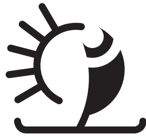
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Unsettling Methodologies/Decolonizing Movements

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Abstract
As movements for social justice within settler colonial states like Canada and the United States begin to centralize Indigenous struggles for sovereignty as foundational to liberation, non-Indigenous movement participants are challenged to contend with what it means to decolonize within their respective movements. This article explores the potential to engage in decolonizing research methodologies among non-Indigenous anti-authoritarian activist groups. Based on an ethnographic and qualitative research with activists, this paper highlights three core themes emerging out of an attempt to assert a decolonizing methodological approach to research in non-Indigenous activist communities, including: identity and belonging, accountability and consent, and responsibility and appropriation.

UNSETTLING METHODOLOGIES/DECOLONIZING MOVEMENTS

Māori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith in her seminal work *Decolonizing Methodologie*s carefully articulates, "Decolonization is a process which engages with imperialism and colonialism at multiple levels. For researchers, one of those levels is concerned with having a more critical understanding of the underlying assumptions, motivations and values which inform research practices" (Smith 1999:20). Although significant strides have been made to resist colonialist assumptions in the academy, most research in the social sciences (even critical social work research) continues to be structured by the limits of Western ontologies that delegitimize Indigenous ways of being and knowing (Hunt 2013). This means that Indigenous peoples, including Indigenous social movements, are often studied in the academy through a lens that makes them perceptible or legible to scholars who are thinking about the world exclusively through Western ways of knowing. As Kanienkehaka scholar Audra Simpson explains, this

"historical perceptibility was used, and is still used, to *claim*, to define capacities for self-rule, to apportion social and political possibilities, to, in effect, empower and disempower Indigenous peoples in the present" (Simpson 2014:100). Although Simpson speaks most forcefully about resisting Western ontological hegemony within the discipline of anthropology, Indigenous and anti-colonial scholars have similarly challenged the foundations of other social scientific disciplines, including social work (Hart 2010).

Studies focused on decolonizing methodologies have been specific to research by or with Indigenous communities (Stanton 2014; Lincoln & González y González 2008; Evans et. al 2009), however my research investigates how processes of decolonization are learned, imagined and practiced among primarily *non-Indigenous anti-authoritarian people.* My research is organized as a series of ongoing, conflicting, and at times overlapping conversations, reflections and dialogues among organizers in a wide range of social movements on their collaboration with Indigenous movements and communities.

There is no standard model or practice for decolonizing research methodologies. In *Decolonizing Methodologies*, Smith (1999) provides dozens of examples of strategies and techniques that critical scholars have used to conduct research with Indigenous communities (i.e. an emphasis on claiming and reclaiming Indigenous ways of being, the validation of storytelling and oral histories, documentation of the survival of Indigenous peoples rather than their demise or assimilation; intervening politically and socially in the struggles of Indigenous communities; etc.), but none are presented as prescriptive or applicable to all situations. However, very little has been written about whether such principles are relevant or useful in conducting research with settlers and non-Indigenous peoples seeking to decolonize. Given that my research focused on the way that *non-Indigenous* social movement participants imagine, practice, and support process of decolonization in settler states, it was important to be aware of the limitations of simply applying decolonial methodological approaches intended for specific Indigenous nations and communities. Studying processes of decolonization among non-Indigenous people can easily centralize the role of the settler as the primary actor in anti-colonial and decolonizing actions. With these considerations in mind, I drew from Indigenous methodologies and conversations with activists and Indigenous mentors to establish five core principles that I hoped would guide my research. These principles included: (1) drawing on multiple ontological realities and worldviews; (2) situating contemporary political struggles within the structures of settler

colonialism, white supremacy, heteropatriarchy, and capitalism; (3) engaging in critical self-reflexivity; (4) seeking to embody practices of decolonization not only in my research but as a life praxis; and (5) creating long-term and sustained relationships across and between the participants of the study. To follow these principles meant that being guided by an overarching relational worldview, one drawn from Indigenous ontologies (Kovach 2009). Nonetheless, every interview and every ethnographic observation in this research project is filtered by how it is represented from my perspective and the perspective of my research participants *in relation to* Indigenous movements for land and life. In doing so, it is impossible to ignore the underlying power relationship pervasive in a study that seeks to interpret what it means to decolonize from the position of settlers or non-Indigenous peoples. And yet, in learning to speak with (rather than listen to or speak for) Indigenous subjects, it is critical to engage in research that explores the multiple positionalities, contradictions, and limitations that are brought to the fore through serious engagement with practices of decolonization by settlers and non-Indigenous peoples.

Applying these methods without being continually self-reflexive about one's position as a non-Indigenous researcher connected to colonizing institutions like the university can be difficult and at times impossible to reconcile. As Andrea Smith (2014) suggests, this must move beyond the "confessions of privilege" that are commonplace in both activists and academic circles. Confessions of privilege, Smith explains, "rarely [lead] to political projects to actually dismantle the structures of domination that enable this white/settler privilege. Rather, the confessions become the political project themselves" (Smith 2014:215). These confessions are often used to absolve white people/settlers from their responsibility to engage in and support anti-colonial resistance in tangible and material ways, including the relinquishing of stolen land and the loss of material benefits gained from living in a settler colonial state (Tuck & Yang 2012). Similarly as theories of decolonization and resurgence put forward by Indigenous movements and theorists become more popular among non-Indigenous activists and academics, the risk of co-optation and appropriation also increases (Cruz 2008). Wallace (2013) argues, "one of the ways neo-imperialism and internal colonialism are actualized and expanded is through research and knowledge production that negates Indigenous peoples' knowledges, experiences and self-governance" (34). On the other hand, the responsibility of non-Indigenous peoples to engage in self-reflexive and critical actions and research around their own relationships to colonialism and the processes of decolonization is important in the development of self-determining relationships

of solidarity (Alfred 2005; Walia 2013).

These contentious questions are not unique to this project and I have tried to learn from the experiences and challenges of other activists and researchers who have engaged in similar work. For instance, in the summer of 2013, the Unsettling Resistance editorial collective faced a number of questions regarding their desire to publish an edited volume of writing and art around the topic of "lessons learned, wisdom gained, and practical strategies from those non-Indigenous anti-authoritarian activists engaged in the struggle for decolonization" (Unsettling Resistance 2013). The project was put on indefinite hiatus in the fall of that year after members of the editorial collective decided to take more time to reflect on some of the challenges posed to them as they began to organize the book. The concern over the absence of Indigenous guidance at the onset of the research project and the ultimate decision to put the project on hiatus reaffirms the need to be self-reflexive about the risks of turning Indigenous peoples into an essentialized "Other" when non-Indigenous activists discuss decolonization. Critical and decolonizing research needs to be grounded in long-standing relationships with specific Indigenous people and communities and what it means to be decolonizing as a settler remains open and dynamic and must inherently be, as scholar Adam J. Barker quips, "unsettled" (Barker 2009).

In this paper, I focus on three methodological themes that required *unsettling* during my field research. The first centres on questions of ***identification and belonging*** and it explores the complications I faced in setting criteria for who would be included in the study. The second explores questions of ***accountability and consent*** by addressing some of the barriers and challenges faced in negotiating relationships of mutual consent with research participants and their communities. The final theme engages the tension between ***responsibility and appropriation*** when incorporating Indigenous theory into research focused on non-Indigenous peoples and their processes of unsettling and decolonizing.

IDENTIFICATION & BELONGING

In her zine, *Stuck in Place: Some Notes on Belonging*, Claire Urbanski (2013) discusses the fears of being rootless that many settlers feel when confronted with the prospect of decolonization. She challenges those fears by noting that, "When we say we have no place, I feel like that denies the kinds of privileging and freedom of movement we access in our present place. We do have place. We have to undo how we know the world, how we currently exist in

the world in order for it to become a home" (40). By complicating our notions of what place means and how it is tied to freedom of movement for non-Indigenous people living within the Canadian and U.S. settler states (particularly white settlers), Urbanski touches on the interrelationship between decolonization, borders, home, and belonging. Belonging, as suggested by Snelgrove et al. (2014) "requires the discursive production and circulation of those who do not belong" (5). In contrast, "to settle" might be differentiated based on axis of power-oppression. In breaking down the seeming fixedness of borders and their corresponding nationalist myths we are better able to understand the processes that legitimate the construction of white European settlers as those with sovereignty over particular territories.

During my field research I travelled through Haudenosaunee, Algonquin, Anishinaabeg, Métis, Sto:lo, Musqueam, Tsleil-Waututh, Squamish, Saanich, Lekwungen, Ohlone, and Lenape territories and reflected on the inherent privilege that my status as a settler white-presenting Canadian citizen afforded me to travel seamlessly from place to place. Unsettling this methodological process necessitated that I critically reflect on my ability to move freely across borders and the ways in which my identity and my connection to "home" are tied up in racist, nationalist, and colonialist frameworks. The settler colonial state seeks to create a sense of home and belonging for particular groups of white settlers and to incorporate (though this is never quite fully attainable) those "model minorities" who are assimilated within the hegemonic culture through official multiculturalism policies. However, in that process the settler state continues to systematically deny membership to others (particular Black people and migrant workers) and attempts to erase Indigenous presence (Amadahy & Lawrence 2009; Deloria 1998).

The criteria I drafted for selecting participants at the onset of my research was influenced both by my political experience and my desire to contain the scope of the project. At first I made the decision to limit my study to people who self-identified as "non-Indigenous" participants in "anti-authoritarian" movements and who saw "decolonization" as being central to their political work. This limit seemed appropriate given my long-standing relationships with organizers in these movements in Toronto and several other cities in Canada and the United States. I borrowed the term "anti-authoritarian" from Dixon (2012) to describe a current within contemporary social movement struggles that encompasses a wide-range of political projects and collectives that could be seen as sharing common commitments. An emphasis on the centrality of Indigenous sovereignty has become an increasingly important political practice within this anti-

authoritarian current (Walia 2013). This focus gives rise to questions about the capacity of settlers and non-Indigenous peoples to decolonize, the ways in which many of us are differentially situated within colonialism, and the challenges of centralizing anti-colonial and decolonial struggle in contemporary movements. I was drawn to this work through my own experiences organizing within the anti-authoritarian current in Toronto within groups attempting to implement decolonizing analysis and practices into our day-to-day social movement organizing.

The past several years have seen a number of radical groups from a diverse set of social movements exploring and imagining practices and processes of decolonization as *non-Indigenous peoples*. I narrowed my participant criteria to people who self-identified as "non-Indigenous" in order to avoid the common problem in academic work of trying to interpret or speak on behalf of Indigenous peoples (Wallace 2013; Denzin, Lincoln & Smith 2008; Cruz 2008). This criterion seemed to be a critical part of a movement-relevant research strategy and yet I was distinctly aware that I was embarking on a project rife with contradictions, differing opinions, and fluid/shifting definitions.

I recognized that my use of the term "non-Indigenous" was itself problematic and open to multiple interpretations. Since there is such a variance in the ways that people interpret the terms "settler", "migrant", "non-Indigenous", and "Indigenous" this presented a considerable challenge. On the one hand, I tried to keep a broad and open mind about the myriad ways in which people understand themselves within this current historical context, but I also wanted to signal that I was primarily focused on engaging folks who see their work as being *in relation to* Indigenous people rather than *as* Indigenous people. This was inevitably complicated by the presence of people interested in participating in the study who self-identified as Indigenous but who organized primarily within urban non-Indigenous anti-authoritarian spaces.

In an FAQ I developed to send to prospective research participants I included a paragraph where I attempted to explain my interpretation of the term "non-Indigenous":

> I've narrowed my focus to interviewing and engaging non-Indigenous people/settlers because I think that it is really important that we have important discussions about how we are holding up our end of either treaty relationships, responsibilities from living on unceded, stolen and/or occupied lands, and to reflect on the various ways in which we try to come together in order to decolonize our relationships with each other and our relationships with the multiple Indigenous nations and peoples whose territories we occupy.

My desire for interviewees to self-select based on this brief description was perhaps a bit presumptuous and I was provoked by some potential participants to be clearer in my definition of "non-Indigenous". I sent a follow-up email revising my definition to potential participants but I also explained that I was explicitly vague in my invitations because I felt that it was important to recognize the multiple and contradictory ways in which people understand their relationship to settler colonialism, indigeneity, and identity.

The use of these terms to bound or clarify targeted participants produced a number of responses – some people (particularly those who identified as white settlers) could see their lived experiences reflected in my chosen definitions of identity categories, while others (primarily though not exclusively people of colour or mixed-race people) struggled with the terminology. As the project moved forward I had to confront the lurking feeling that my participant criteria may also be silencing the voices of self-identified Indigenous peoples who wanted to contribute to a discussion on the responsibilities or relationship of settlers/non-Indigenous peoples to processes of decolonization. I also wanted to push back against the colonialist logic of deciding who is or is not an Indigenous person. As Sium et al. (2012) caution, these colonial strategies of measurement and containment through blood quantum and colonialist histories "is particularly done through a policing of boundaries, especially under a binary system of Indigenous/non-Indigenous, which has a long history of colonial power taking up these tools of differentiation to divide and conquer, disenfranchise, and steal land from Indigenous peoples" (vi). I was helped to think about the complexities of settler identities through the writing of Beenash Jafri, who articulates that we should "think about settlerhood not as an object that we possess, but as a field of operations into which we become socially positioned and implicated" (Jafri 2012, in Walia 2013:128). By theorizing settlerhood in this way, Jafri moves away from a static conceptualization of identity and instead positions the subject as being a participant in a set of social relations that is both caused by and maintains colonialism. Such a definition provides for the possibility of collective liberation as being the act of defying these social relations *and* developing relationships of solidarity with Indigenous struggles for sovereignty. It also turns the discussion about privilege into one about complicity and accountability by acknowledging that one need not be privileged by the social conditions in a settler state to be complicit in the ongoing process of colonization.

ACCOUNTABILITY & CONSENT

Forging a relationship of accountability with research participants is a reciprocal and continually renewed process that goes beyond the informed consent forms and ethical protocols of the university. Understanding the academy as what Smith (2014:214) calls "an institution rooted in colonialist, capitalist, and white supremacist logics", non-Indigenous activist-scholars who desire to engage in decolonizing research processes are confronted with the need to prioritize our relationships with movements for collective liberation and in support of Indigenous resurgence during the entire research process. Walia (2014:47) suggests that "a willingness to decentre oneself and to learn and act from a place of responsibility rather than guilt" helps to build social movements that are accountable to processes of decolonization. These practices of decentering oneself are also important for activist-researchers trying to determine the boundaries between being too interventionist in the movements that you are researching and failing to uphold social movement commitments. For many activist-scholars, engaging in a process of mutual accountability with research participants moves into uncharted waters in that balancing issues of identity, positionality, desire, and purpose rests strongly on the ability to create trust through open and honest communication within and outside of the institutionalized academic research process (Davis and Shpuniarsky 2010).

In developing relationships with the participants in my research study, I was guided by feminist, Indigenous, and activist scholarship that explore alternative ways of negotiating trust, accountability, and consent in the research process (Kovach 2009; Wallace 2013). Developing a radically anti-authoritarian concept of accountability requires learning together, ongoing re-negotiations of the boundaries of consent, and accepting that the process will not be perfect – it also requires both the researcher and the research participants be accountable to one another and to the movements with which they are connected and to consider the project (as much as possible) to be a creation of each other's mutual labour, experiences, and knowledges.

Making time to uphold and further develop your longstanding commitments to the struggles you are a part of is a critical component of the accountability process. The irony in seeking to contribute to these struggles in tangible ways during the research process is that a project such as a dissertation (at least temporarily) requires time commitments that can reduce your ability to engage in day-to-day organizing. I expected this might happen over the course of the research and I tried to strategize ways to maintain my commitments to these movements by taking on

small and sporadic tasks, relinquishing responsibilities that required me to be consistently available during the term of the dissertation, and being present for key actions and events whenever possible. Nonetheless, this approach raised a number of credibility questions that I regularly reflected on during the research process: *What are my intentions in conducting this research and how do I ensure that this work is not simply an academic pursuit? Is this work contributing to processes of decolonization among the movements I am studying? What is a healthy balance between family, scholarly, community and activist commitments that will not result in burnout?* These types of questions needed to be re-visited throughout the research process in order to ensure that my time as a researcher did not subsume my commitments to the very struggles I was studying.

Fine, Tuck, & Zeller-Berkman (2008) caution researchers seeking to leap between local participatory projects and global analysis to ensure that we are "building, self consciously and transparently, mechanisms of participation so that our work remains situated, even if multisituated, and accountable to place" (172). The need to be accountable to place for non-Indigenous researchers must also be balanced with a respect for and accountability to Indigenous peoples' long-standing relationships to their homelands (Snelgrove et al. 2014). Creating a space for dialogue on decolonization among non-Indigenous peoples within the settler colonial context of academic research is rife with contradictions. Kovach (2009) suggests that misconduct in these scenarios is based on the power structures of settler colonialism and not "a lack of cultural knowledge but good intentions" (142). To negotiate these contradictions, the researcher needs to be consistently re-evaluating the nature of each relationship of accountability that they initiate and determine principles to help make decisions that honour decolonizing relationships. This means both the researcher and participants need to be honest and humble about the research intentions and the inevitable decisions made to resolve or alleviate harm that the research project or any of the interviews has the potential to create. One way this manifested among the participants in my research was in their unanimous choice to have their names connected to the insights that they shared because they saw this as being accountable not only to their respective movements, but also the Indigenous communities in which they have built relationships. While each interviewee was given the option to use a pseudonym or to remain anonymous in their response, there was an overwhelming sense among the participants that what they said in the interviews should be accountable to these broader communities. Through the use

of their own names participants also committed to being accountable to future generations of social movement organizers by contributing their experiences to the history of the movements in which they have participated.

Beyond the informed consent procedures required by academic institutions, this practice requires ongoing and fluid discussions that necessitate the research participant be *an active collaborator* in how and when their insights are used. Engaged and active consent should be seen as an important practice in decolonizing research methodologies. This means opening the research process up to vulnerability and the possibility that participants might want to dis-engage from the project, revise their interviews, or play a more hands-on role in the writing process. It may also mean seriously considering terminating research prior to completion if it risks hampering any of the social movements you are working with.

Oral interviews that take place during a single moment in time are an imperfect medium to capture a moving and fluid dialogue within, between, and inside dynamic social movements so I felt it was important to give each participant the opportunity to edit their transcripts directly for content, wording, and missing information. I also gave them the option to share their transcript with the movements in which they organize and to delete or pull back information that they felt uncomfortable sharing after further consideration. On some occasions, I conducted follow up interviews in order to probe particular areas of importance to the interview participant. Through these processes I sought to facilitate collective self-reflexivity in an attempt to subvert some of the self-actualizing power that comes from non-Indigenous or settler subjects reflecting upon their relationships with Indigenous peoples (Smith 2014). Furthermore, as a movement-generated project it is my intent to ensure that the work that I put forward serves to support the emergence and spread of relationships and actions in solidarity with Indigenous sovereignty struggles rather than provide fodder for the state or other oppositional forces to use it as a means of attacking movements.

This needs to be balanced with the responsibility of the academic researcher to present an honest and at times critical analysis that seeks to highlight potential opportunities for growth and development. For instance, Bevington & Dixon (2005) caution, “movement-relevant research cannot be an uncritical reiteration of the pre-existing ideas of a favored movement. If the research is exploring questions that have relevance to a given movement, it is in the interests of that movement to get the best available information, even if those findings don’t fit expectations”

(191). While the researcher cannot predict all the ways in which information produced in a particular study could be used, being attentive to the ways in which social movement participants desire their words be represented requires that both researcher and interviewee share responsibility for co-creating knowledge.

RESPONSIBILITY & APPROPRIATION

I made a conscious effort to develop research questions that challenged myself and other activists in non-Indigenous social movement spaces to grapple with Indigenous peoples' theories and practices of decolonization and resurgence but to also reflect on our responsibilities to disengage and dismantle settler colonial institutions and relationships. As Nora Butler Burke, one of the research participants in this project, asked, "What are responsible ways to then engage in this work that are not just token talking about colonization at the same time?" The tension between responsible engagement with Indigenous theories, methodologies, and practices and the (mis)appropriation or misrepresentation of Indigenous knowledge underlie every decision I took in this research project.

The study of settler processes of decolonization within anti-authoritarian social movements runs the risk of either re-centralizing settler/non-Indigenous peoples as the primary actors in processes of decolonization or obscuring their complicity in the colonial project through a move to innocence. Snelgrove et al. (2014) suggest, "[W]ithout centering Indigenous peoples' articulations, without deploying a relational approach to settler colonial power, and without paying attention to the conditions and contingencies of settler colonialism, studies of settler colonialism and practices of solidarity run the risk of reifying (and possibly replicating) settler colonial, as well as other, modes of domination" (4). In this section, I explore methodological issues that exemplify the tension between attempting to apply a relational approach that is responsible to Indigenous struggles for decolonization and the appropriation of Indigenous theory/knowledge within the research project. Specifically, I discuss the difficulties of asking questions about Indigenous decolonization and resurgence without appropriating Indigenous knowledge and experiences.

Adam Barker (2010) contends that, "One of the frustrating implications of the decolonizing, unsettling, and ultimately, respectful approach to becoming a Settler ally…is that there is no 'plan,' no universally applicable model, no clear set of friends and enemies" (327).

This leads to the question as to whether non-Indigenous scholars and research participants *can* apply Indigenous and/or decolonizing theory and methodologies to study processes of decolonization and unsettling *without* being appropriative. This was most apparent in my when I struggled to articulate research questions that explored the participants' relationship to Indigenous decolonization and resurgence. In asking questions about how non-Indigenous peoples might respond to or engage in their own forms of decolonization, many of the participants were concerned that I was framing the discussion in an appropriative manner.

For example, when discussing the process of Indigenous resurgence, one of my research questions was originally constructed as follows: "The context of resurgence among Indigenous peoples has some parallels and similarities with the ideas, desires and principles being practiced by a number of non-indigenous radicals within settler states. How does this particular concept resonate with you?" My intention in asking this question was to get participants to respond to theories of resurgence being articulated by Indigenous activists and scholars on the role of cultural, linguistic, and spiritual resurgence in developing lasting solutions to the multiple forms of oppression faced by Indigenous nations within settler colonialism (Simpson 2011; Alfred 2005). My desire was to discuss how participants understand their relationship to Indigenous struggles for sovereignty and resurgence and to address the widely held assertion that a parallel process of reclamation or remembering of ways of being outside of the logics of capitalism/colonialism was possible and/or necessary for non-Indigenous peoples to develop relationships of solidarity with Indigenous decolonial struggles. Although this was my intention, the question itself seemed to infer that non-Indigenous peoples could appropriate the discourse and practice of Indigenous resurgence as a means to develop relationships of solidarity with Indigenous movements for decolonization. Participants in the study responded to these questions in a multitude of ways, but many of the respondents were quick to point out the problematic nature of the practice itself. One respondent, Fred Burrill, noted:

> I think a lot of people talk about these things in terms of the Two Row Wampum and parallel yet separate paths. I think it's important to keep that in mind because the alternative to that is a very uncritical and kind of appropriative relationship to the concept of resurgence. I don't know how it is in Toronto but in Montreal Idle No More events personally made me feel very uncomfortable - lots of white folks wearing feathers and doing round dances and stuff.

The semi-structured approach I took in conducting the interviews allowed for the possibility to revise and reflect on how my questions were framed. I began to make a conscious decision to simplify the questions and to be clear about the relational context in which I was asking them. Additionally, I was aware of the potential "move to innocence" that could be created by focusing on the development of critical consciousness around processes of decolonization among non-Indigenous radicals. Tuck & Yang (2012) suggest that such moves to innocence are characteristic of settler desires for relief from the relentless guilt and haunting of the settler-colonial context. These can be manifested in a number of ways including the attempt by non-Indigenous progressives to differentiate themselves from mainstream settler society because of their greater consciousness of the settler colonial condition. Conversely, being open to knowledges and teachings shared by Indigenous peoples is part of the process of solidarity – a process that can only take place in a reciprocal manner.

One research participant, Jaggi Singh, articulated such a point when I explained how it was difficult to construct questions about non-Indigenous relationships to processes of Indigenous resurgence without being appropriative, "I'm a bit critical of people who are hard-line anti-cultural appropriation. Cultural appropriation to me is a very specific thing and clearly I'm against that – it's about the very exploitative use of culture. But there is a respectful borrowing that can happen when you talk about debate and dialogue..." (Singh 2013). Indeed, the ability to take guidance from and to respect the knowledge that Indigenous peoples have offered settlers seeking to live in a good relationship on these territories seems critical to any discussion of decolonization in settler colonial states. Sharing knowledge in a non-appropriating way is an important component of developing a decolonizing research framework. Being conscious of what aspects of these knowledge-sharing practices are borrowed and attributing them to specific and particular Indigenous peoples and nations are important components of developing a relational approach to decolonization for non-Indigenous peoples in settler colonial contexts.

Conclusion

By exploring some of the key methodological challenges and limitations of this study, I seek to emphasize the contingent and fluid nature of theory as it emerges and is applied in practice. As part of a movement-generated research process, this project has not been immune to the changing political landscape in which it was written. This includes the ongoing conversations about the usefulness of a project such as this to the process of decolonization. As I struggled to

establish parameters for who would be interviewed as part of the project and where I would go to conduct the research, I was faced with methodological decisions that were also fundamentally political. While the interviews that I conducted among fifty-one research participants in nine different cities were deep, rich and filled with a wealth of theoretical and experiential knowledge, my original use of self-defined identity (rather than experience) as a means of setting research participation parameters inadvertently restricted or limited the participation of self-identified Indigenous activists and in many ways continued the settler colonial project of silencing and erasing their voices. By the time I faced a situation that forced me to adapt my methodology, it was far too late in the project to fully address this glaring gap. As such, the results of the research must be read with these limitations in mind.

Nonetheless, by centering Indigenous theories and epistemologies within my research methodology, I have been guided by a desire to respectfully contribute to a broader discussion on the role of non-Indigenous people in dismantling settler colonialism and supporting Indigenous resurgence on Turtle Island. This research has been driven primarily by my relationships and experiences with ongoing social movements and it is hopefully a contribution to the growing body of literature in academia that is generated by and relevant to social movements. Therefore, this paper also serves as part of a process of community accountability. It is an attempt to practice many of the lessons that were shared through the qualitative interviews and it is a call for other non-Indigenous academics to make transparent even the most vulnerable and shameful inadequacies of our research. As such, I believe that unsettling the research process has the potential to build trust through engaged and reaffirmed consent at multiple stages of a particular project and more broadly over one's academic career. This is why I have attempted to explore some of the core decisions and mistakes that I made during the research and the barriers, tensions, and contradictions that continue to shape my academic process in the hopes that these experiences will help to improve our collective practices of scholar-activist research.

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