith notes that decolonizing paradigms focus on self-determination as a goal of social justice that “involves the process of transformation, of decolonization, of healing and of mobilization as peoples. The processes, approaches and methodologies – while dynamic and open to different influences and possibilities – are critical elements of a strategic research agenda” (Tuhiwai Smith 2012, 120). The People and Their Plants garden embodies this as well. Barbara told me she envisioned the community garden as a space for spiritual healing. For me the garden has been a place to learn how to decolonize myself—the way I think, hear, listen, and speak.

I and other white academics can recognize that we have also been colonized by a dominant society by being taught to believe that western ways of knowing are superior. Many Indigenous scholars have seen how the dismissal and delegitimization of Indigenous knowledges by white academics has led to a silencing of Indigenous perspective and knowledge, such as, the refusal of papers to be published for not being “scholarly” enough (Cavender Wilson 2004). Although I have realized that I can never truly understand those worldviews as Indigenous peoples can, I can still work on decolonizing myself by refusing to delegitimize Indigenous worldviews in the academy and especially in my own academic work. While being cautious of not pretending to be Indigenous, learning about Indigenous epistemologies is a part of decolonization for settler/colonizers and being an ally to Indigenous communities is an important part of decolonization for non-Indigenous peoples.

Kovach discusses the role of non-Indigenous allies in the decolonization framework. She explains that, “the relationship begins with decolonizing one's mind and heart. Non-Indigenous academics that have successful relationships with Indigenous communities understand this. This means exploring one's own beliefs and values about knowledge and how it shapes practices. It is about examining whiteness. It is about examining power. It is ongoing” (Kovach 2009, 169). Because trust-building is a part of decolonization, “reconceptualizing the relationship with Indigenous communities from that of a studied, exotic 'other' to that of a partnering relationship” is an important step and requires ongoing critical reflection (Kovach 2009, 170). Kovach advises that, “non-Indigenous scholars who wish to engage with Indigenous knowledges need to connect with Indigenous scholars, people, and communities” (Kovach 2009, 172). Therefore, at the core of this project is a building of relationships with Barbara and Kat as well as a collaborative partnership with the local Indigenous community through the garden work.

Settler/Colonizer

Learning about the violence of colonization and how it has worked to devalue Indigenous knowledges and Indigenous communities has allowed me to look squarely at privilege imbedded in settler/colonizer identity. First, I want to briefly examine the role of the *white benevolent peacemaker* prevalent in colonizer-colonized relations. Ravi De Costa explains that “benevolent urges recur throughout the histories of imperialism and colonialism, including forms of humanitarianism and 'benign imperialism,' providing ground[s] for policies of modernization and development, assimilation and integration, charity and aid. Indeed, these motivations are foundational to the colonial enterprise in legitimating Europeans' presence and presumed superiority” (De Costa qtd in Regan 2010, 47). Although benevolent urges of guilty settler/colonizers may appear to be grounded in good intentions, these beliefs and actions

reproduce imperialist ideologies that serve to legitimize violence. Regan adds that this benevolent ideology enables “non-Indigenous people to feel good about feeling bad but engender no critical awareness of themselves as colonial beneficiaries who bear a responsibility to address the inequities and injustices from which they have profited” (Regan 2010, 47). Therefore, I work to resist these learned desires to “help” others who have not profited from settler/colonizer privilege, while critically analyzing settler/colonizer identity.

Anne Opie explains that through a deconstructive analysis, the researcher engages “in a fluid process of identifying and questioning ideology (her own, not merely the other's), her location within the literature, the nature of her textual practice and the personal and political implications of methodology for the participants in the study” (Opie 2008, 365). Swadener writes about how as a “European-American woman benefiting from an array of unearned privileges,” she has actively interrogated ways in which her “work may be producing colonial, exploitative, or oppressive patterns and relationships” (Swadener 2004, 6). I too attempt to continually interrogate how power may be imbedded in my work, as well as my actions. Through this interrogation, I am able to disrupt these patterns that reproduce colonialism.

Regan asks the question, “how can we, as non-Indigenous people, unsettle ourselves to name and then transform the settler – the colonizer who lurks within – not just in words but by our actions, as we confront the history of colonization, violence, racism, and injustice...” (Regan 2010, 11). Decolonization for me, a non-Indigenous person, means unsettling and transforming myself, and this comes in the form of my internal thoughts, academic writing, and most importantly my behaviors and actions in efforts for social justice. This works to “deconstruct the foundational myth of the benevolent peacemaker – the bedrock of settler identity – to understand how colonial forms of denial, guilt, and empathy act as barriers to transformative socio-political

change” (Regan 2010, 11). I have learned that victimizing Indigenous peoples and acting as a person who thinks they can “help” Indigenous communities are part of the ongoing *colonial* framework. Regan argues “that we must risk interacting differently with Indigenous people – with vulnerability, humility, and a willingness to stay in the decolonizing struggle of our own discomfort” (Regan 2010, 13). This issue has arisen for me personally through a specific interaction with Kat, where she challenged an idea of mine concerning education of Indigenous history. I had mentioned that I thought primary education needed to portray an accurate history of Indigenous-colonizer relations, and that this might give rise to better relations today. However, Kat explained to me that this idea can easily lead to victimization of Indigenous peoples, which almost perpetuates violent Indigenous-colonizer relationships. This experience helped disrupt my comfort of being in a privileged position and aided in the decolonizing struggle to embrace vulnerability and humility within my relationships with Elders.

Regan connects interrogation of the settler within to the research methodology of autoethnography. She references the work of critical theorist-activist Mehmooona Moosa-Mitha, who writes from an anti-racist feminist perspective. Part of the decolonizing praxis is to

“... [situate] oneself not as an expert but as a learner in anti-oppressive experientially based research. Thus, in seeking to know the Other, the researcher comes to know herself and to understand her own complicity: 'The researcher holds the attitude of a learner, of one who is a 'not-knower', but through the act of empathetic imagination and by possessing critical self-consciousness, comes to gain a sense of what the Other knows. The researcher is reflective in her practice, whereby the knowledge of the subaltern or subjugated is used to reflect dominant practices and assumptions in which the researcher herself is complicit... Anti-oppressive theorists... make a connection between knowing and doing, and research as 'praxis'... Knowledge therefore, is not conceived of as neutral, nor is it abstract in nature” (Moosa-Mitha qtd in Regan 2010, 26).

By situating myself as a learner in my relationships with Elders, I have come to gain a sense of Indigenous ecological knowledges through critical reflexivity of the dominant practices in which I am complicit. Regan provides another example:

“Both Jones and Breton, as non-Native scholars, emphasize the importance of continually interrogating their own colonial position within their work. Jones describes her effort to engage in collaborative dialogue while being ever mindful of the need to examine her own attitudes and actions: 'To rethink collaboration between indigene and colonizer is both to desire it and to ask troubling questions about it... Interrogating the logic of (my own) White/settler enthusiasm for dialogic collaboration, I consider how this desire might be an unwitting imperialist demand – and thereby in danger of strengthening the very impulses it seeks to combat. I do not argue for a rejection of collaboration. Rather I unpack its difficulties to suggest a less dialogical and more uneasy, unsettled relationship, based on learning (about difference) from the Other, rather than learning about the Other’” (Regan 2010, 27).

By situating myself within these unsettling tensions, I am able to refuse the assumption of the need to learn *about* Indigenous ecological knowledges and instead, I am able to learn about difference from Elders. This methodology ties back to my choices of autoethnographic writing, which works to make ourselves “the subject under closest scrutiny” (Epp qtd in Regan 2010, 34). In the same vein, during an interview concerning multi-culturalism, Spivak asks those of privilege to be

“... working critically back through one's history, prejudices, and learned, but now seemingly instinctual, responses. If we can learn racism, we can unlearn it, and unlearn it precisely because our assumptions about race represent a closing down of creative possibility, a loss of other options, other knowledge...Unlearning one's privilege by considering it as one's loss constitutes a double recognition. Our privileges, whatever they may be in terms of race, class, nationality, gender, and the like, may have prevented us from gaining a certain kind of Other knowledge: not simply information that we have not yet received, but the knowledge that we are not equipped to understand by reason of our social positions. To unlearn our privileges means, on the one hand, to do our homework, to work hard at gaining some knowledge of the others who occupy those spaces most closed to our privileged view. On the other hand, it means attempting to speak to those others in such a way that they might take us seriously and, most important of all, be able to answer back” (The Spivak Reader 1996, 4).

Spivak asks us to think of privilege as loss because it produces space where those of privilege can unlearn their learned ways of knowing by critically analyzing histories. This unlearning gives way to learning about other ways of knowing. To contextualize my experience of *privilege as my loss*, I will provide how my time abroad affected me. When I came back from my semester in Nepal, I would talk about my experience living with my host family, and most people would usually have a response such as, “you must have really learned to appreciate all the luxuries you have here.” I understood where their thinking came from, but I usually gave a confused response because I felt that even though I may have “luxuries,” such as a flushing toilet at home, I considered my “privilege” to be a loss. I felt sad that I didn't grow up in a multi-generational household, or learn traditional agricultural or spiritual knowledge. And this unlearning is something I have continued through my relationships with Barbara and Kat. I consider the fact that I lack Indigenous ecological knowledges and am not equipped to truly understand this type of knowledge as a loss. Through this project, in a personal pursuit to decolonize, I have tried to work hard at gaining some of this knowledge by doing background homework—such as reading books that Barbara and Kat have recommended to me—in order to be taken seriously by them.

Indigenous Paradigms

These Indigenous paradigms, which strongly guide my work and writing, are grounded in Indigenous scholars' writings that focus on Indigenous ways of knowing, which can translate into methodologies and research paradigms. The act of discussing Indigenous paradigms puts me at risk of essentializing Indigenous epistemologies, therefore I proceed with caution and recognize that these paradigms are complex and multiple. I want to note that these Indigenous scholars are speaking to other Indigenous researchers, not me. However as part of a decolonizing framework, I still place importance on following Indigenous ways of learning knowledge. Indigenous

“traditional stories don't work for us [settler/colonizers]. Their stories hold meaning for us only as examples. They can teach us what is possible. We must create our own stories” (Williams 1984 qtd in Denzin & Lincoln 2008, 6). Therefore, I hope to learn from Indigenous paradigms, and create my own narrative to examine my dual-position as a colonizer-perpetrator and colonizer-ally (Regan 2010, 28).

I wanted my interactions with Barbara to be guided by Indigenous ways of learning and traditional relationships between Elders and younger people. So I am careful not to occupy a leading role in our relationships. Barbara took the lead in our conversations as well as in teaching me how to garden, and specifically how to interact with non-human living beings. Wilson frames Indigenous research paradigms through relationality. He says that, “all things are related and therefore relevant... 'Respect regulates how we treat Mother Earth, the plants, the animals, and our brothers and sisters of all races... Respect means you listen intently to others' ideas that you do not insist that your idea prevails. By listening intently you show honour, consider the well being of others, and treat others with kindness and courtesy” (E. Steinhauer 2001, 86 qtd in Wilson 2008, 58). Barbara has taught me about the relational qualities shared between human and non-human living beings. Learning in this way has taught me to feel and show respect to all living beings. Wilson explains that Indigenous research paradigms are “a matter of forming a relationship that goes beyond the informant-researcher duality to becoming co-learners... if knowledge is formed in a relationship, it can't be owned” (Wilson 2008, 113). In my relationship with Barbara, we worked and talked with each other. The themes I am writing about in this paper were not entirely self-directed. Most of the main topics I discuss come from issues and ideas that Barbara brought up in conversation. I would ask her questions, as is done in any informal conversation, and her ideas led our conversation and led the direction of my thesis. Wilson

argues that in order to honor the relationships that Elders share with knowledge, “we need to name that relationship, so that, well, we're not claiming it, but saying where it came from and what those relationships were that went into making it. That way we can be held accountable to those Elders, those relationships... So you're looking at the relationship that develops between the person telling the story and the person analyzing the story; it becomes a strong relationship” (Wilson 2008, 114). I want to honor my relationships and so I name the relationship that has developed between the Elders who share the stories, and me who listens. Wilson adds that, “an Indigenous style of analysis has to look at all those relations as a whole instead of breaking it down, because it just won't work. So it has to use more of an intuitive logic, rather than a linear logic, because you can't just break everything down into small parts and use linear logic to bring them back together to a whole” (Wilson 2008, 119). Wilson discusses storytelling as means of communicating in Indigenous paradigms. He says that, “stories go in circles. They don't go in straight lines. It helps if you listen in circles because there are stories inside and between stories and finding your way through them is as easy and as hard as finding your way home. Part of finding is getting lost, and when you are lost you start to open up and listen” (Tafuya 1995, 12 qtd in Wilson 2008, 6). This ties to how the decolonizing methodology asks you to listen with more than just your ears. By opening myself to other ways of learning, I have been able to see the richness of knowledge that can be found in stories. Indigenous research paradigms can ask for self-accountability as well— “you have to be true to yourself and put your own true voice in there, and those stories that speak to you. That is retaining your integrity; it's honouring the lessons you've learned through saying that they have become a part of who you are” (Wilson 2008, 123). This connects to the autoethnographic methodology where I create a space for

myself to explain how the shared knowledge has become part of my personal decolonizing process.

Kovach also advocates for “use of story, life history, oral history, unstructured interviews, and other processes that allow participants to share their experiences on their terms” (Kovach 2009, 82). She explains:

“Methods that are congruent with tribal epistemology include approaches such as a conversational method that involves an open-ended structure that is flexible enough to accommodate principles of native oral traditions, and is thus differentiated from a more traditional interview process. Conversation as method is unlike standard structured or semi-structured interviews that place external perimeters on the research participant’s narrative. An open-structured conversational method shows respect for the participant’s story and allows research participants greater control over what they wish to share with respect to the research question. It is an approach that may take longer and require more sessions than with highly structured interviews...These methods are more elastic, and this gives research participants an opportunity to share their story on a specific topic without the periodic disruptions involved in adhering to a structured approach, as in an interview format” (Kovach 2009, 124).

My “research” is carried out through an unstructured framework of informal conversations, however it is intentional because it is based on these Indigenous epistemological principles, as well as because of the violent historical context of western research in Indigenous communities. Because I wanted to show respect to what Barbara and Kat wanted to share, this open-structured conversational method gives them more control over the conversation, and therefore, the direction of the thesis project. Kovach goes on to explain that:

“It becomes less about research participants responding to research questions, and more about the participants sharing their stories in relation to the question. They may do this in a direct and indirect fashion...This would doubtless frustrate those interested in a 'just the facts' approach. However, for those who value story as knowledge, this method allows for a breadth of knowing to enter into the research conversation that the researcher alone may not have considered... Using open-structured methods, the task of researchers is to intuitively respond to the stories, to share as necessary their own understandings, and to be active listeners” (Kovach 2009, 125).

Because I didn't use the traditional ethnographic approach of interviews, I was able to learn

much more than I had previously considered about native plants and ecological relationships on my own. This method allowed me to actively listen in a way that worked towards the building of my relationships with Barbara and Kat while also disrupting the power dynamic that typically functions within western research paradigms. As a non-Indigenous person, I used this methodology to work towards building trust between Indigenous communities and the academy.

In *Research Is Ceremony*, there are conversations written between several Indigenous scholars regarding how information is gathered. One woman, named Jane said,

“Sometimes when you go into doing research, you don't want to come with a set of questions. Especially to an Elder. So you enter into conversation. And hopefully they will let you use a tape machine or allow you to take notes. But sometimes even those things are obtrusive and invasive, so you have to rely on your memory, and you have to rely on the things that are coming through you at that time, and the words that the Elder is saying. And from there, extrapolate from what the Elder is saying. And that is conversation. That is a valid tool. Because it is contextual. It helps build relationships (Wilson 2008, 113).

Although this method of informal conversation is more challenging because of the need to rely on memory, it is more meaningful in my opinion because it asks me to rely on my emotional reaction to what I am hearing. This allows me to have a more reflexive response when I write a reflection later, and it coincides with the methodological component of writing about difference rather than *about* peoples and culture.

To Inconclude

These methodologies show that there is no conclusive end to the process of decolonization and it is not linear. Anne Opie explains that,

“In a discussion of the nature of ethnographic research, Clifford displaces the ethnographer to a position 'at the edge of the frame' (1986: 1), a felicitous phrase which undermines the authoritativeness of the research and introduces elements of incompleteness and contingency. Historically, however, Clifford argues that anthropological (and sociological) studies have disguised their inherent limitations, claiming instead an ability to portray what he describes as strategies... Yet to present

one's research outcomes as contingent and incomplete goes against very strong Western notions of objectivity and truth and raises questions about the authority of texts and modes of writing in which limitations are overtly acknowledged" (Opie 2008, 366).

This shows how knowledge is contingent and therefore *inconclusive*. Refusing to draw conclusions is an intentional choice of mine because it refuses totalization. This refusal acts to disrupt the axiomatic impulse to claim objectivity. Therefore I reject this impulse and work towards a different analysis.

Part II: Power in Food

In Part I, I described the methodological approaches I used throughout my relationships with Barbara and Kat and how these theoretical considerations helped guide my efforts in the process of self-decolonization. The aforementioned methodologies pushed me to analyze the politics of knowledge that work in conjunction with settler/colonizer desires and impulses to perpetuate appropriation and violence. In Part II, I work towards understanding my own experiences as a settler/colonizer and how I have benefited from acts of violence against Indigenous peoples by analyzing colonial/capitalist food systems. It is important for me to examine this because it is the system of food relations that I have learned as natural and inevitable. This analysis provides a context for considering how the practice of decolonizing food, and the People and Their Plants garden, itself, are acts of resistance to colonial/capitalist systems. I interrogate these normalized assumptions and advocate for creating cracks in these relations and systems through decolonizing economies/economic relationships as well as decolonizing relationships to the land and non-human living beings. Part II also provides an analysis of the collaborative community project where Barbara and I co-authored a brochure about the garden.

Colonialism, Gender, and Capitalist Food Systems

Throughout the history of colonialism, peoples' relationships with food and nature have been altered. In the context of this history, a profound disconnect between humans and nature emerged as settler/colonizer ideology, which views land as a source of profit, was promoted and propagated. The way in which we have been taught in settler/colonizer society to relate to nature as a commodity is embodied by corporatized agriculture. This point of view monetizes food and attempts to render other worldviews as irrelevant or nonexistent. This mainstream food system “is characterized by the monopoly market power of agrifood corporations, globalized meat production, giant retail, and growing links between food and fuel” (Holt-Gimenez & Shattuck 2011, 317). This globalizing corporate food regime works towards the “removal of social and political barriers to the free flow of capital in food and agriculture and is institutionalized through international agreements such as the WTO's Agreement of Agriculture” (Fairbairn 2010, 17). Despite the world's surplus of food, there are vastly disproportionate realities between those populations of different economic privilege within the globalized capitalist economy. We may consider how the worldviews attached to this particular system are deeply connected to colonialism.

Capitalist food relationships and the partnering mentality of an innate separation between people and food are founded in the context of colonial ideologies and this “industrialization and capitalization of food production and the commodification of food have radically altered our relationships to food, land and place” (Whittman et al. 2010, 10). European agriculture manipulated “the environment to meet the needs of the settlers for food and other resources” (M'bayo 2003, 191). Therefore colonization has had significant ecological impacts:

“The soil and flora of most colonized areas throughout the world were altered forever.

Domesticated animals from Europe arrived, thrived, and multiplied into enormous herds. Their eating habits, trampling hooves, and droppings and the seeds of weeds they brought left a deep impact on the environments that became their new homes. In the end, colonialism changed and reshaped the world because most continents lost countless natural plants and animals due to the human introduction of overpowering species. And in many instances, colonized regions were adversely affected by the introduction of animals, diseases, and plants from another environment, which dominated the existing indigenous flora and fauna” (M'bayo 2003, 191).

Within the physical ecological effects of colonization, an embedded settler/colonizer worldview exists. This “is founded on a simple, economic ideology of nature,” compared to a view of nature based on principles of reciprocity. This ideology “in turn depends on the utilization of certain technologies in the name of efficiency and the expansion of capital-oriented production” (Whittman 2010, 94). Hence its discourse, which is based on economic efficiency of nature, reinforces the view of “man's dominion over nature” and promotes the “perception of 'progress' as an essential component of societal development (defined as economic growth and technological advancement)” (LaDuke 1993, xi). This notion of a linear progress reinforces a discourse which always-already rejects a dialogue containing possibilities to analyze the value of said technology. Al Gedicks states that, “the disappearance of native peoples and the degradation of the natural world is not the result of some abstract and inevitable 'development' process. Both these evils can be traced to a particular and identifiable source—the resource-acquisition and profit-maximizing activities of some of the most powerful institutions in the industrial global economy” (Gedicks 1993, 1). Although it has been made to seem natural in mainstream settler/colonizer society, agribusiness economy constructs local food relations by attempting to claim power over how we can interact with food. The physical degradation of the environment coupled with a colonial ideology has had impacts on health for Indigenous communities. Cavender Wilson explains that “diabetes and heart disease (not to mention alcoholism) have all

taken extreme tolls on our communities, and it is rare that an Indigenous family is not touched by at least one, if not all, of these devastating conditions” (Cavender Wilson 2004, 82). By homogenizing its food system, this capitalist regime works to normalize the inequitable health impacts on marginalized communities.

In Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's interview with Suzana Milevska, entitled *Resistance That Cannot Be Recognized As Such*, she explains that “the creation of an unjust society as a good society, unjust as good, is based upon establishing gendering that takes this unequal exchange, imposes fear as a norm and bases the woman's ethical practice upon this norm” (Spivak 2006, 77). While Spivak is specifically talking about labor and gender, we can extrapolate this theme when it comes to food systems. This helps us consider how the colonization of land and food has created an unjust society, and how the practice of this colonial/capitalist system and its means of operation make inequality invisible. From its origins, “modern agriculture was based on a set of exclusions and enclosures that were fundamental to the emergence and strengthening of capitalism. Through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a set of myths about the supposed benefits of capitalist agriculture were constructed and continually reinforced to help make these exclusions more palatable” (Handy & Fehr 2010, 58). This colonial discourse “has both naturalizing and self-actualizing tendencies” because it depicts the neoliberalization of food “as an inevitable, external force rather than an intentional project (of capitalist corporations and governments) and it reshapes the social world to fit the picture that it describes” (Bourdieu 1998; Peck and Tickell 2002 qtd in Fairbairn 2010, 19). Despite capitalist corporations' and governments' effort to mold the world to fit “inevitable” neoliberalization of food, it is important to remember that this effort is often challenged when groups of people resist these practices by boycotting them.

Following Spivak's investigation above, we can see how racism and sexism are closely tied in a capitalist food system, and can consider how gender is integral to understanding colonization. In Anne McClintock's exploration of colonialism she describes “three of the governing themes of Western imperialism” which are “the transmission of white, male power through control of colonized women; the emergence of a new global order of cultural knowledge; and the imperial command of commodity capital...” (McClintok 1995, 3). This quote asks us to consider how these themes are related, and more specifically, how gender fits into the colonization of land and food. For example, “just as rape came with conquest, so did the idea that the brown female body we call the land and everything that inhabits her dwellings like the (feminized) animals are for the taking” (Rodriguez 2012, np). This analogy expresses the connection between women and the land throughout colonization. Furthermore, “gender justice is often articulated as being a separate issue from issues of survival for Indigenous peoples. Such an understanding presupposes that we could actually decolonize without addressing sexism, which ignores the fact that it has been precisely through gender violence that we have lost our lands in the first place” (Smith 2005: 8 qtd in Henning 2007, 197). Confronting how gender relations and therefore food relations are constructed by settler/colonizer ideology is important for decolonization.

Resistance

The food regime discourse “has the effect of depoliticizing the process, thereby making the task of resistance far more difficult (Peck and Tickell 2002)” and therefore “distills resistance down to a matter of individual purchasing decisions, thereby creating a form of food politics which is actually highly apolitical” (Fairbairn 2010, 19). Much like the efforts to depoliticize other social movements, the agribusiness-sponsored discourse results in the individualization of

problem solving and therefore attempts to detract from community based initiatives. However, many food activists see this movement as an effort to change what power means, rather than to obtain power. An alternative form of resistance may exist in “the realm of creating alternative spaces” (Kloppenburger 2010, 153). Settler/colonizer society may not recognize the People and Their Plants garden as a form of resistance to the corporate food system and dismiss it as a form of leisure rather than as a political act. Nevertheless, this form of action has the capacity for creating other spaces in the colonial/capitalist food system—“cracks in the paradigm that open up wiggle space for alternative approaches” (McKeon 2011, 265). As mentioned earlier in the paper, the Chia Cafe, with which Barbara and Kat are involved, is also part of a network that creates spaces for alternative food practices. The Chia Cafe consists of a group of people from the Tongva tribe as well as other tribes who get together to cook with native food ingredients. Within this group, both men and women participate in cooking with native ingredients, which is part of a reinvention and reincorporation of native foods relationships in local Indigenous communities. This action challenges the patriarchal-capitalist food system, which separates men and women in a hierarchical manner. Resisting this hierarchy reimagines relationships with food, specifically by recreating relationships with native foods. This can become a point of decolonization, which lies outside of the patriarchal food system, enacting alternative ways of knowing food. My analysis of the Chia Cafe's work talks back to the sexism of the colonial/capitalist food system because it recognizes that these acts reconfigure the politics of gender and food relations. My analysis also highlights the possibility of creating equitable gender/food relations through disrupting colonial/capitalist systems.

Via Campesina, an international coalition of activists and agricultural, Indigenous, and rural communities who created the concept and organize around the idea of *food sovereignty*—

the right of peoples to define their own food systems, including their agricultural policy, as well as where and how their food is produced, and the right to protect their food's cultural integrity—which goes beyond the mainstream idea of food security (Demarais 2007, 34). The garden and related Indigenous food projects in the Tongva community can be seen as part of the food sovereignty and decolonizing food movement. Around the world, communities' foodways have been disrupted by colonial food regimes. This food sovereignty movement demands “the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems” (Nyeleni Declaration 2007 qtd in Stedile & Martins de Carvalho 2011, 24). Food sovereignty organizations “started from a prior principle in which 'food is not a commodity, it is a human right’” and argue for the right for local and autonomous food relationships (Montecinos 2010 qtd in Stedile & Martins de Carvalho 2011, 23). Based on what I have learned from Barbara, this is not a new principle to Tongva peoples, but rather embodied in the reciprocal relationships between people and nature. Furthermore, “food sovereignty counters the hegemony of neoliberalism by strengthening the vision of economic democracy in the world” (Stedile & Martins de Carvalho 2011, 24). By refusing to participate in the commodification and monetization of food and instead respect its sacredness, we may create cracks in the capitalist paradigm. By creating a space which physically and ecologically represents local colonial history, the People and Their Plants garden effectively works towards a decolonizing effort of *coming to know the past*. The garden is an act of acknowledging the existence of this history and thus resists the discourse, which has created an erasure of other ways of knowing nature and food.

Economies

Emerging sites of decolonization, which don't participate in the capitalist economy, can promote more democratic spaces and produce new ways of thinking about economic relationships. In *A Postcapitalist Politics*, Gibson-Graham explore the reimagination of “the economy” and the possibilities of creating new economies:

“In its current hegemonic articulation as neoliberal global capitalism, capitalocentric discourse has now colonized the entire economic landscape and its universalizing claims seem to have been realized. A distinctive social imaginary—a heady mix of freedom, individual wealth, unfettered consumption, and well-being trickled down to all—convenes a series of myths that constitute the (illusory) fullness and positivity of “capitalist” society, masking the social antagonisms on which this presence is posited. We have come to accept that 'the economy' establishes the bottom line for action and 'it' makes us perform in certain ways. This ideological fantasy has become safe and even enjoyable, directing and limiting politics to certain channels, blinding us without realizing it to the possibility of other options” (Gibson-Graham 2006, 55).

As we begin to analyze how capitalist discourse has been used to promote certain economic policies, it becomes clear that capitalism has become naturalized and seen as inevitable or the only logical option—and thereby excludes other types of economies and solidifying the “impossibility” of alternatives. However, “we can begin to 'unfix' economic identity by deconstructing the dominant capitalocentric discourse of economy” and therefore “dislocate the unity and hegemony of neoliberal global capitalist economic discourse through a proliferative queering of the economic landscape and construction of a new language of economic diversity” (Gibson-Graham 2006, 56). This produces a language of new, diverse economies, which expand “the identity of the economy to include all of those practices excluded or marginalized by a strong theory of capitalism. The landscape we describe does not ignore relations of power between economic practices, but neither does it presume that they are structured in any necessary or inherently reproducible manner” (Gibson-Graham 2006, 60). It is important to recognize that

embodied in this new language and way of thinking about economies, involves an analysis and critique of the politics of knowledge—how we have come to know economic relations, as well as how we have come to understand power in society and our daily lives. For example, capitalocentric discourse creates the mythical representation of *the market* and declares it “as 'free.' But we know that this is rarely the case” (Gibson-Graham 2006, 62). Food decolonization and food sovereignty efforts bring the realities of the “free market” to the surface.

Once we critically analyze how capitalocentric discourse has constructed power, we can begin to think about how alternative markets already exist in society—some for the intentional purpose of reenacting economies, and others have not been forged for that specific intention. In terms of the People and Their Plants garden, Barbara told me that she wanted to create a garden that was different than other community gardens. This garden is unique because it creates a physical site for the study of ecological history and colonial impacts on the environmental landscape. Embedded into this space are the workings of an alternative economy. Because the garden is a place for learning and developing closer relationships with plants, it enacts economic values and practices that lie outside of capitalism. For example, when some of the medicinal native plants grow too large for the garden bed, they are replanted into smaller plastic pots, so they can be given to community members who want to start their own medicinal garden. Within global society, “the most prevalent form of labor the world over is the *unpaid* work” which is likely to occur in the community (Gibson-Graham 2006, 62). But even though “this work is unremunerated in monetary terms, many would say it does not necessarily go uncompensated. The rewards for this labor may come in the form of love, emotional support, protection, companionship, and a sense of self-worth” (Gibson-Graham 2006, 62). This garden was created and made possible without the use of money. Different organizations and groups came together

to donate what they had—seeds, wood for beds, or gardening tools and supplies. All of those who work in the garden volunteer their labor. Yet they are rewarded by the feelings that come from working with plants and the soil, as well as the reward of working collectively to make a living history garden possible. Furthermore, “the nonmonetary nature of this compensation does not disqualify this work from assuming a central role in the functioning of any economy” (Gibson-Graham 2006, 64). If we consider the labor that is dedicated to efforts like the garden, we can see how the economic relationships impact the community economy. However, some forms of work such as this “might rarely be seen as a form of economic activism,” especially because this collaboration “could include people from very different income and occupational groups who identify differently with one or more of the above subject positions” (Gibson-Graham 2006, 77). Therefore, we may see how these acts could be considered resistance to the capitalist food system even when not intended for that specific purpose. In this space, which dislocates capitalocentrism's hegemony, we can “see opportunities for new economic becomings—sites where ethical decisions can be made, power can be negotiated, and transformations forged” (Gibson-Graham 2006, 77). This involves the reenacting of power, which has the potential of forming equitable and moral economic relationships.

Decolonizing Food

Recognizing the effects of colonialism's imposed food system and its ecologically damaging changes in the Southern California landscape is an important part of decolonization. Cavender Wilson writes about how these “supposedly 'superior' diet and food ways forcefully imposed on us have only served to deteriorate the health of our people” (Cavender Wilson 2004, 83). Because “these conditions were nonexistent prior to the invasion of our homelands, it is obvious that knowledge and recovery of our traditional food ways is an important means to

restore health among our people. Indigenous scholars can utilize knowledge of precolonization food sources, including planting and harvesting methods” (Cavender Wilson 2004, 82). This brings together the importance of Indigenous epistemologies and the importance of revitalizing Indigenous ecological knowledges. Relearning the colonization of land and food, as well as the knowledge production surrounding western writings of history, which has served to legitimize this colonization and “owning” of land, is integral to interacting with Indigenous communities' efforts to reroot and revitalize cultures and ecological relationships. Cavender Wilson articulates how decolonizing food can have real implications for Indigenous communities' health:

“... in order to build healthy bodies, we need to return to a diet based on the plants and animals also indigenous to our homeland. If we could participate in a lifestyle that would allow us to sustain ourselves on the lean meats of venison, buffalo, and fish, wild rice from our traditional lands, corn, beans, and squash from our gardens, and the numerous berries, nuts, and root vegetables we routinely harvested, diabetes would not be a health concern for future generations” (Cavender Wilson 2004, 83).

This addresses the issue of decolonizing food and what that means for Indigenous communities. Cavender Wilson explains that, “the recovery and practice of traditional knowledge, coupled with the political actions to make sure the positive environmental conditions of Indigenous animals and plants are protected, will assist in the physical and spiritual recovery of our people in a very concrete way” (Cavender Wilson 2004, 84). We may consider how this rerooting to Indigenous ecological knowledges and the move towards a decolonized diet is an act of resistance to the corporate food system.

If we turn our focus to the act of growing these foods in the People and Their Plants garden, we can think about how this actively decolonizes relationships with food and works toward decolonizing the larger food system. Gedicks articulates how communities can be reenvisioned and reenacted:

“More satisfying, more sustainable ways of living on this planet are possible, of course. Many alternatives to multinational capitalist industrialism already exist; others are being envisioned and developed by communities all over the world. Social 'progress' does not have to be defined by genocide, social hierarchy, an out-of-control technology, a nonrenewable resource addiction, life-threatening pollution, massive habitat destruction, and endless material growth. We do not have to submit or acquiesce to the multinational corporations' ongoing war of aggression against native peoples and the natural world. We can, in fact, fight back and help give birth to more democratic and humane societies that are better able to protect and restore the earth” (Gedicks 1993, 1).

This illustrates how a new vision of social progress is possible and doesn't include violent practices, even though the capitalist version of “progress” is made to appear natural and normal.

This illustrates how other ways of knowing and being in the world and in our environments already exist and are continually being recreated in alternative spaces. This reimagining of social progress can translate into decolonization of the food system. The Zapatista movement for autonomy provides a translocal example for how food autonomy, or food sovereignty, can be enacted:

“Certainly, a major lesson from the Zapatistas is one of self-determination (Alfred 1999), and how to move beyond resistance (El Kilombo Intergalactico 2007) towards decolonial autonomous movement building by remembering our traditional ways of healing and eating without dependency on the current systems of education, politics, food and health. In line with the Zapatista focus on self-determination, People of color (POC) movements in the U.S. are creating alterNative ways of doing health, food and nutrition by remembering the ways of our ancestors” (Rodriguez 2012, np).

Even the smallest of acts that work outside of the capitalist food system forge a space for alternative economies. By reconnecting to ways of interacting with the environment previous to colonization and previous to the current food regime, we may create sites of decolonization, while resisting capitalist food ways and instead celebrating Indigenous knowledges.

The food sovereignty movement “entails a changing relationship to food resulting from an integrated, democratized, localized food production model” and also “forces us to rethink our relationships with one another” (Whittman et al. 2010, 4). Throughout my time working in the

garden with Barbara, she taught me to practice these principles in my interactions with food. The rethinking of relationships, which is part of this epistemology, involves rethinking how gender relations may be shifted. And “because women play a key role in food production and procurement, food preparation, family food security and food culture, the social and political transformation embedded in the food sovereignty concept specifically entails changed gender relations” (Whittman et al. 2010, 5). Once again, this allows us a space to reconsider gender relations with respect to interactions with food, and how they are important in the decolonizing food movement. The garden can provide opportunities for changed gender relations by shifting food activity from grocery stores to gardens, because it provides opportunities where there can be space for more gender solidarity. Furthermore, the food sovereignty model “demands that we treat food not simply as a good, access to which and the production of which is determined by a mythically natural and fetishized 'market.' Food sovereignty demands we recognize the social connections inherent in producing food, consuming food and sharing food” (Handy & Fehr 2010, 58). Community-based food movements produce food “in ways that rebuild community connections” and are “not raised simply for profit” but instead in these movements, “food is considered a gift... not a commodity to be sold” (Meter 2011, 207). These food sovereignty principles are practiced in the People and Their Plants garden as well. By Barbara teaching me about Tongva ways of knowing, particularly knowing plants as living beings which deserve respect and gratitude, we were able to enact the process of remembering Tongva foodways, and therefore to decolonize relationships with the land and food. In order to reroot to Indigenous ways of knowing, there must be a connection to *place*, and in this case, it is the Coastal Sage Scrub ecosystem of Southern California, and this is the ecosystem with which I have been interacting during my time spent gardening with Barbara. Revitalizing the physical landscape

and how we interact with it, as well as the rerooting of Indigenous ecological knowledges, is intimately tied with Indigenous epistemologies. In the garden, Barbara rewrites history by designing plants and food in a way that represents how colonization has impacted Indigenous peoples by directly impacting the physical environmental landscape. When Indigenous epistemology is utilized, the reconnection of the value of Indigenous ecological knowledges can be recognized.

Learning to Learn

Through my experiences, I learned of ecological relationships through learning difference. Every time Barbara picks a plant for her own use, she gives the plant physical offerings, or respect and gratitude by thanking the plant for helping her and giving her a gift. She appreciates all that the plant provides. I learned about difference from working in the garden by learning about Tongva ways of knowing living things. This helped me see how plants can be seen as an extension of ourselves as humans. Embodying this relationship with the non-human living world has helped me think about relationships with knowledge. I was able to see the history of colonization through an ecological lens and understand how the ecological landscape has changed. I began thinking about what that has meant in very real ways for Indigenous people, by learning about local ecology through physical interaction with plants. Kat taught me that the earth is not dead or gone. Sometimes it is hidden under concrete—but it's still there. Learning about the ways that local Indigenous peoples lived and interacted with the environment can teach us how to relearn our relationships with the earth and therefore relearn how to treat the earth. This encourages me to refuse to think about the environment in a way that assumes white people need to *save* the earth. Instead I could see the possibilities of environmentalism being a matter of people connecting with the way this region was managed by Indigenous people.

Barbara talked to me about her personal experience with learning the traditional knowledge of the Tongva people. She explained how the knowledge of plants and the practice of plant gathering were passed down each generation through the mothers of the family, and how she learned about medicinal and food uses from her mother. Barbara told me that when she was young, her family was poor, so they went into the fields to gather local native plants to eat. Barbara explained that she has always been fascinated by traditional knowledge because she grew up practicing it. Throughout my time with Barbara, I learned difference by learning to value something that is not typically valued in settler/colonizer society, where often people are valued in terms of their utility. I began to learn the value of Elder knowledge as well as adopting the practice of listening to stories and tradition with my heart.

A continuous theme throughout my experience with Barbara and Kat has been a need for reconnection. In the garden, I learned how gardening can be a way of preserving heritage and sharing knowledge. For Barbara, a goal of the garden is to grow plants and then, when they are ready to be replanted, share them with the community, so they can learn about and benefit from the healing qualities of native plants too. She also talked about how she started this community garden in order to bring people together to share their knowledge, stories, and experiences. She said that this type of collective space brings people together for spiritual healing and connecting to others.

Spending time with Barbara and Kat helped me experience difference. I grew up under the influence of western ways of thinking and knowing—seeing food as a resource for consumption and seeing non-human life as a product for sale or profit. I have been in the process of learning a different way of experiencing food. Barbara and Kat taught me how relationships to plants and other non-human life forms can be shaped in other ways—such as seeing food and

medicine as alive and spiritually active and seeing non-human life forms as a partner in life, as something that deserves our respect and gratitude. Throughout the past several months, I have been in the process of relearning histories, and reconnecting to non-human life. I have attempted to look at relationships with the environment in a way that refuses to abide by the assumptions of the colonial/capitalist food system.

Collaborative Brochure Project

The People and Their Plants Garden is a place where people in the community can reconnect to living things, reroof to Indigenous knowledges, particularly of the local Tongva tribe, and relearn colonial histories of the region. An objective of my thesis project is to build a reciprocal relationship with the Tongva community by giving back in a way that is useful to them—and what is *useful* was defined by the community itself. As mentioned before, at the beginning of the project I wanted to challenge conventional western academic research by having an aspect of my thesis be a collaboration with Barbara on a project for the community, while resisting the learned impulse to “help,” because I knew that the Tongva community did not need my “help.” Throughout my time with Barbara in the garden, we brainstormed ideas for a community project. Eventually, our discussions evolved and we thought of the idea of creating a brochure about the People and Their Plants garden. Barbara said that making a brochure would be most useful to the community because there was not yet any material written about the garden.

After meeting with Barbara several times to talk about how she envisioned the brochure, we came up with some ideas on how to design the project. The brochure developed into a combination of photographs and text. I took the photographs of the garden—wide shots of the different garden beds and close-ups of individual plants—with exception of the citrus bed photographs, because the citrus garden was not yet complete at the time. I showed Barbara the photographs and she then chose which photos were to be used in the brochure. She wrote all of the text for the brochure and sent it to me to put together—and I made a few edits and sent it back to her for approval. This process of making suggestions and changes, including small edits and ideas such as creating a Spanish version of the brochure, continued until we were happy with

the final brochure.

The intention of this brochure is to encourage people in the community from various backgrounds to visit the garden and to participate in helping it grow. The brochure also aims to provide a basic educational background to the garden's unique design and purpose. The text is meant to be accessible to many audiences, including Tongva Indians, other Indigenous communities, such as the Sherman Indian School, Latinos, whites, all genders, economically/racially/politically marginalized communities as well as those economically/racially/politically privileged, environmentalists, and those interested in food, cooking, and local history. A goal of this project is to speak to multiple audiences. This is a pedagogical skill that works within the intersections of the community in order to invite a conversation involving different groups within the local area. It is our hope that the brochure resonates with different groups and encourages involvement in the garden of some form or another.

The following pages include images and excerpts from the brochure, as well as my analysis of the brochure's decolonizing praxis.

A Living History Garden



A walk through 500 years of living history—a visual tour of four eras of time, that tell the story of people and their plants from our local communities.

The front cover of the brochure explains the purpose of the garden, inviting those interested in relearning the history of the local ecological landscape. Although the writing appears apolitical, embedded within an examination of the local environmental history is a history of violence. Histories of violence against Indigenous peoples and knowledges include the history of settler/colonizers rendering local knowledge systems invisible and delegitimized. On a local level, there is a history of Spanish colonizers' erasure of Tongva ecological knowledge. Furthermore, ecosystems in the region were heavily damaged due to the introduction of non-native plant and animal species. This environmental genocide was coupled with colonizer's physical and cultural genocide of Indigenous peoples through European disease, forced christianization, relocation to Spanish missions as forced labor, and the denial of practicing Tongva language, cultural and spiritual customs. Barbara is planning on giving guided tours of

the garden, which will provide both ecological information and local histories based on the plants in the garden. Taking a walk through this history may bring up uncomfortable feelings, particularly for white settler/colonizers, who may be used to a culture of denial concerning these violent histories.

The Tongva Indians Garden (... -1771)



The first people living in this area were the Tongva Indians. When the Spanish colonizers arrived they re-named them Gabrielinos to represent San Gabriel Mission. For thousands of years previously, the Tongva Indians were caretakers of the land where the native plants provided them food, medicine, clothing, and shelter.



The first section of the brochure specifically recognizes that the land belongs to the Indigenous peoples of the region, the Tongva, who have been caretakers of the land for

thousands of years previous to colonization. By remembering Tongva foodways, we can begin to think about what it might mean to decolonize our relationships to land and food. The text and photos share a story that shows how these foodways are currently active in the local community, while communicating a contradiction to the settler/colonizer notion that Indigenous peoples and culture no longer exist. The brochure and the garden itself invite a move towards unlearning the learned impulse to delegitimize this local Indigenous knowledge and to recognize the value of these plants that surround us in the local environment. The text also acknowledges how colonialism is multidimensional by acknowledging that the Spanish colonizers changed the name of the Indigenous peoples themselves, much like how they changed the names of plants and animals. Recognizing and using Tongva names of the plants works towards decolonizing our relationships to native plants. For example, the second image on this brochure panel is a photograph of *kwiayah* from the People and Their Plants garden. This plant has medicinal properties which are/were utilize(d) by the Tongva:

“The Tongva use a decoction of the leaves to treat respiratory problems like bronchitis and asthma. This decoction is also taken for urinary problems. Mothers that have recently given birth also drink this tea to improve circulation. For rheumatic pain and wounds, the Tongva apply a *kwiash* poultice. To alleviate earaches, they place heated *kwiash* leaves in the ear. A tea made from *kwiash* bark helps to relieve stomach [aches], sore throats, and coughs. Parts of the *kwiash* plant are made into a poultice to treat cuts, bruises, sores, and back pain. The leaves are used to wash hair and relieve scalp irritation. *Kwiash* holds a special place in Tongva ceremonies. Bundles of the plant hang in sweatshouses. Girls preparing for puberty rites must bathe in a *kwiash* wash. To protect themselves from the spirits of the dead, men and women in charge of handling the dead wash and rub their hands in *kwiash*” (Incayawar et. al. 2010, np).

A piece of knowledge such as the above text helps us recognize and learn difference by connecting to Tongva knowledges. I did not know about *kwiayah* until Barbara taught me about it in the garden. I had lived over three years in the area, yet had no knowledge up until that point that *kwiayah* existed. This encouraged me to think more about how the majority of people I know

have little to no knowledge of their surrounding natural environment. By learning ecological knowledges, settler/colonizers may be able to recognize the absence of these knowledges in their normative education. This may allow them to see that how they have come to know living things in settler/colonizer culture is incomplete—a loss and disconnect between them and their environments.

The Spanish Mission Garden (1771-1834)



Spain established the Mission San Gabriel in 1771. With them they brought grapes, figs, olives, pomegranates and also various plants that come from Mexico. The mission grape vineyards extended as far east as San Bernadino.



This text provides a door to an analysis of the physical and ecological colonization of the land. Not only did settler/colonizers occupy the territory and forcibly teach their eurocentric worldviews, but as explained above, they also brought foreign plants and animals, which effectively worked to decimate native plant populations. These colonial practices also silenced

Tongva foodways, which had been supported by those native plants and animals. In the garden, Barbara talked about how when the Spanish colonized the Tongva, they brought new animals and crops that were higher in fat content, which varied greatly from the native plants that were high in protein and energy. Even though the Tongva found ways to utilize a lot of these new plants and animals, a lot of the health effects were harmful. Barbara said that the garden shows the living history of these changes. It contains both native plants and non-native species because both have been used by the Indigenous peoples of the region. The garden shows the ecological experiences of the Tongva tribe by providing a place to reveal these histories and reconnect with native plants as food, allowing for a process of decolonization. By showing the changes in the local history, is to show that the local ecology *was changed*, and that those plants represent a history of the people who lived there.

The Spanish Rancho Garden (1834-1882)



After secularization of the Mission San Gabriel, parcels of land were issued to the Spanish and Mexican soldiers and their families. The Indians remaining at the mission went to live on these ranchos as domestics and cowboys. The Rancho gardens included crops of chili peppers, tomatoes, beans, squash, and corn.



This text describes a seemingly apolitical history, but the subtext of the above includes a

much more violent history. The Spanish colonizers effectively transplanted their culture onto a new space, using practices of genocide and assimilation to colonize the Tongva. The text also demonstrates how these colonizers manipulated the ecological landscape in order to meet the needs of their society.

The Citrus Garden (1882- Present)



The first citrus arrived with the Franciscan padres from the Baja California missions. These orange trees were called the Mediterranean sweet orange. Local citrus groves became abundant in the late 1800's when the transcontinental railroad was completed, making the Washington navel orange "king."



This information shows how colonial mentality was expanded to encompass even more “efficient” use of Tongva land. At this time, there was a strong connection forging between colonialism and capitalism meaning that the settler/colonizer worldview gave way to capitalist “development” of the land, such as the development of the Claremont Colleges. Thus capitalistic use of the land was furthered and has intensified as the current food regime has grown.

The decolonizing praxis of this brochure works to analyze and critique the settler/colonizer culture of denial, along with the politics of knowledge, which have constructed that worldview. With this recognition comes the hope of decolonizing our minds and shifting how we think about power. This helps us to examine what it means to be a settler/colonizer, particularly within the environmental context. Part of decolonization is to see how we are complicit in this long history of systematic violence, especially because this violence has often been made to appear invisible. While this is just a brochure, it opens up the possibility of confronting local environmental colonization. This means that we can begin to make cracks in the current capitalist food regime. We can discover the connection to decolonizing our minds by recognizing Tongva ways of knowing food and knowledge of the Los Angeles Basin Coastal Sage Scrub ecosystem. This actively works to confront the normalization of the colonial/capitalist food regime and helps bring accountability into the frame of a decolonizing relationship between Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous allies. I have attempted to do this through my relationships with Elders, time spent in the garden, and co-creating the brochure with Barbara—and these thoughts are a reflection of my experience working within these contexts.

In terms of the depth of this decolonizing praxis, the brochure has the possibility of being interpreted and therefore implemented in daily life in multiple ways. It seemed natural for Barbara to write the text for the brochure, but because of the limited space, choosing the words

that would invite intersections of the community became a pedagogical task. In my conversations with Barbara regarding how the brochure will be used, we discussed the brochure as simply a door to the opportunity of getting involved in the garden. Once an individual chooses to spend time there, it is their choice how they interpret the meanings embedded within the garden's plants and design. This opens up the possibility for settler/colonizers to have conversations with Barbara about these ideas, and to relearn local history in a way that they may have not considered previously. The brochure is community-focused and aims to support Barbara's work. It will become a part of her efforts to revitalize Indigenous ecological knowledge, which she currently does by using Tongva foodways in local community-based cooking practices. The brochure becomes a point of accountability and can serve as an anchor in my personal and community experience with decolonization. It leads to a recognition of what I can give the community besides what they already have and also contributes to the larger goal of creating and supporting reciprocal relationships. The decolonizing praxis can be shallow or have depth—but it is this that gives way for the possibility for personal, interpersonal, and community wide healing and decolonization, along with the possibility of making cracks in the colonial/capitalist food system.

Reflections

The People and Their Plants garden has been a site of decolonization for me. It represents a process of unlearning and relearning; a space for unsettling and healing. I have used my experiences in the garden to guide my decolonizing writing process. I have attempted to destabilize traditional positions of *knower* and *known* in my writing, and have reflected on this way of learning difference through autoethnography. By not using interview in my methodology, I instead attempted to experience relationships differently. In settler/colonizer society, I have been taught to view logic and rationality as superior to *feeling*, so part of decolonization is recognizing and remembering the importance of *feeling*. When I spent time with Barbara or Kat, I recorded my own voice and reflected on my mental and emotional responses from the experience. I only claimed these reflections to be how I perceived their stories and I attempted to write on behalf of my personal relationship to decolonization.

Through my analysis of the connection between colonialism and capitalist food systems, I recognized that my *experiences* as a settler/colonizer have been informed by ways of knowing produced through those systems and histories of violence. I worry that I did not fully *escape* learned settler/colonizer ways of knowing, despite my efforts to reject settler/colonizer knowledge systems as *normal* and *natural*. In this process, I worked to accept the impossibility of knowing culture by refusing to seek authenticity and *truth*. The process of feeling comfortable in the uncomfortable unknowability was, and still is, challenging. I attempted to step away from the academic realm of note taking and instead *feel* what I was hearing and thinking. This task was frustrating and often awkward. However, I aimed for my writing to be a process of transforming the settler within, which meant unsettling myself. This encouraged an ongoing critical self-reflection and helped me understand my own experiences as a European-American

who has benefited from unearned colonizer privileges. I must say that my understanding of the settler within is far from complete and through this I have accepted that decolonization is an always-incomplete process. In some ways I had hoped to reach a final place of a decolonized mind, so it was almost dissatisfying to realize that unlearning is a life long process. It was even more frustrating to constantly overstep into a space of colonization and discover the always-present risk that everything is in danger of being colonizing. Often, I felt like settling back into a comfortable space where I could write a traditional academic paper—something I was used to. I have also struggled to accept that I am incapable of claiming objectivity and that I will not draw *final conclusions* in this paper.

Throughout my time spent with Barbara in the garden, and with Kat gathering acorns at the Haramokngna Center, I learned about the environment in a new way. Through these relationships, I have tried *learning to learn*. In order to learn Indigenous ecological knowledges and therefore decolonize my relationships to land, food, and the environment, I have situated myself as a learner in my relationships with Elders. By analyzing how colonialism has worked to devalue Indigenous knowledge, I have recognized how politics of knowledge are embedded in ways of knowing. I simultaneously work to decolonize my mind and heart by refusing to delegitimize those Indigenous ways of knowing. I learned that the process of decolonization means choosing your words wisely when speaking, and questioning the knowledge systems that have produced them. In practice, this was an effort in which I continually failed. For me, falling back into learned impulses was common. These experiences and reflections have helped me shift to truth telling and a position of becoming accountable, while working hard to begin to confront the invisibility of violence towards Indigenous peoples.

I titled my paper “decolonizing ecology through rerooting epistemologies.” Through this

project, I have tried to decolonize ecology by disrupting the western academic practice of studying Indigenous peoples' relationship with the environment. By interrogating the desire to *study* Indigenous peoples, I have attempted to build relationships with Elders and begin to learn how to learn and share knowledges through reciprocity. Rerooting epistemologies means examining the place from which I learned what qualifies knowledge, which for me, is rooted in colonial/capitalist food systems. This experience included allowing myself to see how rerooting to Tongva knowledge systems can lead to healing relationships with land, food, and the environment, and thus create spaces for relearning relationships with food—enacting resistance to colonial and capitalist systems.

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