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DECOLONIZING ASSESSMENT: WITNESSING, DISRUPTING, AND REIMAGINING
ASSESSMENT IN RHETORIC, COMPOSITION, AND TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

LISA SCHULER DOOLEY

155 Pages

This dissertation is concerned with the context in which assessments are conceptualized and designed, with the implications of assessment for its participants and their communities, and with the institution of assessment—its claims, its values and practices, its relationships to power. With this in mind, in this project I will propose decolonization as a framework through which to: 1) recognize, witness, and address the complicit nature of assessment practices in maintaining “normal;” 2) disrupt and redress the slow violences of assessment in rhetoric, composition, and technical communication studies; and 3) reimagine assessment through decolonial methodology, research methods, and assessment pedagogy with the intention of decolonizing pedagogical spaces and places. In these ways, this dissertation will extend existing scholarship in rhetoric, composition, and technical communication, creating more space to confront, witness, and redress colonialism.

KEYWORDS: antiracist; Arab American; assessment; colonization; critical race theory; decolonial rhetorics; decolonization; decoding; decolonial methodology; disability studies; intersectionality; nonviolent assessment methods; normativity; pedagogy; pedagogical journaling; rhetoric; composition; technical communication; professional communication; writing assessment.

DECOLONIZING ASSESSMENT: WITNESSING, DISRUPTING, AND REIMAGINING
ASSESSMENT IN RHETORIC, COMPOSITION, AND TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

LISA SCHULER DOOLEY

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of English

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DECOLONIZING ASSESSMENT: WITNESSING, DISRUPTING, AND REIMAGINING
ASSESSMENT IN RHETORIC, COMPOSITION, AND TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

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L.S.D.

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CHAPTER I: REDEFINING ASSESSMENT FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE: A DECOLONIAL PROJECT

At the age of 17, my great-grandmother Rose arrived at Ellis Island on Christmas day after a daunting and lonely journey across the Atlantic Ocean as a steerage passenger on the S.S. St. Louis. All of the (assumed) pertinent information about Rose (#10955) is contained on Line 30 of the ship's manifest. Line 30 includes information that may have been anticipated, like her calling/occupation, literacy, nationality, marital status, and last permanent address. But the questions that most surprised and concerned me when I read the manifest were: By whom was passage paid? Whether in possession of \$50, and if less, how much? Are you a polygamist, anarchist, indentured servant, prisoner, institutionalized, insane, or supported by charity? Are you deformed or crippled? What is the nature, length of time, and causes? After reading these questions, I had a clear sense of the work done at Ellis Island and by other Port Authority employees.

As I read the copy of the ship manifest—that my uncle tracked down in the early 1980s—it becomes obvious that the answers to these questions were important to the government. I can tell because the top of the manifest reminds the captain that this manifest was “[r]equired by the regulations of the secretary of commerce and labor of the United States, under act of Congress approved March 3, 1903, to be delivered to the US immigration officer by the commanding officer of any vessel having such passengers on board upon arrival at a port in the United States.” It also became obvious that most of the curiosity/concern had to do with dis/ability and finances, especially as the Secretary of Commerce is named as the source of these regulations. These assessments levied, beginning with the questions on the manifest, determined whether or not the immigrant would be admitted into the U.S. or denied entry and deported back to their last

permanent address. As immigration workers used snapshot diagnosis to determine the fitness of immigrants and determine their likelihood of becoming public charges, immigration policy and processing were contingent on weaponizing decontextualized assessments.

As Rose's great granddaughter, living in today's world, I am still impacted by colonization, subjected to an updated kind of governmentality that manages my autonomy and choices, assesses my potential for success in a neoliberal capitalist society, and attempts violences on my body and mind. And as a teacher, I witness this weaponization of prescriptive normativity, as assessment has found a comfortable home in our education systems and academic institutions.

In our fields of rhetoric, composition, and technical communication, assessment has traditionally been defined similarly: as an evaluative tool to determine adherence to an ideal/correct final product; conceptualized in relation to evaluations of student writing and/or programmatic needs; and discussed through a framework of validity and normativity.¹ When racist, sexist, classist, heteronormative assessment methods are used, assessment enacts violences. Effectively, such approaches and practices colonize the embodied identities of those

¹ Emerging from disability and cultural studies scholarship (Anzaldúa; Campbell; Cushman; Dolmage; Lewiecki-Wilson; Mitchell and Snyder; Pérez; Titchkosky), I understand normativity as assumptions about, and rhetorical constructions of, bodies—their experiences, genders, cultures, abilities, races—that classify and categorize. I will discuss this more in Chapter II.

subjected to colonization². Building upon decolonial approaches and progressive assessment scholarship in the fields of rhetoric, composition, and technical communication, my project—located at the interstices of assessment, decolonial rhetorics, and rhetorics of race and ability—addresses abuses of power, disrupts hegemonic normativity, and responds to the need for socially-just assessment.³ Specifically, I consider assessment as it intersects with cultural theories so that we can better recognize and thus intervene in colonial violences within and beyond the classroom. Toward this end, I offer heuristics to recognize when assessment practices are complicit in maintaining normal and to disrupt this violent process.^{4,5}

² Colonization takes place when bodies are denied the right to govern themselves, when they are managed by another. It is a violent system of domination that governs, classifies, manages, and disciplines bodies. I will discuss this more later in this chapter and in Chapter II.

³ This need is informed by Jones and Walton: “Social justice research in technical communication investigates how communication broadly defined can amplify the agency of oppressed people—those who are materially, socially, politically, and/or economically under-resourced. Key to this definition is a collaborative, respectful approach that moves past description and exploration of social justice issues to taking action to redress inequities” (242).

⁴ To be clear, I don’t intend to shift the conversation away from past acts or instantiations of colonization, which are crucial to recount in terms of what happened, who was responsible, who was impacted and the consequences that were, and still are being, incurred.

⁵ “Normal” is hegemonic encoding that: prescribes meaning to bodies; perpetuates power through inclusion of sanctioned bodies and exclusion of non-sanctioned bodies; and shores up social, economic, and cultural privilege for included bodies while justifying the exclusion of

Concerned with the contexts in which assessments are conceptualized and designed, and with the implications of assessment for its participants and their communities, this project seeks to reimagine assessment by proposing a decolonial methodology, utilizing decolonial methods, and articulating a decolonial assessment pedagogy. By decolonial, I mean methodologies, methods, and pedagogies that directly respond to colonial institutions, systems, and processes that were built to exclude, harm, or otherwise oppress the most vulnerable in them, thus normalizing the inhumane treatment of others. This decolonial response, then, begins with advocating for the bodies made most vulnerable by the settler colonial, ableist, patriarchal institutions, systems, and processes and attempting to rectify that harm. Such a response calls for theories, methodologies, and methods (Anzaldúa; Pérez; Tuhiwai Smith), pedagogies (Agboka; Haas), and approaches that recognize the centrality of lived and embodied experience of colonization and decolonization (Driskill; Haas and Frost). Decolonization, then, is a process of social justice that addresses and redresses colonization, colonizing practices, and embedded histories of coloniality; confronts power and systems of domination with truth; and creates spaces for theories and practices that recognize and value all bodies.

So, as an act of reimagining, I call on rhetoric, composition, and technical communication scholar-teachers to decolonize assessments of normativity by decolonizing normal; by decolonizing discussions (and addressing the lack of discussions) about embodiment

other bodies (Baynton; Dolmage, Garland-Thomson; Lewiecki-Wilson, Siebers;). This will be discussed further in Chapter II.

and privileged positionality; by decolonizing prescriptive norms; and by reimagining assessment, in terms of its decolonial potential, as the work of social justice.⁶

In the remainder of this chapter, I first discuss the multi-layered exigencies that compel my work before situating my approach to assessment in ongoing scholarly conversations in technical communication and decolonial rhetorics. Informed by the literature review I provide, I then discuss the violences of colonization, before finally giving an overview of the remaining five chapters that follow.

EXIGENCIES

I am motivated by multiple exigencies to engage in decolonial work and to articulate a decolonial methodology that problematizes assessment practices and prioritizes intersections of race and disability. What follows are five foundational exigencies that compel this project.

PUBLIC EXIGENCY

We do not live in a postcolonial world; the United States (and other countries) still take, occupy, and colonize indigenous places and spaces; and bodies—particularly women’s, non-white, and non-normatively abled bodies—are still colonized, surveilled, and controlled. Colonization manages bodies and denies their rights to self-determination.

Socially constructed understanding of “the norm” is a taxonomy of power. Codified by designations of able-bodied, white, heterosexual, Western, cisgender maleness, “the norm” privileges a culturally, economically, standardized able body (Campbell) and is employed in the interest of assessing fitness, citizenship, and proximity to power (Dingo; Sandoval; Tuhiwai Smith). I will discuss this in more detail in Chapter III.

Colonization is a continual, ever present, and ongoing process that, in many different ways, does violence to bodies (Haas; Tuhiwai Smith; Sandoval; Pérez; Anzaldúa; Agboka); it is a way to discipline bodies—the ways that bodies are controlled, surveilled (Haas and Frost; Foucault), and managed. Colonization is weaponized biopower and biopolitical governmentality (Foucault) and should be discussed as bodies are managed, governed, and unfairly assessed (Inoue and Poe; Gomes; Banks et. al; Cushman) in relation to a normative standard (Dolmage; Campbell); measurement and calculation (Broad; Gould; Elliot) are used to determine fitness (Dolmage; Dingo, Spurr), validity (Cushman; Lederman and Warwick), inclusion/exclusion (Jung; Jones; Baynton; Jones, Moore, and Walton), and normative ability (Kerschbaum; Siebers; Kafer; Snyder & Mitchell). Contingent on management through identity politics, colonization is supported, validated, and perpetuated by performances of hegemonic normativity through which bodies are assessed and determined fit/unfit.

This colonial management of bodies is justified by colonizers as a necessary means of governmentality. Spaces, places, and bodies are colonized when they are stolen from the original inhabitants—who are then disregarded, dismissed, subsumed under a form of colonial jurisdiction—and then co-opted by the colonizers/thieves through methods of control and appropriation. Though often discussed as past offenses and relegated into the coffers of history, colonization has happened, is happening, and will continue to happen, determining who gets included in, and excluded from, sanctioned groups.

With this in mind, it is important to identify some recent examples of colonization: drug laws and sentencing standards unequally impact non-white bodies and lead to disproportionately high rates of incarceration; immigration policies meter non-white immigration, single out and harm non-white asylum seekers fleeing deadly circumstances, and imprison non-white

immigrants in detention centers; ADA accommodations are applied disproportionately to ensure undue burden is not placed on the institution, shifting responsibility to obtain legally ensured accommodations in already exclusionary environments to disabled bodies; and Indigenous people's tribal lands and, thus, sovereignty are infringed upon, especially when their land has resources and access that serve corporate interests. These examples motivate me to redress the impacts of colonization.

PERSONAL EXIGENCY

I am Lebanese, a member of the Uzeizat tribe from Jdeidet Marjayoun—a rural corner of Lebanon, bordered by Syria and Israel—that's located in a geographic region with a long history of territorial coloniality. My family still lives in the Middle East, in a region of the globe long occupied by colonizers where bodies and lands are still managed by outsiders (oftentimes by governments that have no stake in this region other than capitalistic endeavors that lie beneath the earth's crust). My family immigrated from Syria and settled in Marjayoun about 200 years ago, while Lebanon was under the control of the Ottoman Empire. Oppressed under Turkish rule until 1918, when World War I ended and Lebanon's borders were dictated by France: trade routes were cut off and land boundaries were redrawn without any real meaning or consideration for familial and tribal affiliation. French colonization lasted for several decades until a mandate was established by the League of Nations in 1943 granting Lebanon sovereignty (although French troops occupied Lebanon until 1946).

Lebanon's borders changed again in 1967 when Syria lost the Golan Heights to Israel, and from 1968-1974 the people of Marjayoun endured repeated attacks by Israeli forces during the Palestinian Insurgency. Marjayoun was taken over by a militia (the South Lebanon Army) in 1975 when Lebanon's civil war began, a war that lasted until 1990. Marjayoun was subject to

periods of Syrian occupation from 1977-2005, an Israeli invasion in 1978, and periods of Israeli occupation from 1982-2000 when Israel continuously engaged in heated battle with Hezbollah. And again, in 2006 the Israel-Hezbollah War significantly impacted Marjayoun, resulting in many injuries and deaths. Today, conflict exists in the region as the instability of Syria impacts that part of Lebanon in a very material sort of way: in terms of border issues with neighboring countries, Hezbollah influence and interactions, interference by other countries, and racist and xenophobic assumptions and accompanying surveillance.

But the story can't end there. While these ethnic and familial connections to colonialism motivate me to engage in the work of decolonization, I understand that privilege and positionality aren't just about identifying the ways in which you have been subjected to and oppressed by colonization—it is also about the ways that you have benefitted from it. This being said, I must acknowledge the settler colonialism that my family and I now participate in.

I—a cisgender, heterosexual woman—currently live a middle-class lifestyle in central Illinois. The life I live is built on the ancestral lands of multiple native nations: the Illini, Peoria, and Myaamia Nations; and later—due to colonial encroachment and displacement—to the Fox, Potawatomi, Sauk, Shawnee, Winnebago, Ioway, Mascouten, Piankashaw, Wea, and Kickapoo Nations.⁷ The campus I teach at and home that I live in both sit on lands that were the traditional birthright of Indigenous people who were forcibly removed and have faced centuries of struggle for survival and identity in the wake of dispossession and displacement.

⁷ I also honor those Indigenous people who I may have excluded in this acknowledgement due to erasure and historical inaccuracy.

Land acknowledgements like the one I just made are important. When positionality, embodiment, and interdependency are ignored and overlooked, power can operate covertly, taking hold and managing bodies in the name of economic progress and justifying violences as a necessary means of governmentality. My personal narrative provides an example of how—to varying degrees—one can be both a survivor of and complicit in colonization.

CULTURAL EXIGENCY

As an Arab American woman myself, I identify with Arab American activist English professor and scholar Thea Renda Abu El-Haj as she discusses paradoxical issues of recognition.

⁸ She acknowledges that “[i]f negative images and stereotypes represent one problem for Arab Americans, invisibility has been another” (22). Being negatively represented/stereotyped and overlooked comes from racism and cultural imperialism and results in overlapping conditions of marginalization and disregard.⁹

This designation of invisibility is systemic, built into the very mechanisms that are weaponized to assign and validate identity. For example, Americans of Middle Eastern descent are not considered a minority in official government data nor counted in the census. This lack of census classification perpetuates Arab American invisibility, and the inattention given to their

⁸ Arab Americans have ethnic and cultural heritage from an Arabic speaking country, whereas Americans of Middle Eastern descent have ethnic and cultural heritage from a country in the Middle East (not all of which speak Arabic).

⁹ Middle Easterners are often represented via racial stereotypes, thus resulting in racially motivated immigration policies, racial profiling, and terrorism/the war on terror. This is especially evident post-9/11.

non-white, non-Western, ethnic and cultural heritage has multiple impacts. Though “hate crimes against Arab Americans have dramatically increased since 9/11, [...] the FBI does not keep statistics on these hate crimes because the Census does not recognize Arab Americans as a racial group” (Tamer 110). Not only are civil rights unprotected, Tamer contends that sanctioned invisibility “denies a group that is historically and presently suffering discrimination the benefits and protections of minority status, as well as the benefit of official recognition as a way of conferring identity” (102). Invisibility obscures identity and justifies misrepresentation and exclusion.

In addition to government policies and practices, educational institutions—places that profess diversity through policies and committees alike—perpetuate this state of invisibility. As Abu El-Haj notes, “[m]any discussions of cultural diversity in U.S. schools fail to include information about Arab Americans. Despite a long presence in the United States—the first wave of Arab immigration began in 1880—the significance of Arab Americans as a minority racial and ethnic group has rarely been recognized” (22). She goes on to point out that this “visible misrepresentation/invisible lack of representation” thing is not a uniquely Arab American experience (and may not be the experience of all Arab Americans).

I choose to discuss this misrepresentation and invisibility as a reclamation of identity and an act of allyship with others who live a similar dichotomy. In response, part of my purpose as an Arab American scholar is to contribute to decolonial rhetorics and help diversify cultural rhetorics to include and create space for Arab American rhetors and rhetorics, and others who have experienced invisibility. Positionalities—though different and contextualized—can leave us feeling similar; positionality and embodiment matter tremendously as we forge connections with others in our fields and with allies from other fields.

SCHOLARLY EXIGENCY

I provide a lot of information about my own positionality as a way to give context. And some readers may question why all of the information about me and my family history was shared. It seems risky: too personal, not academic enough. But communicating this information matters because positionality matters in academia, as does acknowledging intersections and interdependencies. In other words, this narrative matters because it's personal, because it's an outline of the colonialism that my family has experienced, been subjected to, and been occupied by. It is not only about the migration (and colonial management) of my Lebanese family; in many ways it is the origin story of my decolonial methodology, a methodology emergent from my positionality.

Inextricably intertwined, my positionality—alongside public, personal, and cultural exigencies—motivate my purposes as a teacher-scholar in the fields of rhetoric, composition, and technical communication, and as an ally with multiply marginalized teacher-scholars from other disciplines. As both a teacher and a scholar, I am moved to call out and intervene in these enactments of violences, and to ask important questions like: Whose bodies are being (un)acknowledged? Whose experiences are being incorrectly represented, appropriated, and co-opted? How are oppressed and disenfranchised multiply marginalized bodies being represented and erased? Our methodological frameworks and pedagogies can inspire and direct us in this work. Angela M. Haas discusses their potential and asks scholars to “imagine that we are capable and that doing so will generate responsible and productive ways of imagining a diversity of users of and participants in our discipline and other technical communication workplaces” (“Race” 304). This decolonial imagination—and reimagination—of methodologies, frameworks, and pedagogies are interventionary practices that confront and disrupt violences.

DISCIPLINARY EXIGENCY

In addition to intervening in violences, I take up the urgent disciplinary call to engage decolonial methodological work by addressing violences, extending it to include violences exacted by inequitable and colonizing assessment practices.¹⁰ This exigency compels my project and, as I will demonstrate throughout this dissertation, reducing violent impacts and enactments of violences requires that we recognize colonization that permeates our assessment practices; talk to others about violent and oppressive practices; and then decolonize those practices by rejecting and replacing violent and unfair methods with socially-just assessment methodologies and methods.

Now that I have explained the exigencies that compel my work, the literature review that follows contours the scholarly conversations my project engages and extends.

SITUATING ASSESSMENT IN THE LITERATURE

Assessment and colonization make common cause, for combined they create a larger problem space that upholds arbitrary norms against which bodies are measured, and then rewards proximity to the center of normal's bell curve. Through methods of evaluation and classification, bodies are evaluated and measured against subjective norms, while assessments of normativity act upon these bodies by prescribing meaning to them, thereby shoring up power and privilege through the inclusion of some bodies while justifying exclusion of other bodies through a process

¹⁰ I'm *not* discussing violence, rather violences. Violences are layered with multiplicities of manifestations, actualizations, impacts, and effects. These violences are both collectively experienced and deeply personal.

of othering. Make no mistake, this “acting upon” bodies *is itself* a form of violences with impacts on and consequences for those being assessed.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE IN ASSESSMENT

Many in our fields traditionally define assessment as an evaluative tool that determines adherence to a universalized “correct” authority-articulated final product (Broad; Elbow) which is a product evaluated with a framework of validity and normativity (Cushman; Dolmage 2012; Inoue). But scholarship and active pedagogy have prompted important cultural and social justice turns, and this is no different in the field of Technical and Professional Communication (TPC). This turn in TPC “toward a collective disciplinary redressing of social injustice” (Haas and Eble 3) has encouraged and supported significant and sustained discussions about assessment and its impacts. Extensive literature has been published about this reorientation (Savage; Scott, Longo, and Wills) and about socially-just methodologies and methods. From early work considering the work of assessment in the field (Allen; Cook) and its reach through the institutions that we work in (Salvo and Ren; Yu), this scholarship “foregrounds a subjective, reflexive, and critical way of conceptualizing what technical communication is, what technical communication does, and why technical communication matters” (Jones and Walton 337), prompting scholars to reconsider assessment and discuss its sometimes violent and colonial impacts (Haas; Agboka; Cushman). And as foci changed from product orientation to process pedagogy in the field, and then from process to post-process, space emerged for scholarship that engaged with rhetorics of risk (Haas and Frost; Jones and Williams), with anti-racist (Inoue; Villanueva;) and anti-ableist (Baynton;

Kerschbaum) calls for action¹¹, alongside calls for localizing classroom practices (Gallagher) and recognizing and valuing contextualized human practices (Walton, Moore, and Jones).

These conversations about nonviolent, student-driven assessment methods (Medina and Walker) and nonviolent, socially-just assessment pedagogies (Caswell and West-Puckett; Jones and Walton) began to engage assessment and classification as socially-situated and negotiated by those in power, centering students and concentrating attention on assessments' impacts and damages (i.e., violences) done—particularly to those who are marginalized and multiply marginalized. This reorientation encouraged new research and scholarship in assessment as student-centered and contextualized (Manion and Selfe; Yu) and as occurring in a variety of spaces and places (Yergeau et. al.; Scott), prompting discussions of non-violent assessment methods (Medina and Walker; Bouelle, and Jones) and bringing into focus the impact of unfair and damaging assessment practices on non-white (Haas; Walton and Jones; Moore), queer (Cox), non-normatively abled (Palmeri) bodies.

Through a framework of social justice and a focus on contextualization, localization, usability, and embodiment, collections like Haas and Eble's *Key Theoretical Frameworks*, containing chapters such as Frost's "Apparent Feminism and Risk Communication: Hazard, Outrage, Environment, and Embodiment," speak to the ways that all bodies, embodiments, and embodied realities should be considered first and foremost *as they are* and not as they are

¹¹ Ableism functions to institute the norm by valuing abled bodies as normal and disabled bodies as abnormal (Baynton; Garland-Thomson; Mitchell and Snyder). Ableist positionality is upheld as normative and is maintained rhetorically (Dolmage), while the production of disability is all about reaffirming and justifying exclusion (Campbell; Kafer; Siebers; Titchkosky).

constructed, interpreted, and governed by those in power. Frost's chapter explains that embodiment work in TPC scholarship always involves paying attention to legacies of power and control. Recognizing and upholding the centrality of embodiment and embodied experience *is* the work of social justice and responds to Savage's critical assertion that "social justice work must begin by assembling a community of thinkers and actors who agree on the need for change," while building from an understanding that this work involves "teaching, campaigning, studying, witnessing, and materially transforming the conditions that perpetuate injustice" (iv). In agreement, Jones and Walton point out a gap: "Although social justice is increasingly relevant to the discipline and pedagogy of technical communication, few resources exist to help teachers explicitly address diversity and social justice in the technical communication classroom" (337). From this conversation emerges an awareness of embodiment as socially-just practice, and scholars are encouraged to create pedagogical resources that honor all bodies, literacies, and knowledges. I take up and extend this call in my dissertation through the lens of assessment.

By way of summing up then, there has been a shift from assessment-as-universal to assessment-as-social and assessment-as-political. The shift to assessment-as-social does not impact assessment-as-political's role in both sustaining and revising problematic ideologies, and assessment-as-political does not impact assessment-as-social's role in both discounting and upholding embodiment and experiential knowledges. But, taken together, assessment provides a site of scholarship to identify, witness, and reimagine ways to treat people. In short, assessment is about social justice.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE IN DECOLONIAL RHETORICS

The progressive work in rhetoric, composition, and technical communication is already in conversation with decolonial rhetorics, a field that brings together scholarship in decolonial studies

for purposes of emphasizing the effects of decolonial frameworks, practices, theories, and approaches.¹² Decolonial rhetoricians work to advocate for bodies, identify asymmetric power relations, and take seriously the regime of power entrenched in global capitalism—creating space and place for decolonization and calling for theories and practices that are brave, oppositional, and recognize the centrality of lived and embodied struggle and reality.

Supported by the social justice and cultural turns in these fields, decolonial scholars have done incredible work explaining and contextualizing decolonialism while identifying opportunities for decolonization and actively engaging in decolonial work. For example, in response to Patricia Lynne’s call for “new words and related concepts on which to build a new theory for writing assessment” (paraphrased in Martin 155), Ruiz and Sánchez’s *Decolonizing Rhetoric and Composition Studies: New Latinx Keywords for Theory and Pedagogy* confronts the dispossession, displacement, exploitation, and attempts at elimination experienced by Indigenous bodies by focusing their project on delinking, creating space in which Latinx scholars claim and reclaim terms coopted, appropriated, and used incorrectly by institutional entities.

As this work of delinking is expanded, terms, concepts, and practices related to assessment must undergo the same process of identification for the purpose of decolonization. In “Decolonizing Validity,” Cushman models this work while focusing her attention on validity, problematizing colonial “concepts from their grounding in Western imperialism, to expand the content of what counts as these key terms, and to explore the tenets that structure them” (n.p.). She proposes validity evidence tools “not as a way to maintain, protect, conform to, confirm, and

¹² These are calls for identifying and redressing harm done to bodies by assessment; these calls are for reimagining assessment practices that are just and contextualized.

authorize the current systems of assessment and knowledge making” but rather as “validity measures [that] would seek to identify understandings in and on the terms of the peoples who experience them” (n.p.). Technical communication scholars have been engaging with this important decolonial practice of delinking as well. For example, Medina and Walker argue against the traditionalist model of assessment and advocate instead that teachers “appl[y] concepts of consequential validity to the assessment site of grading contracts,” proposing that this can “work to both disrupt traditional exercises of privilege and advocate for the marginalized” (67). Cushman, Medina, and Walker engage in this project of delinking in relation to a specific concept (validity), acknowledging power and issues of access while problematizing how some knowledges are privileged while others are discounted. Whether or not “validity” is the most productive term to use in problematizing the relationship between power, privilege, and assessment is part of the delinking efforts that I will take up in my dissertation.

Ultimately, my project seeks to disrupt colonial violences perpetuated through assessment practices, as I act as one of the assessment killjoys that Caswell and West-Puckett call for.¹³ In this way, my dissertation extends existing scholarship in rhetoric, composition, and technical communication, creating more space to confront, witness, and redress colonialism. And an important part of doing this decolonial work is explicitly acknowledging the violences of colonization.

¹³ Assessment killjoys are those who doubt or protest normalizing assessments and/or assessments of normativity.

VIOLENCES OF COLONIZATION

When I put scholarship in assessment in conversation with scholarship in decolonial rhetorics, the violences of colonization were highlighted, and some insights about colonization emerged. I share two of them below, each of which permeates the remainder of this dissertation.

COLONIZATION ALWAYS ENACTS VIOLENCES

Regardless of the form it takes, colonization enacts violences. Colonization relies on managing bodies, in part, through identity politics; then on articulating valued identities and characteristics (emergent from hegemonic norms) and justifying colonization's work of management and governmentality with those same normative assumptions. Colonization enacted through assessment (and assessment enacted through colonization) provides just one lens through which to view colonization as violences and, more specifically, as slow violences.

In taking up this argument, it is important to discuss the term "violences" and to differentiate between types of violences and enactments of violences. *Violences* is not singular; it is layered with a multiplicity of manifestations, actualizations, impacts, and effects. Violences levy, as Johan Galtung describes, "avoidable insults to basic human needs, and more generally to life, lowering the real level of needs satisfaction below what is potentially possible" ("Cultural Violence" 292) and are "that which increases the distance between the potential and the actual, and that which impedes the decrease of this distance" ("Violence, Peace, and Peace Research" 168). So violences impede. They impede self-realization, self-actualization, and self-confidence. And through structural inequality, violences set up systems of exclusion and inequity.

Though multiple violences exist, it is overt violences that are most often acknowledged as violent at all. In *The Violence of Literacy*, J. Elspeth Stuckey posits, "[t]oo often, people perceive broad change only in terms of violence. They overlook the incremental, daily violence against

those who are not favored by the system” (127). The violences that Stuckey describes materialize in the overlooking, disregarding, disenfranchising, marginalizing, and ignoring of less powerful and less privileged bodies by those with more power and privilege. These incremental, repeated, and unrelenting violences are, arguably, most lethal when they are covert.

Persistent, incremental violences are slow violences. And, as Rob Nixon explains, they occur “gradually and out of sight” (2). There is an important distinction to be made between singular violent events and accumulative violences. Nixon parses this differentiation between violence “conceived as an event or action that is immediate in time, explosive and spectacular in space, and as erupting into instant sensational visibility” and “violence that is neither spectacular nor instantaneous, but rather incremental and accretive, its calamitous repercussions playing out across a range of temporal scales” (2). Slow violences—residing in the psyche and imprinting on the flesh of those that they inflict—are accumulative, exponential in impact, and impose long-term damage.

Slow violences permeate assessment practices. As discussed by Josh Lederman and Nicole Warwick, when educators “quantify unquantifiable matters just for the sake of satisfying institutional pressures” (230), slow violences are enacted. When a culture of silence—within which “the object of structural violence may be persuaded not to perceive this [violence enacted] at all” (Galtung, “Violence” 173)—is supported and preserved, slow violences are enacted. When erasure occurs or is attempted, slow violences are enacted. My point is that some bodies determine what (and who) is quantifiable, what is unsayable, and who is erasable; while others—the quantified ones being treated unjustly and unequally—are the ones being erased. This understanding of violences and their reach greatly impacts the exigencies that compel my teaching, learning, and being.

COLONIZATION TRAVELS

Throughout our lives we are all impacted by colonization. Colonization travels and exists amongst most spaces that humans are assessed, and in all spaces that humans are managed. Just as I believe inequitable assessment practices participate in colonial violences of/in access, I believe decolonial frameworks can disrupt universalizations coded onto bodies and embodied experiences.

Humans are composed of overlapping narratives, stories that give insight into the spaces and places and people and events that have shaped us in profound ways. Those narratives are our stories, the messages that communicate who we are in relation to other people and places. Histories and practices of colonization move location to location, and shape these stories, whether we realize it or not. Then, when we take the advice of Elise Verzosa Hurley and Amy Kimme Hea to contextualize and situate our social messages “in relationship to cultural constructs” (57), we can reflect on our own understandings of self-narrative, the role of positionality in meaning making, and how colonization shapes these relationships. And, looking at the overlaps and intersections enables us to construct more inclusive spaces and processes and texts.

Colonization is a community issue. We must address it then as a community through community witnessing and action in service of decolonization, and with intersectional and decolonial methodologies and assessment methods.

CHAPTER OVERVIEWS

In Chapter II, I develop and explain my decolonial assessment methodology. I first articulate a clear understanding of *decoloniality* and *decolonization*, before discussing at length

intersectional rhetorics of race and disability, and finally expounding on the methodological tenets that I provide.

In Chapter III—the first of my two pedagogy chapters—I draw upon my experiences teaching an introductory course in technical writing (ENG 249) to illustrate key concepts and demonstrate their affordances. I discuss decolonial pedagogy broadly, contending that decolonizing assessment is a specific way of practicing decolonial pedagogy. I identify key methodological concepts for decolonizing assessment in the TPC classroom and discuss specific assignments and activities I use in my ENG 249 classrooms to enact these concepts.

In Chapter IV, I draw on my teaching of legal writing (ENG 248) to provide specific examples that engage and sustain decolonial pedagogical practice and offer a framework for creating and using decolonial assessment methods and for teaching decolonial content. Through this case study, I explain my pedagogical approach to writing assessment in rhetoric and composition classrooms while, again, articulating a framework for decolonial pedagogy in *all* writing classes.

I argue in Chapter V that standardized assessments—such as those included in ACT’s Expanded Framework for Readiness—commit acts of slow violence. Before rhetorically analyzing the Framework as an enactment of slow violences, I discuss neoliberalism and neoliberal assessment practices and the harm they cause, underlying my own call to recognize and intervene in violent neoliberal assessment practices and to utilize nonviolent assessment methods.

Finally, in Chapter VI I bear witness to the value and lessons in everyday pedagogical journaling and discuss implications for the work completed in this dissertation. Maintaining a

focus on marginalia, I discuss three mentorship moments before introducing my Decolonial Assessment Toolkit and outlining my future research and work trajectories.

CHAPTER II: AN INTERSECTIONAL DECOLONIAL ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

This dissertation is concerned with the contexts and implications of assessment and reimagines¹⁴ assessment through an intersectional decolonial methodology. As discussed in Chapter I, I argue that assessment practices participate in colonial violences and, thus, that by decolonizing assessment we can work to redress the effects of those violences. This chapter articulates an intersectional decolonial methodology that can be used by rhetoric, composition, and technical communication scholars to honor and bear witness to colonized bodies by problematizing the practices and impacts of colonization and by reimagining and intervening in colonizing assessment practices. The intersectional decolonial methodology assembled for this project prioritizes issues of race and disability toward identifying and redressing how colonization impacts those that are multiply marginalized. As an antiracist decolonial scholar who focuses research and teaching on issues of race and ability, I choose to foreground these priorities of mine. As I extrapolate throughout this chapter, race and disability are connected in consequential ways. And with this focus specifically on the intersections among disability and race, we can formulate a response to colonization that centers multiply marginalized narratives and foregrounds those being managed and controlled.

An intersectional decolonial methodological framework builds a counter rhetoric that responds to systemic biopower and biopolitical control performed through colonial, racist, and ableist methods of assessing and managing bodies. In building this counter rhetoric, I bring together the separate scholarly discussions of colonization and assessment to highlight contemporary examples of colonization and to disrupt their momentum by reimagining

¹⁴ Reimagination is defined in Chapter I and discussed in more detail in the chapters that follow.

assessment in rhetoric, composition, and technical communication. Performing this rhetorical work makes apparent the need to decolonize assessment. To do so, Chapter II will proceed as follows: First, I review in more detail conversations in rhetoric, composition, and technical communication about decoloniality and decolonization. Then, building upon definitions of—and distinctions between—key terms that I introduced in Chapter I, I articulate my own understanding of these concepts. Next, I review scholarship on decolonial methodology before discussing intersectional methodological frameworks. Then, I posit assessment as a eugenic practice and form of biopower, and discuss its relationship to intersectional rhetorics of race and disability. Finally, I explicate the tenets of my intersectional decolonial methodology.

DECOLONIAL RHETORICS: A BRIEF REVIEW

My project builds upon important disciplinary work that addresses violences pedagogically; redresses injustice; and responds to calls for coalitional work.^{15, 16, 17} To meaningfully contribute to these discussions, I review scholarship on decoloniality and decolonization in the fields of rhetoric, composition, and technical communication before

¹⁵See, for example: Worsham, Lynn. "Going Postal: Pedagogic Violence and the Schooling of Emotion." *JAC*. vol. 18, no. 2, 1998, pp. 213–45. Print.

¹⁶ See, for example: Haas, Angela M. and Michelle F. Eble. *Key Theoretical Frameworks: Teaching Technical Communication in the Twenty-First Century*. Logan, UT: Utah University Press, 2018. Print.

¹⁷ See, for example: Walton, Rebecca, Kristen R. Moore, and Natasha N. Jones. *Technical Communication After the Social Justice Turn*. New York: Routledge, 2019. Print.

providing my own understanding of terms and concepts in conversation with these current exchanges.¹⁸

Over the past 15-20 years, important scholarly conversations in rhetoric, composition, and technical communication have transpired about decolonial theory, methodology, pedagogy, and practice (Haas; Driskill; Haas and Frost; Ruiz and Sanchez; Cushman; Bratta and Powell; Agboka). Among other things, this scholarship recognizes that silence is a privilege and opting out of conversations about violences is a privilege. These scholars call upon us to use our rhetorical and technical communication skills to be community/public/civic intellectuals and to confront and intervene when justice is denied.¹⁹

Decolonial frameworks provide such responses to injustice. Angela M. Haas explains decolonial frameworks as theoretical approaches to examining the ways “we have individually and collectively been affected by and complicit in the legacy of colonialism” that plays out in our embodied practices (“Toward” 191). As I briefly explained in Chapter I, these socially-just frameworks advocate for governed/colonized bodies by redressing injustices of colonization. This means identifying and disrupting colonization and asymmetric power relations, and then

¹⁸ As in the discussion that follows, decolonial work in rhetoric, composition, and technical communication often draws upon scholars in other areas as well (Anzaldúa; Mohanty; Pérez; Sandoval; Tuhiwai Smith).

¹⁹ In *Technical Communication After the Social Justice Turn* (2019), Rebecca Walton, Kristen R. Moore, and Natasha N. Jones help us to imagine how to do this work vis-à-vis their framework for coalitional action that offers concrete strategies for recognizing oppression, revealing it to others, and rejecting and replacing unjust behaviors and practices.

engaging in decolonization by reimagining decolonial futures. Decolonization conceptualizes and supports theories, practices, methods, and methodologies that address and redress colonialism and creates spaces for colonized bodies through processes of delinking (Mignolo) from colonial imaginaries and epistemologies. It advocates for multiply marginalized bodies by foregrounding the existence, entrenchment, impacts, and consequences of power. As praxis, decolonization includes actionable processes of social justice that direct attention to colonialism and colonizing practices while prioritizing alliances across multiple marginalizations.

Importantly, decolonization then *does* something in response to colonizing practices and ideologies—it delinks. With its transgressive imperative, decolonization sets a goal to rupture colonial systems and practices. When doing decolonizing work, it is vital to consider legacies and embodied impacts of colonization and helpful to draw upon Emma Pérez’s explanation of the decolonial imaginary as “a rupturing space, the alternative to that which is written as history” (6). Godwin Agboka takes up this concept of rupture, asking us to consider the ways rupturing spaces reveal “that colonialism continues to operate and to affect lives in new and innovative ways as well as to show the unmitigated damage inflicted by past colonial practices” (298) as they “seek to produce new knowledge about how colonialism has worked and continues to work” (302). And as decoloniality highlights ruptures that disrupt coloniality, it also creates conditions for possibility.

Building upon this scholarship, decolonial frameworks and decolonization efforts—as both (decolonial) heuristic and (decolonizing) practice—are ongoing resistances to and ruptures of colonial and systemic power. So the rupture, in a sense, works two ways—it is both a break from coloniality and a break for other possible conditions. In *Decolonizing Methodologies*, Linda Tuhiwai Smith asserts that “decolonization must offer a language of possibility, a way out of

colonialism” (204). She differentiates amongst past and present decolonization practices, explaining that, “Decolonization, once viewed as the formal process of handing over the instruments of government, is now recognized as a long-term process involving the bureaucratic, cultural, linguistic and psychological divesting of colonial power” (101). Considering decolonization as a process, Qwo-Li Driskill explicitly defines it as “ongoing, radical resistance against colonialism that includes struggles for land redress, self-determination, healing historical trauma, cultural continuance, and reconciliation” (69-70). Simply put, it is power’s counter history.

Decolonization is an active, ongoing process that has meaningful implications for curricula and pedagogy. While Chandra Mohanty importantly posits “the task at hand is to decolonize our disciplinary and pedagogical practices” (200), Haas further clarifies decolonial work as “designed to assist scholars, educators, and students in decolonizing Western foundations of dominant thought by investigating and intervening in the histories and rhetorics that sponsor colonial intellectual production and reproduction” (“Toward” 190-191). This pedagogical focus is fundamental to decolonizing Western hegemony. But what makes a pedagogy particularly decolonial? Decolonial pedagogy does not simply involve critically processing knowledges. Instead, Mohanty posits decolonial pedagogy as “actively transforming knowledges” and “taking responsibility for the material effects of these very pedagogical practices on students” (201). As Haas contends, decolonial pedagogy involves considering the ways that colonialism has affected the education of *all* teachers and *all* students and disrupting colonialism’s extensive record of “prescribing personal and community identities and the values associated with those identities” (“Toward” 191). This observation is influential to the ways in which my methodology is applied pedagogically.

DECOLONIAL METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORKS

Decolonial methodologies are committed to revisiting and reviewing colonization and oppression, and analyzing the ways that these relationships shift over time and space; they contend with the different ways that bodies are colonized and the different agendas served through colonization. Decolonial methodologies seek to address the effects of colonial frameworks, which Tuhiwai Smith defines as “set[s] of ideas, practices and privileges [. . .] embedded in imperial expansionism and colonization and institutionalized in academic disciplines, schools, curricula, universities and power” (x) that reinscribe colonial powers and power relations in research and scholarship practices. Considering this embeddedness, Agboka emphasizes that colonial methodologies are “complicit in colonizing practices” (300). Extending Agboka’s observation of complicity, colonial methodologies collapse bodies and embodied experiences into single stories to justify exclusionary methods, policies, and rhetorics.²⁰ This is particularly evident when assessments are weaponized, value is assigned to bodies, and decisions are made about whose stories and bodies to consider and value and whose to dismiss and debase. But it is not enough to just identify colonization; one must act in response to colonization. Carrying out this work, decolonial methodologies identify asymmetric power relations and advocate for bodies most at risk of being colonized and multiply marginalized while amplifying their narratives.

Countering colonization, Haas posits decolonial methodologies as forms of response that “support the coexistence of cultures, languages, literacies, memories, histories, places, and

²⁰ The concept of a single story emerges from Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s July 2019 TED Talk, “The danger of a single story.”

spaces—and encourage respectful and reciprocal dialogue between and across them” (“Race” 297). And considering the impacts of the colonization, an intersectional methodology—one that draws upon other socially-just approaches—is best used. An intersectional decolonial methodology, then, should advocate for bodies *as they are*—honoring their cultures, their languages, and the communities they identity with—calling for theories, methods, and pedagogies that recognize the centrality of lived and embodied realities.

That some bodies are multiply marginalized points to the need to couple decolonial methodologies with intersectional frameworks. Since my project is concerned with decolonizing assessment in ways that attend to multiple and interlocking oppressions, my methodology necessarily draws upon scholarship on intersectionality and intersectional rhetorics. A review of that work appears below, followed by a description of my intersectional decolonial methodology and analysis of the four key tenets that inform my intersectional decolonial approach to assessment.

A DECOLONIAL METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK OF INTERSECTIONS, INTERSECTIONALITY, AND INTERSECTIONAL RHETORICS

Engaging in social justice practice requires thinking, acting, and theorizing intersectionally. A failure to recognize and embrace intersectionality supports political and social structures and ideologies that uphold violent status quos. Promoting these normative views of society results in exclusions and marginalizations. Though categorical thinking relies on naming “the other,” acts of classification are often considered in isolation. Countering violences of normativity means thinking intersectionally about exclusionary practices and those being excluded. As leading intersectionality scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw explains:

There are many, many different kinds of intersectional exclusions—not just black women, but other women of color. Not just people of color, but people with disabilities.

Immigrants. LGBTQ people. Indigenous people. There are all sorts of ways that the way we imagine discrimination or disempowerment often is more complicated for people who are subject to multiple forms of exclusion. The good news is that intersectionality provides us a way to see it. (“Plenary” n.p.)

Intersectionality contends with categorization and focuses attention on overlapping marginalizations and matrices of oppression that have differential effects. It contests categorical thinking by foregrounding embodiment and embodied knowledges and is guided by the following understanding: Individuals and their embodied experiences are interrelated with culture, race and ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and class; they exist in the spaces (and in the margins) where identities converge and intersect. Crenshaw came up with the term “intersectionality” in response to these circumstances, explaining that she “began to use the term ‘intersectionality’ to deal with the fact that many of our social justice problems like racism and sexism are often overlapping, creating multiple levels of social injustice...[It’s when you are] impacted by multiple forces and then abandoned to fend for yourself” (“The Urgency of Intersectionality” n.p.). It is from this definition I build my own understanding of acting, researching, and teaching intersectionality.

When interrogated in terms of asymmetrical power relations, intersectionality works to illuminate privilege and subordination. Based on the same values as decoloniality, the intersectional work that takes place at—and because of—the margins contends with the ways that different bodies are violently impacted and colonized under different regimes and institutions. Instead of separating decoloniality and intersectionality, we should acknowledge the ways that they build upon and exist in allyship with each other—though their existence is not contingent on the other. Doing socially-just decolonial work is driven by an understanding of intersecting identities and marginalizations and requires one to recognize and confront colonization and its violences.

In conjunction with decolonial frameworks, intersectional methodologies are both complex and necessary because, as Crenshaw observes, “[w]hen one discourse fails to acknowledge the significance of the other, the power relations each attempts to challenge are strengthened” (“Mapping” 1283). In addition to illuminating within and across discourses, intersectionality is a form of framing. But why does a frame matter? Crenshaw explains that “[w]ithout frames that allow us to see how social problems impact all the members of a targeted group, many will fall through the cracks of our movements, left to suffer in virtual isolation” (“The Urgency of Intersectionality” n.p.). This brings to the forefront a crucial component of methodological work: methodology can be a means of intersectional framing.

Intersectional work is imperative. Being a social justice scholar and advocate means identifying the intersections that you are working at/within/between. I posit that we should do so through a framework of intersectionality. For example, I understand that my work in decolonial rhetorics *are* cultural rhetorics that overlap and converge with intersectional rhetorics of disability and race. I look to Tuhiwai Smith’s understanding of intersections as I further understand ways to engage in this work. She explains intersections “not only as intersecting lines but also as spaces that are created at the points where intersecting lines meet. Spaces created by intersecting ideas, tendencies or issues are sites of struggle that offer possibilities for people to resist” (202). Pérez further parses these spaces as interstitial gaps, as “the unheard, the unthought, the unspoken,” spaces that “interrupt the linear model of time” and in which “oppositional, subaltern histories can be found” (5). Pérez imbues so much hope in these spaces, so much potential to reimagine them, when she explains these interstices as “the negotiating spaces for the decolonizing subject” (5) that create space for decolonization.

Tuhiwai Smith's and Pérez's considerations of intersections lay out a clear path in which intersectional approaches inform and complement decolonial methodology. Connecting this discussion to the work of my dissertation, I identify the interstitial gaps at which my decolonial work takes place. In many ways, mine is an intersectional methodology of intersections. Acknowledging intersections of systemic networks is pertinent to understanding the work that does/needs to get done in the interstices. Systems of domination set up relations of ruling; when the impetus is colonization, some of these relations include violent intersections of marginalization and disenfranchisement.

In honor of my commitments to intersectional inquiry, the following sub-sections discuss the intersections that I prioritize.²¹

NORMATIVITY + ASSESSMENT

This project's intersectional decolonial methodology is concerned with assessment as an inherently colonial method of determining normativity. Broadly speaking, as explained in Chapter I, I understand assessment as classification through evaluation with the objective of assigning valuation. I understand some assessments as enactments of violence: when racist, sexist, classist, heteronormative assessment methodologies, methods, and approaches are utilized, violences occur.

In problematizing these violent assessment practices, my project responds to calls from and seeks to extend the work of assessment scholars who call for anti-colonial and anti-racist assessment practices (Gomes; Inuoe; Ruiz; Medina & Walker). Assessment is a method of

²¹ While I choose to prioritize intersections of biopower and eugenics, race and disability with assessments of normativity, this methodology can be taken up by someone else to foreground other intersectional priorities.

colonization that enacts ableistnormativity, and recognizing these covert violences begins with identifying the concept of “normal.”²² Assessments that construct entrenched dominant public and hegemonic narratives about bodies and seek to impose identity (e.g. gender, race, ability, citizenship status, normativity) by naming and locating the existence of an “other” do violences. Exclusionary tactics that use carefully constructed binaries—conflating certain identity markers (whiteness, able-bodiedness, maleness, cis-genderedness) with “normal” and all others with “abnormal”—have real and material consequences for those bodies being acted upon by evaluations and categorizations.

This understanding of exclusionary tactics points to assessments of (dis)ability—defining and determining normalcy by dictating and standardizing one’s worth—as enactments of power. These acts include marking, discounting, marginalizing, and othering non-normatively abled bodies while negating or ignoring considerations of embodiment. When bodies are assessed and otherness is marked, exclusion is justified and categories of inclusion and exclusion are rhetorically maintained through norms. Jay Dolmage clarifies, a “simple definition of the norm is that it acts as a noun designating culture’s desire for homogeneity, and it also acts like a verb, in that this agenda is enforced” (21). Norms designate who will be othered and excluded, and then sets about doing that work.

²²While ableism functions to institute the norm by valuing abled bodies as normal and disabled bodies as abnormal, ableistnormativity is a normative assumption about prescriptive able-bodiedness. It is “the compulsion to emulate the norm through the internalization of ableism” (Campbell 4).

“Normal” is the standard assumed by the norm and is a form of hegemonic encoding that prescribes meaning to bodies; perpetuates power by including sanctioned bodies and excluding non-sanctioned bodies; and shores up social, economic, and cultural privilege for included bodies while justifying the exclusion of non-included bodies by “othering” them.²³ Determining and encoding normativity relies upon rhetorical constructions of bodies—of their experiences, genders, cultures, abilities, races.²⁴ These assumptions and constructions are directed at bodies in order to classify and categorize them. This classifying and categorizing is a form of biopower that materializes through eugenic practices. My project works to redress the effects of violences of normativity by contesting assessments of “normal” as decontextualized practices steeped in privilege. After confronting and disrupting violent assessment practices—in collaboration with those who they impact—assessments can be reimaged as decolonial practices that participate in decolonization.

Given the relationship between normativity, biopower, and eugenics, redressing the violence of normativity requires a broader understanding of how biopower and eugenics function as colonial assessment regimes. That discussion follows.

BIOPOWER AND EUGENIC PRACTICES + ASSESSMENT

This project’s intersectional decolonial methodology reveals and works to dismantle colonial power and control by directing attention towards the ways that power is weaponized

²³ For this understanding of normal, I draw upon the upon the scholarship of Siebers, Dolmage, Lewiecki-Wilson, Tuhiwai Smith, Haas, Baynton, Garland-Thomson, and Haas and Frost.

²⁴ My discussion of determining normativity builds upon the scholarship of Mitchell and Snyder, Cushman, Pérez, Campbell, Lewiecki-Wilson, Bratta and Powell, Titchkosky, and Anzaldúa.

through assessment and manifests as biopower and eugenics. In other words, I engage the question: What is biopower and eugenics, and how is this form of colonial power exhibited in assessment practices? Responding to this question and interfacing with my sites of research—both pedagogical and public spaces—means engaging in conversations (with past and current literature) about assessment weaponized as biopower and eugenics in both theory and practice. Through these conversations, I direct attention toward colonizing assessment practices that are rooted in eugenic methods of classification and weaponized as forms of biopower so as to decolonize those spaces and the assessments levied therein.

Colonization sponsors the abuse of biopower: it infiltrates and biologically manages citizen-subjects' bodies in order to shore up privilege. Michel Foucault addresses biopower as the “numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugation of bodies and the control of populations,” as an investment of power meant to govern and control bodies, pointing out that biopower utilizes “numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugation of bodies and the control of populations” (“Right of Death” 45). In other words, those in power use biopower to maintain control over those with less power. Sustaining this connection, in *Disability Rhetoric* Dolmage describes biopower as an approach through which “power invests, distributes, and controls the body, and specifically how it controls entire populations of bodies” (27). The control and governmentality Foucault and Dolmage discuss are colonial methodologies to manage bodies. So if biopower is a methodology, then biopolitics is a system of methods used to make inroads for power and control. Biopolitics introduces measurable functions, intervening at access points at which phenomena are determined; through various methods of assessment, biopolitics establishes regulatory mechanisms that carry out its normalizing methods. Differentiating between biopower and biopolitics, Dolmage clarifies that biopower is a *technology* of power

tasked with exerting control over bodies, whereas “[t]he extension or systemization of biopower is biopolitics, the ways that definitions and valuations of life organize politics and economics” (27).

Building upon this understanding of biopower and biopolitics, my methodology examines the relationship between eugenics and assessment. Rosemarie Garland-Thomson calls our attention to eugenics’ incendiary ambitions: “Eugenics is about controlling the future[...]in the interest of controlling the composition of a particular citizenry” (59). Assessments to determine normalcy are technologies of biopower that are rooted in eugenics; they aim to dictate and standardize one’s worth, as well as one’s worthiness to access resources/citizenship/etc. Eugenics enlists violent assessment practices that categorize, segment, and compartmentalize bodies. When eugenics are in play, embodied experience is not at all considered and bodies deemed non-normatively-abled/disabled are disregarded.

Often politicized and woven into the fabric of legal code, eugenics influences the ways that law constructs race and the naming of the “other.” Via colonizing assessment practices that evaluate, coerce, and control bodies, eugenics relies heavily upon the imposition of rule and on violence directed at the named “other” as a way to “lawfully” retain privilege. With eugenic intent, racism and ableism—and racist and ableist ideologies—rely upon a carefully constructed binary whereas oppositional dualities are arranged hierarchically and work to conflate “white” with “normal” and “nonwhite” with “abnormal.” This conflation leads to, and/or reifies, unfair assessment practices that support and reinscribe normative assumptions of race, fitness, and disability. These relationships are critical to scrutinize because, as Dolmage acknowledges, “[d]isability in history always highlights particular power relations, relations that affect everyone,” and that racialized and ableist assessments of normalcy “marks out unwanted

elements while reinforcing the hegemony of the dominant group” (*Disability Rhetoric* 9-10). An intersectional decolonial assessment methodology can be utilized when identifying and disrupting relationships between eugenics, race, and disability.

RACE AND DISABILITY + ASSESSMENT

This project’s intersectional decolonial methodology exposes the ways that normative assumptions about bodies are deeply entrenched in rhetorics of race and disability, and assessments of “potential threat” conflate race and disability with danger and threat. Though Dolmage reminds us that “NO person is immune from the power of norms” (*Disability Rhetoric* 21), assessments of normativity carry out greater violences on certain bodies—particularly those who are nonwhite and non-normatively ablebodied. That is precisely why this intersectional decolonial methodology prioritizes intersecting rhetorics of race and ability. When considering the impact that assessment practices have on “non-normative” (i.e., non-white and disabled) bodies, the intersections of assessment with rhetorics of race and ability provide essential sites of analysis. Racism, ableism, and their corresponding ideologies rely upon hegemonic binaries, ones in which identity markers are ordered hierarchically. The “justifications” for these evaluations are deeply rooted in both historical and contemporary assessment practices imbued with racist and ableist outcomes.

This is a disciplinary debate because racialized and disabled bodies—inside and outside of the classroom—are assessed for normalcy. Following these assessments—or, oftentimes, before they even begin—some (namely non-white and disabled) bodies are discounted while other (white and non-disabled) bodies are privileged. This act of coding is colonial; it ascribes subjective meaning—usually assigned by a non-member of the group being evaluated—and then sets forth that meaning as objective truth. Classifications of normativity, coded through

assessment practices, quantify bodies in order to standardize “normal.” Make no mistake, this coding of racialized and disabled bodies²⁵ explicitly marks (non-white) race and (dis)ability in order to conceptualize some monolithic experience and to create a basis for essentialism and universalization.

Decolonial frameworks, such as the one proposed in this chapter, can disrupt universalizations coded onto bodies and embodied experiences²⁶. While coding is a colonizing assessment practice and decoding becomes a decolonizing assessment practice, it is impossible to decode bodies/groups of bodies that we are not already a part of. Decoding is about self-determination, and supports work that contextualizes and elucidates; it confronts colonial practices that prescribe meaning and assign value. Instead, we must *self-decode*²⁷ so that we are not coded by others; we must support and exist in solidarity with those in the process of self-decoding.²⁸

²⁵ Paying attention to the codings of racialized and disabled bodies is intentional and driven by my methodology.

²⁶ For example, it recognizes the racialization of whiteness instead of focusing only on people of color; it recognizes invisible disabilities, not just visible ones.

²⁷ Unfortunately, as assessments mobilize eugenic agendas to mark, classify, and categorize bodies in order to govern and control them, more prescriptive coding happens than does self-decoding.

²⁸ Though this discussion of coding, decoding, and self-decoding is cursory and incomplete, I will discuss these terms in much greater detail in Chapters III and IV.

In addition to self-decoding, what other counter responses can address and potentially change violent assessment practices? Flourice Richardson asks rhetors “to expose the rhetorical strategies that have been historically used to subjugate dis/unenfranchised, marginalized, and disempowered people and to expose how rhetoric can bend our cultural understanding of right and wrong” (18). This aligns with Mohanty’s argument for change that “resides in a fundamental reconceptualization of our categories of analysis so that differences can be historically specified and understood as part of larger political processes and systems” (*Feminism* 193). Expressly, this is why I choose to focus on race and ability: I am moved by both of these calls for action and understand my responsibility as a decolonial scholar and pedagogue to identify and redress colonizing rhetorical strategies, and to approach scholarship and pedagogical practice intersectionally. Specific to my work, this involves analyzing assessment within specific cultural and historical contexts, foregrounding the complexity of each individual body being assessed. Thus, as this intersectional decolonial methodology draws connections between assessments and effects on bodies, context and localization should always shape the methods used—especially when considering ways to revise disciplinary assessment practices.

As a decolonial rhetorics scholar, I build upon existing scholarship while making my own contributions as well. Now that I have discussed foundational understandings of decolonial frameworks and decolonization practices, I connect this scholarship with my decolonial methodological framework and posit this intersectional decolonial methodology as a response to colonization.

AN INTERSECTIONAL DECOLONIAL METHODOLOGY FOR ASSESSMENT

The work of this chapter, and of this entire dissertation, is methodological. As I have previously stated, concerned with the contexts and implications of assessment, this dissertation reimagines assessment through an intersectional decolonial methodology.

Given that my scholarly contributions are shaped by interdisciplinary and intersectional inquiry, my methodology is informed by the unique intersections of decolonial rhetorics and intersectional rhetorics of race and disability as they impact practices of assessment. Intersectionality provides a framework for socially-just decolonial methodologies to problematize the entrenchment of racialized power and hegemony and to amplify the narratives of those being oppressed. My project happens at these intersections because assessment enacts violences—violences of colonization, violences of racial classification, and violences of normativity enacted through eugenically motivated assessment practices that materially impact the bodies being assessed, colonized, and normed.

As I discussed in Chapter I, colonization takes place when bodies are denied the right to govern themselves—when they are managed by another. When bodies are assessed and otherness is marked, exclusion is justified; then, categories of inclusion and exclusion are maintained rhetorically through assessments of proximity to, or deviation from, “the norm.” The rest of this chapter introduces the methodology I’ve built to redress this.

Motivated by the social justice imperative to respond to and disrupt colonialism—alongside witnessing and reimagining decolonization—I develop a specific kind of intersectional decolonial methodology that responds to colonizing assessment practices, one that identifies technologies for sustaining colonialism and addresses colonial approaches to knowledge production and assessment. My methodology influences how I write, on which

bodies I focus attention, which narratives I amplify, the methods that I conceptualize, the curricula I design, and the pedagogies that I practice. By identifying opportunities for decolonization and engaging in decolonial work, I am making intentional efforts to contribute to decolonial theory and praxis work done by others in rhetoric, composition, and technical communication studies.

While I understand decoloniality as a socially-just framework and heuristic, the actual “on the ground” practice—decolonization—looks different. Engaged both theoretically and as practice, my decolonial framework and decolonization efforts are compelled by the commitment to: (1) critically analyze the significance and consequences of colonialism as related to embodiment and perceptions of embodied reality; (2) respond to and condemn the damage and violence done by colonial practices; (3) enact intentional and focused diligence to counteract colonialism and engage in decolonization by supporting alliance, solidarity, coalition, and collaboration; (4) acknowledge decolonized spaces and places and amplify the efforts taking place there; (5) continually acknowledge past and present colonial frameworks and practices—both historical and contemporary iterations of colonialism—that bodies perpetrate and are impacted by; and (6) critique colonialism and insist upon ardent commitment to frameworks, practices, and approaches that are socially-just for multiply marginalized bodies in *all spaces and places at all times*.

This is not a project meant to be completed, and I draw upon Driskill’s understanding of decolonization for guidance: “Instead of seeing decolonization as something that has a fixed and finite goal, decolonial activism and scholarship ask us to radically reimagine our futures” (70). My intention is that this methodology becomes a situated decolonial framework that serves as an access point and frame for engaging in decolonization.

First and foremost, the guiding principle of this methodology is grounded in an awareness and appreciation of multiply marginalized bodies and embodiments, and in support of experiential knowledges. Compelled by these commitments, what follows are the four overarching tenets of my methodology:

- This methodology is intersectional.
- This methodology holds scholars to bear witness.
- This methodology asks users to be disruptive.
- This methodology uses reimagination as intervention.

It is important to note that there is no hierarchy in which these tenets are discussed, nor in the components described in the subsections that follow.

THIS METHODOLOGY IS INTERSECTIONAL

As a direct and purposeful response to erasure, this methodology centers and amplifies the narratives of the colonized and multiply marginalized.²⁹ Prioritizing positionality and embodiment, it asks: Who are you? Rather than being named and classified by colonial power, this questions asks multiply marginalized people to foreground themselves. The decolonial *is* intersectional and draws clear connection between privilege and oppression: The less privilege you have, the more oppression you are likely subjected to and suffer from. Built upon this understanding, my methodology answers intersectionality's call to provide "a framework that allows us to see how the parts of us that might be excluded from social justice agendas would link up with other people that might be excluded from existing social justice agendas" (Crenshaw

²⁹ Erasure occurs when some bodies are deemed excludable and thereby marked for omission and negation.

“Plenary” n.p.). This methodological framework advocates for colonized and decolonized bodies by witnessing relationships of power and disrupting systems that violently act upon bodies—often those most vulnerable.

THIS METHODOLOGY HOLDS SCHOLARS TO BEAR WITNESS

This methodology holds its scholars to the responsibility of *bearing witness to colonization and colonialism*. As Crenshaw reminds us, “[w]e have to be willing to do more. We have to be willing to bear witness, to bear witness to the often painful realities that we would just rather not confront” (“The Urgency of Intersectionality” n.p.). Bearing witness must be done with steadfast conviction—without turning away for even a moment—especially when confronting violences. With that in mind, this methodology asks users to *bear witness to violences done to bodies by colonizing assessment practices*. It calls for historicized and contextualized awareness of places, spaces, and bodies. And, it calls for us to take seriously (historical, preexisting, currently existing, and potentially existing) asymmetric power relations. But we can’t just talk about who’s not here; rather, we need to talk about where they *are* and the empowering work that they are doing in those spaces and places. To honor this commitment, this methodology asks scholars to *bear witness to decolonized spaces and places*³⁰ by acknowledging

³⁰ Colonized spaces and places are stolen ones that are being used, in the interest of power, to govern and control othered bodies. Decolonized spaces and places are non-colonized ones, reclaimed or created by those “othered” bodies. Inequalities are acknowledged, experiential knowledges of all bodies and embodiments are upheld (particularly those discounted and multiply marginalized), and supportive networks and coalitions are built in decolonized spaces and places.

and taking notice of the work being done by colonized and multiply marginalized people in the (noncolonized/decolonized) spaces and places in which they are not marginalized, and to hold ourselves and fellow scholars accountable in doing this work.

THIS METHODOLOGY ASKS USERS TO BE DISRUPTIVE

This methodology is in opposition to assumptions about and constructions of bodies. It is in opposition to efforts aimed at standardizing and norming bodies and asks users to *disrupt violences of normativity*. This means *disrupting hegemonic assumptions* by identifying and calling attention to them. It involves *disrupting colonizing practices* by pointing out disproportionate impacts experienced by colonized bodies. Since colonizing policies and practices are carried out through methods of assessment, this methodology is committed to *disrupting dominant assessment practices*: to disrupt the legacy of past assessment practices and the violences achieved by current practices by problematizing assessment in rhetoric, composition, and technical communication; and to *disrupt through transparency* by promoting honest and transparent conversations about the designs, uses, and impacts of assessment methodologies and methods. Expressly, this methodology does the decolonial work of *disrupting through delinking* as it supports reclamation of spaces, places, terms, and identities.³¹

THIS METHODOLOGY USES REIMAGINATION AS INTERVENTION

Since reimagination is interventionary, this methodology *reimagines decolonial frameworks by building upon past decolonial frameworks and contributing to current decolonizing work*. Foundational to interventionary reimagination, it *discusses decolonial assessment frameworks as a social justice practice and priority*. Maintaining a focus on assessment, this methodology

³¹ Delinking, previously discussed in Chapter I, is further explicated in the chapters that follow.

intervenes in assessment practices in rhetoric, composition, and technical communication by reimagining pedagogical frameworks for both classroom and public pedagogy as well as assessment's advocacy potential for addressing and redressing colonialism's historical and continued impact on bodies. In short, by foregrounding the experiences of multiply marginalized bodies and focusing on alliance and coalition building, this methodology imagines decolonial futures.

DECOLONIAL REIMAGINING

Decolonization is not an end to be met; rather, it is a reimagination of futures (Driskill; Pérez); it is, as Tuhiwai Smith reminds us, “a long-term process involving the bureaucratic, cultural, linguistic and psychological divesting of colonial power” (101). As explained by Angela M. Haas and Erin Frost, decolonization involves “investigating and intervening in the histories and rhetorics that sponsor colonial intellectual production and reproduction” (“Toward an Apparent Decolonial” 190-191). It is my hope that my methodology becomes a way to intervene while deregulating regulated systems. I hope that this methodology encourages methods that incorporate Dolmage's call to “refuse the forward march toward a perfectible text/body, and move instead through a recursive process via which gaps, erasures, mistakes, and collaborations might be highlighted” (“Writing” 126).

In this chapter I proposed an intersectional decolonial methodology with which to interrogate colonial assessment practices and reimagine decolonial assessment futures. Building upon the methodological tenets I have articulated, in the remaining chapters I will address the following questions:

- How can my intersectional decolonial methodology be used to analyze specific assessment practices?

- How can we decolonize our assessment practices and pedagogies in our rhetoric, composition, and technical communication classrooms?
- How can we use decolonial rhetorics and our expertise as rhetors, community intellectuals, and technical communicators to decolonize educational industries that sponsor colonial agendas?

In Chapter III, I will begin to apply this methodology to a pedagogical case study discussing the decolonial assessment methods used in ENG 246 (Rhetorics of Citizenship).

CHAPTER III: AN APPROACH TO DECOLONIZING ASSESSMENT IN TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION PEDAGOGY

I was challenged the other day to think about the ways that we care for students with and beyond our pedagogies. With and beyond. I really appreciated that challenge because it made me wonder *if* I cared for students with and beyond my pedagogies in ways that *they recognized as receiving care*, not just in ways that I understood as showing care. My pedagogy and teaching are informed by my foundational understandings that lived and embodied experiential knowledges and perceptions—which form personal and contextualized recognitions and understandings—should always be centered, amplified, and deferred to. This said, how can we teach and mentor and care in nonviolent ways—with and beyond our pedagogies—that enact care without prescribing how it should be enacted, or *if/how* it should be received and taken up?

As rhetoric, composition, and technical communication pedagogues, it's our duty to develop ethical pedagogies that center social justice and call attention to inequitable conditions and institutions that espouse violence and colonization. In this first of two pedagogy chapters, I engage scholarship within and beyond technical and professional communication (TPC) to propose a decolonial approach to writing assessment, and I draw on my experiences teaching an introductory course in technical writing (ENG 249) to illustrate key concepts and demonstrate their affordances. To begin, I discuss decolonial pedagogy broadly before asserting my major claim that decolonizing assessment is a specific way of practicing decolonial pedagogy. Next, I identify key methodological concepts for decolonizing assessment in the TPC classroom. Then, I discuss specific assignments and activities I use in my ENG 249 classrooms to enact these concepts. Finally, I discuss this pedagogy as a decolonial antenarrative of assessment in TPC.

DECOLONIAL PEDAGOGY

Decolonial pedagogy is an intersectional, socially-just, action-oriented pedagogy that involves deep reflection about one's proximity to privilege and power, supports and amplifies narratives that contest and redress white privilege and supremacy, and advocates for decolonization.

Decolonial technical communication scholar Angela M. Haas explains how decolonial pedagogies do this intentional work:

Ultimately, a decolonial pedagogy interrogates how colonialism has impacted the experiential and formal education of all learners and teachers of all cultural backgrounds, as colonization has always already shaped our rhetorics and thus has a long history of prescribing personal and community identities and the values associated with those identities: our different ethnicities, genders, sexual orientations, classes, generations, nationalities, abilities, and more. ("Toward" 191)

Prescribing identity—and then running surveillance on and policing said bodies—is a colonial practice. Once prescribed, bodies are assessed in relation to how well their identities correspond to measurements and assumptions projected onto them. They are then assessed as fit or unfit, abled or disabled, compliant or noncompliant, and ultimately successful or unsuccessful. Unfortunately, our classrooms are not all spaces safe from these kinds of assessments. Even in our writing classrooms, these prescriptions can be weaponized through the use of inequitable, vague, and decontextualized assessment methods. They are attached to bodies in labels about writing ability and adherence to linguistic “standards.”

In stark opposition, imagining and enacting decolonial pedagogy “does not entail merely processing received knowledges (however critically one does this) but also actively transforming knowledges. In addition, it involves taking responsibility for the material effects of these very pedagogical practices on students” (Mohanty n.p.). One way that this can be done is by creating spaces in the academy that support and encourage resistance—physical and intellectual spaces

that provide for active discussion and deliberation of systemic issues like racism and ableism. These spaces—alongside physical and intellectual spaces that provide for self-reflection and thinking work to happen—prioritize and amplify multiply marginalized bodies, and all their narratives.

This pushback to colonialism must take place in our classrooms, and it needs to be enacted pedagogically. Since one's proximity to privilege is either a major advantage or disadvantage, decolonial pedagogues like me advocate for the disassembly of colonial systems and for an interruption of colonization's control of our pedagogies and their applications. Decolonial scholars (Linda Tuhiwai Smith; Emma Pérez; Haas; Tuck and Yang) ask teachers to disrupt the relationships “between a colonizing institution of knowledge and colonized peoples whose own knowledge was subjugated, between academic theories and academic values, between institutions and communities” (Tuhiwai Smith x), warn educators that in not working to decolonize “we risk reinforcing a colonial fiction woven into the fabric of nation building in the United States” (Haas, “Toward” 190), and propose decolonization as a response to colonizing practices and approaches. And while other scholar-teachers—like Natasha Jones and Rebecca Walton—argue for socially-just pedagogy in the TPC classroom, they continue to point out that, while “social justice is increasingly relevant to the discipline and pedagogy of technical communication, few resources exist to help teachers explicitly address diversity and social justice in the technical communication classroom” (Jones and Walton 337). Lacking these resources, “educators will continue to struggle—or, worse, fail altogether—to equip the next generation of technical communication scholars and practitioners for the complex work of recognizing, acting within, and shaping issues of social justice and diversity” (337-38). So when—in her much-referenced 2019 article—Cecilia Shelton challenged us to shift out of

neutral and to actively engage in socially-just pedagogical work, I was again reminded that decolonial pedagogy offers a way to engage these commitments. And that decolonizing writing assessment is simply a specific way of practicing decolonial pedagogy.

DECOLONIZING WRITING ASSESSMENT PEDAGOGY IN TPC

Before I continue, I want to be clear about my intention of this chapter. I am offering an approach to and framework for doing decolonial writing assessment in the scene of TPC pedagogy. But as I explain my pedagogical approach to writing assessment in the TPC classroom, I am articulating a framework for decolonial pedagogy in *all* writing classes. I simply use my experiences teaching in TPC classrooms to explain a decolonial way of approaching writing assessment pedagogy. Providing this kind of contextualization is important to me; it's part of what draws me to decolonial writing assessment pedagogy to begin with.

In prioritizing localization, contextualization, and experiential knowledges, decolonial writing assessment practices require acknowledgement of/respect for writers as experts—the experts of their communities, the experts of their own writing processes, the experts of their own histories and embodied practices. As I discussed in Chapter I, assessment is classification through evaluation with the objective of assigning valuation. To disrupt the legacy of past assessment practices and the violences authorized by current practices in the field of technical communication, we need to talk about them and then act to (re)imagine the designs, uses, and impacts of pedagogical methodologies and methods, especially those engaging with assessment. And writing assessment is often a practice in need of disruption. While decolonial frameworks like mine won't actually decolonize landbases we are on—a rightful critique—it is nonetheless important to do work that tries to undue and revise the colonial clutch on current assessment

practices toward decolonization. Since it is very unlikely that colonizers will return stolen land, this is a process that will forever be ongoing.

At its base, decolonizing writing assessment involves co-creating a place and a space where students have an instructor pedagogically committed to valuing the diversity of all student bodies and lived embodied experiences, and to honoring those values through socially-just assessment practices. Committed to prioritizing positionality and embodiment, decolonial writing assessment pedagogy compels teachers to ask students: Who are you? And who/what are you in community with? These questions are central because, in answering them, students construct themselves rather than being constructed by their teacher; they foreground themselves; they tell their own stories rather than have them re-interpreted, discounted, or erased.

Decolonial assessment pedagogy holds teachers to engage violences done to bodies by colonizing practices, specifically assessment practices. It calls pedagogues to act by addressing violent colonial assessment practices and redressing the effects of these violences by prioritizing students/colleagues/community members impacted by violences of assessment and amplifying their narratives while deferring to experiential and embodied knowledges to prompt and inspire pedagogical ideas and applications in the specific courses we teach. But how do we go about actually doing this work? And how do we prioritize the long list of work that needs to get done? Developing ethical, contextualized practices and resources is key. This all starts methodologically.

Our pedagogical methodology is what determines our methods and classroom practices. Throughout this dissertation I propose a decolonial assessment methodology as a framework for pedagogical practice to address and redress some of the slow violences of assessment in rhetoric, composition, and technical communication studies. In practice, this means formulating a

response to colonization that centers multiply marginalized narratives and foregrounds those being managed and controlled. This requires developing counter rhetorics responsive to violences of colonial, racist, and ableist assessment practices, and involves identifying contemporary work of colonization and disrupting that momentum. Methodological concepts grounded in decoloniality can do this work.

KEY METHODOLOGICAL CONCEPTS FOR DECOLONIZING WRITING

ASSESSMENT IN THE TPC CLASSROOM

In the subsections that follow, I discuss two key methodological concepts—self-decoding and reimagination. I explain these concepts using my own teaching as a context for understanding. However, because they are concepts, self-decoding and reimagination can travel to new contexts, thereby enabling teachers to localize them as needed in relation to their own and students' embodiments, relationships to power and privilege, and experiential knowledges.

SELF-DECODING

As discussed in Chapter II, coding is an act of colonization that ascribes a subjective, often quantified, value to a human to track/assess/manage them in some way. Coding can be a colonizing assessment practice. And in Chapter V, I discuss such violences by considering the impacts of standardized assessments on those being assessed, especially when the results impact test takers over a broad continuum of time. Just as coding can be colonial, decoding can be decolonial. Depending on who is doing the decoding and what is being decoded, these methods can confront colonial practices that prescribe meaning and assign value. When decoding involves conceptualizing, articulating, and using self-assessment methods that contextualize and elucidate rather than prescriptively assign meaning, it has decolonial potential. Since it is impossible to decode bodies/groups of bodies that we are not already a part of, we must *self-decode*. In this

sense, self-decoding includes practices that encourage, support, and further an understanding of self that shines light on how we do what we do, and why we do it that way. Decolonial self-decoding must involve interrogating our relationships and interdependencies and requires a responsibility to understanding which communities we are in relation to and thus accountable to when decoding themselves. Through these practices, decoding is a form of self-determination. As a result, when violent assessment methods and pedagogies are confronted and disrupted—in collaboration with those who are impacted by them—assessments can be reimagined as decolonial practices working for decolonization.

Self-decoding writing assessment practices provide space for students to think more about themselves as writers and their own writing practices. And as socially-just teachers we can design courses that prioritize student-led evaluation, understanding experiential knowledges as acts of self-decoding contingent on students' reflection and own articulation of their own selves as writers. Teaching, I ask students to think deeply about—and journal in reaction to—their own compositions and those that are introduced throughout the course. This approach will be discussed in greater specificity below to account for the false binary between and generalizations about coding and decoding, and to mitigate any colonial re-coding going on. And while the design and application of these self-decoding methods are my own, my pedagogy is constantly shaped by current conversations in our field. From this commonly held commitment to collaboration comes calls throughout our field for socially-just pedagogies like this. Decoding is an act of decolonialization when we do so in relation to first understanding how colonization has coded our identities, and then study and analyze decolonial codes before being able to engage in this practice ourselves. So as to disrupt colonial notions of identity, this process

requires critical understanding of and reflection on how we have been complicit in, beneficiaries of, and victims of colonialism.

(RE)IMAGINING

Reimagination is all about identification (acknowledging colonization and its violences), disruption (stopping colonial systems from continuing their violent work), deconstruction (dismantling colonial systems in place), redress (providing reparation for the violences of colonization as well instituting real systemic change and assuring that it continues), and the just use of imagination (developing socially-just and ethical methods of imagining ways to replace oppressive colonizing systems with approaches and methods that protect multiply marginalized bodies and amplify their narratives).

Discussions of (re)imagination frame calls for socially-just scholarship, calls that I respond to and make myself. This part of my pedagogical methodology responds to then ATTW Vice President—now President—Natasha N. Jones and ATTW Fellow Miriam F. Williams’ call to imagine just uses of our privilege and positionality. In their June 2020 response to the murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin, Jones and Williams ask, “What can you imagine? And, how does this use of imagination not only shift perspective, but work to ensure the realization of justice and equality?” (n.p.). Titled “The Just Use of Imagination: A Call to Action,” this call for response explains that the just use of imagination “[i]s not just conceptual. It must be enacted” (n.p.). Active and intentional, just uses of imagination and reimagination are intersectional and interventionary, imagining and reimaging decolonization itself. Through this work, “[t]he just use of imagination does not solely rebuild and reform. Instead, the just use of imagination simultaneously supports the deconstruction and abolishment of oppressive practices, systems, and institutions” (n.p.). To imagine justice is to know that

justice will not tolerate oppression, and Jones and Williams go on to explain that “a just use of imagination is not destructive, even as it seeks to dismantle, because using imagination in this way also calls for the replacement of oppressive practices with systems that are founded on equality, access, and opportunity” (n.p.). Ever since I read this piece, I’ve been thinking about the just use of (re)imagination. And about how this practice requires action. Not encourages action. Not advises action. Requires action. A just use of (re)magination can help in creating and holding space—spaces of intersectional (re)imagining—to enact decolonial approaches and self-decoding practices.

Through extensive engagement with their own writing—honestly exploring their personal reactions to what they believe and why they believe it—students can experience self-decoding as a process of radical self-realization. This is also experienced by teachers engaging these practices. And as self-reflection and self-decoding work together in service of intersectional imagination, reimagining can take place. In this very practical and applicable sense, self-decoding becomes individualized intersectional reimagination enacted.

These interventionary methodological concepts—self-decoding and reimagination—support teachers and students as we engage with, and react to, practices, rhetorics, and learning environments that shift over time and space. And in acknowledging our own and others self-decoded knowledges as expert knowledges, pedagogies and methods can—and should—be radically reimagined. As a teacher, I engage with my intersectional imagination in different ways, lately through journaling, self-assessment, and reimagination of assessment practices from semester to semester. Because of my specific values, this reimagination frames my pedagogy as a response to my decolonial commitments to collaboratively create and hold space with marginalized and multiply marginalized students and to amplify their scholarship. This approach

calls us to account for the violences endured from settler colonialism (murder; cultural genocide; land theft; etc.) as well as the benefits it provides (i.e. intergenerational wealth; privileged “normative” status; acquisition of resources; sense of cultural superiority; etc.). In response, I try to develop methods of reimagining that require students to consider their complex relationships to and for decolonization—past, present, and future.

DECOLONIAL TPC TEACHING PREPARATION

In the subsections that follow, I will explain the preparatory work that needs to happen for the interventionary concepts just discussed to be enacted in the classroom space with students. I am explaining this preparatory work because it provides a needed context within which to situate the specific assignments in the next section.

IDENTIFYING EXIGENCE

At its heart, intersectional imagination involves (re)imagining ways to intervene when witnessing colonial transgressions. One way to participate in this kind of interventionary imagination is to consider the deep—and often unrecognized—effects colonialism has on our writing assessment practices and our students, and to (re)imagine our assessment pedagogies as socially-just pedagogical practices. And while important discussions about equitable pedagogical practices have been circulating through our fields for many years, bodies and the work that they do are still assessed in ways that do harm. Though equipped with the knowledges accumulated by scholars in this field and others about the extensive and destructive impact of inequitable and unjust assessments, some instructors still engage in these harmful pedagogical practices.³² As

³² These practices can include assigning decontextualized writing assessments like grammar/mechanics tests or unexpected timed assessments like unannounced quizzes, or not

both scholars and teachers, we must respond to these circumstances. Compelled by my commitment to witnessing and changing colonizing policies and practices carried out through assessments, and to disrupting past/current/future colonial legacies in my classrooms, my response is the exigence that motivates all of my course designs: To create an opportunity for students to understand their own writing in a way that honors the value and labor of the work they created and to introduce and use decolonial assessment methods that support them as they self-decode.

This means being transparent and engaging in honest conversations with oneself and colleagues about the designs, uses, and impacts of assessment methodologies and methods. Importantly, it also means acknowledging students as experts that create and evaluate their own texts, while also self-reflecting (through journaling, analysis of evaluations, self-assessment practices, etc.) about whether our own teaching is responsive with and beyond our pedagogies.

MAKING PEDAGOGICAL COMMITMENTS EXPLICIT

Deeply contextualized pedagogical practices are valuable resources that can help foreground and amplify multiply marginalized students' work. Jones and Walton reiterate this importance, reminding teacher-scholars that when we "recognize the need to explicitly address social justice and diversity in the classroom, the exigence for pedagogical resources that facilitate subjective, reflexive, and critical understandings of technical communication becomes increasingly evident" (363). The resources they discuss include all texts composed while designing a course. Haas discusses the work that course documents do, encouraging teachers to

allowing for revisions on submissions, or engaging in instructor-only involved grading practices that don't involve student input or feedback.

be mindful of the documents they create and the words they use to represent the work that they and others are doing. She urges readers to “consider how the language we use might serve to redress the long-standing legacies of colonialism and imperialism, particularly in the rhetoric that we choose to employ to represent our work and the work of others” (“Race” 288). Honoring this reminder alongside my own pedagogical commitments, I pay close attention to the words that I use to represent the work that students and I will do throughout the course, being cautious not to speak over or in lieu of anyone else, while speaking out in opposition to colonization in all forms.

Directly derived from these commitments are the questions I reflect on at the beginning of each semester, for every course I teach: How is this course intersectional? How does this course hold teachers and students to bear witness? How is this course disruptive? How is reimagination interventionary in this course? Whose experiences, narratives, etc. do I amplify? Why? How? How can I ensure that this course can best support those most vulnerable in higher education? And how can I best hold those who are the intergenerational beneficiaries of colonialism to be accountable in their self decoding and reimagining (such as in how they assess others, their bodies, their rights, etc.)? After reflecting upon and journaling about these questions, I scaffold the course content, conceptualize the course calendar, and outline course documents. I then begin the next phase of course design by creating the syllabus.

SYLLABUS

After I engage with the questions posed in the previous section and the course is conceptualized and designed, I compose the syllabus. The syllabus overview of the course that I am discussing in this chapter—ENG 249 Technical and Professional Writing I—is as follows:

ENG 249 will function as an introduction to a variety of different written, oral, and visual genres and communicative situations. This course will familiarize you with the field of

technical and professional communication while focusing on content, audience, usability, style, formatting, and design of these texts, as we consider technical communication as socially-just and ethical communication. We will analyze technical and professional environments and research ways that technical communicators communicate through a variety of texts. Throughout the semester we will focus our work together as a learning community to understand audience, rhetorical situation, and to construct texts accordingly.

While the course specifics mentioned earlier in the chapter are important, pedagogical commitments are acted out through policies and practices. And there are specific sections of the ENG 249 syllabus that very explicitly articulate my decolonial social justice commitments. I would like to include one of those sections—the most important one in my opinion—the Antiracist Statement:

The Antiracist Classroom Statement is found at the very beginning of all my syllabi—right after my contact information and the course overview and immediately before the Course Materials section—because it’s that important and foundational to the work that students and I do throughout the entire semester. For those same reasons I am including this statement, in its entirety:

This is an antiracist classroom.

The difference between being nonracist and antiracist is ACTION. Being “not racist” is not enough. Antiracism is not just a rejection or disapproval of racism. Rather, it involves: sincere and resolute intersectional response to racism; acknowledging your own bias; identifying inequalities and disparities; actively confronting and challenging racist and xenophobic ideologies; and engaging in actionable efforts to create and support antiracist policies and objectives.

Antiracism must be practiced in all spaces and places that we meet, interact, post, and engage with each other. It is our priority to create a classroom environment that fosters and encourages questioning and critical thinking about important social issues.

Throughout the semester, we will be encountering and discussing subject matter that may seem controversial to some members of our classroom community. Please keep in mind that each person’s life has been shaped by a multitude of different experiences and impacted by a variety of belief systems; let this knowledge guide you to always respond to each other with consideration and dignity. In all of our discussions, we must remain respectful of everybody in our learning community. Choose your words wisely and think through the implications of the statements that you might make and the judgment that you may pass. Though disagreements will occur—and all colleagues must be treated with respect—there are certain non-negotiables that will not be tolerated. For example, racist, sexist, xenophobic, homophobic, transphobic, and ableist microaggressions are never

allowed and will be immediately addressed and sanctioned, resulting in grade reduction and possible dismissal from the course.

All about actionable prioritization, acknowledgement, and response, this statement articulates non-negotiables alongside a promise to follow through with sanctions if microaggressions are committed. Acknowledging that words are not enough, this statement holds space for action. This antiracist statement is an important part of living my decolonial commitments through my pedagogical practice as I hope to communicate transparency in my intent to use this course and our time spent together to create and hold space for antiracist discussions and to mobilize actionable plans to identify unequal, disparate, and racist ideologies and policies and to amplify and support research and organizations with antiracist objectives.

So much of teaching is encouraging conversation with others and with oneself, and so on the first day of class when we begin to go over the syllabus, I ask students to read this Antiracist Classroom Statement to themselves and to make notes on what parts stick out to them. Then before I read it aloud, I ask them to consider their experiences with power, their proximity to privileges, and the contexts that can impact those distances. In conversations with ourselves and others, we interrogate our own proximities to power and privileges, and consider ways that these proximities impact our lives in so many ways. So, as a class, we go line by line, discussing and researching and defining terms. In valuing this decolonial process of holding ourselves responsible for recognizing and responding to espoused unjust and inequitable beliefs, values, and actions, we can create spaces in our antiracist classrooms that support decolonial self-decoding witnessing and addressing the violences of colonization. And from the insights gained through these conversations, students articulate connections between their values and the writing that they are composing in the course.

Prioritizing and amplifying decolonial practices and processes is the responsibility of the decolonial teacher, alongside providing students with the support they need to compose ethical and just projects. This means calling someone up to account when they profess values that espouse violences. With this explicitly antiracist statement, I hope to immediately communicate to students my foundational pedagogical values and expectations. From here—on day one—we discuss decolonial assessment methods and I provide my rationale for using these methods.³³

DECOLONIAL ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES IN THE TPC CLASSROOM

I think of engaging in decolonial assessment practices as creating a pivotal space for reflection on embodiment and embodied practices, a space that provides much opportunity to envision liberation and enact change. My decolonial work starts with this method of assessment, as students are encouraged to articulate what they value in their work rather than working to reproduce some master model.

As I imagine and reimagine inclusive and equitable classroom spaces, in the subsections that follow I apply the interventionary methodological concepts just discussed—self-decoding and reimagination—to my teaching of an Introduction to Technical Writing course (ENG 249), taught at a mid-sized midwestern state university, to a class capped at 16 students.

COURSE JOURNAL

As I have discussed, I understand decolonization as a process of self-decoding, and see a clear and meaningful connection between experiential and embodied knowledges and their pedagogical implications and affordances. Now, I would like to provide some contextualization that will serve as an overview of the journaling practices that I discuss in this section.

³³ I discuss this Assessment Rationale in greater detail later on in this chapter.

As socially-just teachers, we can design courses that prioritize student-led evaluation and understand experiential knowledges as acts of self-decoding that depend on individual student's reflection and contextualized articulation of their lived self-value as writers. For example, in the courses I teach, I ask students to think deeply about, and journal often in reaction to, their own compositions and those that are introduced throughout the course, including articles, videos, social media posts, and multimodal compositions.

Journaling is foundational to the writing courses that I teach, and I provide a version of this Course Journal prompt to each writing class I teach:

The what's...

So what is this journaling thing all about? First of all, this course is all about technical communication. By examining a variety of texts and communicative and rhetorical situations, we will consider the use and impact of these texts and the multiplicity of ways that communication happens across a variety of business groups and circumstances. In other words, there is a great deal of critical thinking going on in the course. This means that we must figure out a way to parse through the substantive content that we encounter. Reacting through a mode of journaling is a great way to begin this work.

The how's...

Every time you are assigned a text, you will be asked to react with a series of hashtags in your digital journal and in your private reaction journal channel on slack.com. And react is exactly what I want you to do. Reaction is a deeply personal response to something that one comes into contact with. Thesaurus.com gives the following synonyms for the work "react."

acknowledge, act, answer, behave, claim, clarify, counter, defend, deny, disprove, dispute, elucidate, explain, feel, perform, plead, proceed, reply, resolve, respond, revert, backfire, boomerang, echo, function, operate, rebound, reciprocate, recoil, remark, retort, return, settle, take, work, answer back, be affected, bounce back, get back at, give a snappy comeback, give back, have a funny feeling, have vibes, talk back, work through

Let these words serve as a guide for you as you react. They can help answer the question "What does it mean to react to a reading?"

The why's...

So why is journaling such a major part of this course? Well, I strongly believe that it is absolutely crucial to understand what you believe and why you believe it. This is easier said than done, though.

So how do you go about planning time to think about this stuff? With such busy lives and full schedules, when do we find time to schedule in thinking, considering, understanding, and reacting to the things that we encounter? This is what journaling is all about, making time to think about and react to things that we confront and experience. By reacting through the genre of the hashtag—in this case a series of hashtags—you will consider more fully what you think and why you think what you think. This is important: Your journal is comprised ONLY of hashtags. You DO NOT HAVE TO SUMMARIZE THE READINGS. In other words, ONLY REACT WITH HASHTAGS.

You will find that in going back through your journal reactions you will begin to understand, to a greater degree, what you value. You will begin to recognize patterns of thought and reaction as well as patterns of writing and articulating thoughts. These are incredibly significant realizations, ones that you can track throughout your life and your work.

The specifics...

The only way for this journaling space to work, though, is to write in it. Pose questions, pick apart answers, make connections, get mad—do whatever you need to do, just don't hold back on your reactions.

It is impossible to assess such a space in terms of content and rigor, so I won't even try. Instead, your journal will be evaluated on its completion...just work on it consistently and react to everything that we read and discuss.

If your work results in a complete journal you will get full credit for each entry. If you have an absent entry, you will get no credit for that entry. Entries will be evaluated holistically upon completion when figuring your final journal grade at the end of the semester.

These journals are spaces of reflection and reaction; they encourage students to think about what they value and why they value it, and prompt classroom discussion about these values in relation to the course content. In face-to-face courses, I ask students to use their journals to hold time and space. If used in this way, journaling can provide time and space opportunities to critically think about information being consumed, and to contextualize that information and understand it in relation to one's own values and commitments. And in fully online courses, I have found that the journaling done by students opened up deeper and more substantial discussions, bridging the gap that may have existed between the digital and physical spaces that we occupied together.

Because reaction is a deeply personal experience shaped by lived experiences, embodied knowledges, and positionality, the space of the journal is private and becomes an unmediated space of self-reflection that can then be referenced, across time, to better understand what impacts one's sense of self-value and compels their work. I ask students to review their entries and reactions, and to network patterns across these entries in order to understand their own writing process more fully.

The important part of this self-decoding work, and what differentiates it from the contract grading that has been around for decades, is this journaling/reaction component. Identifying one's own strengths and pitfalls (while considering what impacts and influences these understandings) and determining one's own values (rather than them being determined by others) matters and works to counteract decontextualized assessment practices that code, mediate, and ascribe value to another person's work. In maintaining this focus on self by self—both prioritizing self-knowledges and holding space for greater self-understanding to take place—and identifying value in one's own writing, assessment becomes a method of self-learning and self-decoding. But what makes this different from other progressive pedagogies is the explicit focus on the violences of settler colonialism and our various relationships to colonization—ones that have benefitted us and ones that have disenfranchised us. This is the greater understanding that I hope students leave this course with.

Over the years, many students have acknowledged their discomfort in having to really think about why they believe what they believe. In fact, as their journal entries continue throughout the semester, students are often brutally honest in calling out problematic behaviors or approaches and holding themselves and others accountable, and in tracking and networking arguments (Dingo) across different processes and widely varying content. Pedagogically, it is

important to discuss self-analysis and reflection; and I have found that these journals can help to create a space for reflection. Often, students comment about the space held to engage in this self-reflective writing assessment—and on the honesty with which they are approaching this requirement (which feels less and less required as the semester progresses)—as being meaningful and necessary to actually getting this work done.

In respect for the space created and held—and in hopes of supporting its decolonial potential—these journals are not evaluated for a letter grade. It is not my place to evaluate their personal reactions to their world around them; so I don't. Instead, completed journals are given full credit. As long as the journals are interacted with as assigned and submitted at the end of the semester, students get an A for their journal(s). Surprisingly, the absence of an evaluative grade does not result in substandard and/or sparse journal entries. Rather, I find that these journals provide the richest examples of learning and understanding I have ever encountered.

PROJECT PLAN AND SELF-ASSESSMENT

Honoring my commitment to open and honest communication, I am explicit to students about why I ask them to self-assess. At the beginning of the semester, I provide students with my assessment rationale. Sharing this rationale and discussing the various self-assessment methods that students engage in seems to encourage and support a sense of mutual respect and increased appreciation for everyone's labor. Ethical writing assessment should provide a space of self-reflection and self-assessment. The opportunity to be taken seriously, as well as to listen critically and to be critically listened to, are important components in a classroom cognizant of the coexistence of languages, literacies, and cultures and the different times, places, and spaces that comprise students' histories and experiences.

At the beginning of each project, after reading through and reflecting on their journal reactions, students use their experiential knowledges to create individualized project plans that prioritize their understanding of self and articulate both values (what they see as important in their writing and why) and pitfalls (things to avoid and why). This Project Plan—a one-to-two-page document composed within a few days of the project’s introduction—becomes the framework that is used to evaluate the completed project. This is a form of self-grading that emerges from what each individual student values.

As explained in the prompt, “Throughout the semester, you will each critically evaluate your own work, self-assess your own writing (which can include but is not limited to conversations about content, social justice impact, and mechanics.), and determine what you value instead of being evaluated in relation to the values of another.” I conceptualized this “framework of self-articulated assessment” for students to use when determining what they value in their writing. According to the prompt:

This [Project Plan] is a goal sheet which includes a value (this is what I value in my writing) section, and a pitfalls (things-to-avoid) section. You will self-assess based on your values and pitfalls.” But what are the expectations for these two different sections? Well, values sections consist of a Values Paragraph³⁴ and a Values List³⁵, which includes values paired with questions to help you assess whether or not you are adhering to those

³⁴ This paragraph provides a generalized articulation of what you value in your own writing/project/composition.

³⁵ This list is specific to the writing taking place during this specific project, and includes the components that you identify as good, effective, clear, and concise writing, thus indicating characteristics of the type of writing that you strive to produce.

values. Pitfalls sections consist of a Pitfalls Paragraph³⁶ and a Pitfalls List³⁷, which includes pitfalls paired with questions to help you assess whether you are avoiding those pitfalls.

Once the Project Plan is completed, we meet to discuss it before work on the project begins.

Throughout this process, I encourage students to revisit the plan that they composed. And once the project is complete, students self-assess based on their personal project plan by writing a self-assessment narrative. Throughout, the focus remains on learning and on the self-realization that comes from deep and intentional interaction with one's own processes of writing, processing, and reacting. From beginning to end, work on course projects is foundational to the entire process of self-assessment that students engage in throughout the semester. Guided by their self-directed and self-conceptualized project plans, this deeply contextualized self-assessment process encourages students to further understand and articulate what they value in their own writing.

In the introductory paragraph of the self-assessment prompt, I situate the role of Self-Assessment in this course (paragraphs 2 and 3) before I go on to explain, in more detail, the ways that this assessment practice remains consistent across projects and how it supports and upholds student agency and self-decoding practices. This is a crucial connection to make because when composing practices are assessed by the composer, assessment is not weaponized so as to “other” or to prescriptively code in service of management and control. The Self-Assessment prompt goes on to explain, with a bulleted list, the procedure that students follow once their

³⁶ This paragraph provides a generalized articulation of what you identify as pitfalls in your own writing/project/composition.

³⁷ This list is specific to the writing taking place during this specific project and includes the components that you want to avoid in your writing.

project is submitted. Then, students wait a week before composing their Self-Assessment in order to have had time to process, without pressure, the work that they did throughout the project. Finally, referencing their project plan and collaboratively constructed assignment prompts and analyzing their completed work, students articulate their own project grade. While I still comment on their projects holistically and in text—which includes my evaluation of rhetorical effectiveness, adherence to project requirements, etc.—students’ self-assessments formally confer their grade, as long as said requirements are met.

The Project Plan marks the beginning of work on the project and is foundational to the entire process of self-assessment that students engage in throughout the semester. Then, moving forward in the project—guided by their self-directed and self-conceptualized project plans—the self-assessment process is different for each student as they are encouraged to further understand and articulate what they value in their own writing. Witnessing students participating in these reflective processes, the most significant thing I notice is that once students dismiss and disregard the colonial tropes that they carry about what it means to be an “academic” and a “good writer.” They understand their own work and writing process more deeply, begin to recognize themselves as valuable writers, and gain respect for the vast breadth of effective writing that they already compose. And, as students grow in their understanding of their own writing and values, they often become more confident, and their writing becomes stronger. As the semester progresses, the Project Plans and the Self-Assessments often become richer in detail, in supportive critique, and in identifying the inherent value of one’s own writing. While I notice some early resistance to journaling—as an activity and as a genre—documents sometimes include surprised expressions of pride and shock from some students that they are “actually good writers” but had always been told (or told themselves) that they weren’t because their place in a

colonial system devalues and diminishes their worth, and assesses success in relation to a normative standard of being (white, hetero, cis, ablebodied, male).

While I am discussing my interpretation of their experiences and what I gain out of their work for the purposes of this chapter, it honestly doesn't matter what I am gleaning from their process. It's not about me. It shouldn't be. Through a deep understanding of one's own writing and writing practice, some students, for the very first time in their lives, recognize and articulate the value of their writing and writing process. And, honestly, that's what matters: figuring out more about themselves through extensive engagement with one's own writing and scholarship.

This process of self-realization often begins when composing the Project Plan. Oftentimes, students start expressing the value of the content they are writing about but then move on to express the value of the writing process itself. But while they begin to acknowledge their skills and abilities as valuable to their writing process, students are often hard on themselves the first time they compose their pitfalls section. In fact, a male student once admitted that he normally has a preconceived, already written, laundry list of pitfalls and issues with his writing, but that this practice of identifying them has led him to understand his own writing better and has forced him to consider writing as contextualized rather than a static, decontextualized, master model. This move toward self-understanding and increased confidence is common amongst students engaging in this form of self-decoding. In fact, as the semester progresses, students often articulate their personal growth as resulting from these writing assessment practices where sanctioned space and time are set aside to engage in this self-reflection. During this mid-semester phase, I am most surprised at the frequent expression of complete honesty, often accompanied by brutal admissions about one's failures as a writer across

courses and projects. Students often express surprise at their writing abilities and in their sudden enjoyment of writing as well as shock at how useful this reflective practice is.

Each semester, what becomes glaringly obvious is the general lack of student confidence, emergent from a deep-seeded distrust of their own writing abilities. This leads to a hyper focus on mechanics rather than content (it's easy to get lost in the details) and a reluctance to compliment one's own writing (it should be a common healthy writing practice). In all, I appreciate the ways that many students grow in confidence (and positive self-talk) as the semester progresses.

Growth in confidence as a writer comes from within. This confidence is bolstered when students evaluate themselves in relation to their own expectations and values rather than the expectations and values of another. That's the thing: for the first time in some students' lives, they are writing for themselves rather than for some unreachable model that they think their teacher expects. That's where so many get goofed up, when they try to write for some ideal and subjective model rather than for an actual, clearly articulated application. By recognizing and articulating the value in their writing, identifying pitfalls to avoid, and making a plan to do so, many students engage in self-reflective, contextualized, writing assessment for the first time.

FINAL JOURNAL ENTRY

While Project Plans and Self-Assessments track values and pitfalls throughout singular projects, there isn't a lot of self-reflection done between projects. This kind of reflection across projects can provide opportunity to identify broader trends in writing and in articulating what is valued. Since student-driven and conceptualized assessments provide them greater understanding of what is valued in their writing, and since their reaction journals are meant to be a space of self-realization that offers an opportunity for understanding through intentional reaction, I have

students compose a final journal entry. Since I don't collect and/or comment on journal entries throughout the semester—unless asked specifically by a student to interact with one of their journal entries—this final entry provides a chance for individual and independent reflection upon and reaction to a semester's worth of work, as well as another opportunity to recognize trends across projects and time.

When I first asked students to engage in these self-assessment practices, I was surprised that they became spaces of such brutal honesty. And over the years, I have had difficulty at times not responding to overly harsh self-critiques. I find that it is challenging to discern that line between remaining a passive observer while self-reflection and realization emerge, and disrupting the colonizing stare—the one that encourages self-deprecation and relates self-worth with quantifiable productivity. Whose call is that to make? Should we ask our students to tell us whether they need support or solutions? How then do I support my students without prescribing what that support is? How do I create and hold space without contaminating it? While I don't have answers to these questions—leaving me to feel helpless and ineffective at times—I remind students at the beginning and end of every class that their presence here, in this space, is enough. And that as their experiences, reactions, and texts become the course's assessment framework, they also become decolonial antenarratives of writing assessment in TPC classrooms. And our experiences as teachers can become decolonial antenarratives of teaching in TPC classrooms.

DECOLONIAL ANTENARRATIVES OF TEACHING AND WRITING ASSESSMENT IN TPC CLASSROOMS

As I've encouraged throughout this chapter, TPC instructors must reimagine methodologies and methods that hold space for self-reflection and self-decoding, and then apply these reimaginings through socially-just and inclusive methods. Focused on accountability,

ethically minded TPC pedagogues keep calling for the use of socially-just frameworks like decolonization. Teacher-scholars Walton, Moore, and Jones posit: “More decolonial approaches are needed if technical communicators are to resist and change oppressive structures to which the field has contributed” (*Technical Communication After the Social Justice Turn* 23). This means that there is no one approach, no one way to initiate and carry forth change.

Change is possible when frameworks and approaches are localized and contextualized, and decolonial approaches to methodology, methods, and pedagogy are situated and practiced within communities, not on them. Just as Agboka contends, these approaches “are important for revealing the ways that colonialism continues to operate and to affect lives in new and innovative ways as well as to show the unmitigated damage inflicted by past colonial practices” (298), acting as a terministic screen that focuses attention on the violences of colonization while imagining nonviolent approaches instead. But Tuhiwai Smith reminds us that “to hold alternative histories is to hold alternative knowledges. The pedagogical implication of this access to alternative knowledges is that they can form the basis of alternative ways of doing things” (36). These “alternative ways of doing things” disrupt the white, western, hegemonic, colonial narrative of how things “should” be done and, instead, knit together antenarratives of how lived experiences inform how things are/can be done.

Alternative approaches support the creation and work of antenarratives. In their article “Disrupting the Past to Disrupt the Future: An Antenarrative of Technical Communication,” Jones, Moore, and Walton explain that “part methodology and part practice, an antenarrative allows the work of the field to be reseen, forges new paths forward, and emboldens the field’s objectives to unabashedly embrace social justice and inclusivity as part of its core (rather than marginal or optional) narrative” (2). And as antenarratives are conceptualized and applied,

disciplinary fields can be reimagined more justly.

ANTENARRATIVES OF TEACHING

As I've said, I believe that as teachers/students/scholars/humans it's our responsibility to imagine and reimagine the spaces we inhabit in ethical and decolonial ways. And while I was writing this chapter, I was specifically asked: "What is the decolonial teacher's responsibility—if any—to guide students toward more equitable and just values and projects?" Because I care about "whether-or-not" and "to-what-extent" I am engaging in decolonial practice, when asked this question I began to interrogate (via self-reflection) my own pedagogical practices, wondering and if/how decolonial they *actually* were. And when I went to respond to that inquiry, I realized that I had more questions than answers: What is my responsibility, as a decolonial teacher, to intentionally guide (some?) students toward more equitable and just values and projects? Is having this impact justified? Decolonial? I think that by teaching about the value of rhetoric (through readings, class discussions, writing activities, and journaling) and noting instances of effective rhetoric in their writings, we can teach rhetorically effective writing—and simply hold space for it to take place authentically and individually—without prescribing students' writing process, content, or understandings and realizations.

Instructor created assessments, quantitative assessment criteria, and assignments of value do not equate with expertise. Rather, regarding individual writers as subject matter experts on their own writing and writing process—and acknowledging the importance of self-decoding and self-assessment practices—amplifies the work of young scholars. Others argue that we—writing instructors, many with PhDs and years of teaching experience—*are* the experts regarding what constitutes rhetorically effective writing, that students are there to learn exactly this, and if students aren't taught this by us then they won't understand or include important values of

effective writing. I disagree and, instead, think that this critique fails to acknowledge the significance of foregrounding writer agency when supporting decolonial writing practices and assessments—especially when marginalized and multiply marginalized writers are explaining/narrating/understanding their own writing process. Rather, when teachers emphasize students’ agency over their own writing and support self-decoding and self-assessment practices, far more localized and contextualized assessments are developed and used.

Emphasizing students’ agency over their own writing is an important decolonial teaching practice that can be understood—and accomplished—in equitable and just ways. For example, students can journal throughout a semester and check in on themselves—identifying and networking their writing and reaction trends across time and course content—so as to self-decode their own writing and reacting patterns, and to reimagine themselves as more just and self-aware writers. In similar ways, teacher’s agency over their own teaching should be upheld and foregrounded. Unfortunately, some people—students and teachers alike—will espouse unjust values that are in direct conflict with foundational decolonial practices and pedagogical commitments to social justice. Nevertheless, holding space for decolonial practice is crucial—whether or not that space gets used in the equitable ways it was imagined to be.

ANTENARRATIVES OF ASSESSMENT

As discussed throughout this chapter, I strive to reimagine my decolonial assessment pedagogy with care and in response to the students that I serve, the spaces that we inhabit, and the localized influences and impacts that we engage. Prioritizing this commitment to self-assessment/self-decoding practices in the TPC classroom, antenarratives “link the static dominant narrative of the past with the dynamic ‘lived story’ of the present to enable reflective (past oriented) and prospective (future oriented) sense making” (2). Modeling a kind of

contextualized response necessary to enact inclusive and socially-just pedagogical practices in TPC, I see my pedagogy serving as an antenarrative of assessment for the field of technical and professional communication. In their book *Technical Communication After the Social Justice Turn*, Walton, Moore, and Jones continue to encourage scholars and pedagogues to resist exclusionary norming practices and to challenge narratives of normativity, as they argue that “the field needs a more focused study of the ways inclusivity has emerged in the field and the strategies/approaches that can usefully extend the pursuit of inclusivity” (1). I think that decolonial work is the work of inclusion and the antenarrative to exclusionary colonizing practices. The authors go on to call, and hold space, for this work, as they explain, “In short, we seek any and all TPC research and pedagogy that embraces perspectives and knowledges that do not necessarily assume an anticultural, Westernized, heteronormative, and patriarchal positionality” (“Disrupting” 13). This is a call for critical pedagogies, like the one I am describing here, and for diversity of scholarship and scholars, and for recurrent self-assessment relative to inclusivity/exclusivity practices.

Antenarratives of assessment are an important part of enacting decolonial pedagogical work. In creating and using decolonial methods, we can compose antenarratives of assessment and work to build a counter response to norming and colonizing assessment methods used on students in classrooms. Use of these methods—and the ensuing discussions—further explicates the call for antenarratives that reimagine more just possibilities for assessment in our field in the future. But it’s not just about practices and processes. When the focus is on decontextualized processes, the human subject can get lost. And when the human subject gets excluded, it’s a whole lot easier to ignore our own complicity. As a teacher, a scholar, and a human, I am trying to remind myself of my own complicity: that my complicity still exists even though I personally

experience multiple marginalizations. And unless I approach complicity intersectionally—and as a teacher hold myself accountable to bear witness, to disrupt systems in place with new systems and frameworks, and to specifically reimagine decolonizing classroom practices in actionable and incremental ways—then my complicity becomes a removal strategy.

REIMAGINING INCLUSION

What can we, as teachers and scholars, reimagine for the purpose of creating space? To me, reimagining inclusion and accommodation creates space. If we reimagine inclusion in terms of attending to bodied and embodied experiences: then, as Julie Jung explains, “To create a fully inclusive discipline, we must articulate the material concerns of individuals with an understanding of accommodation as a shared social responsibility, and we must recognize that this revision will generate ideological hardships that are long overdue” (175). Reimagined, socially-just modes of inclusion are crucial when creating and holding space within a discipline and within a classroom. Stephanie L. Kerschbaum explains them as “important because they provide a space to continue exploring difficult, intersectional questions about how our histories are composed along with the identity categories we use to organize ourselves and the work we ultimately produce” (22). Taking additional guidance from Walton, Moore, and Jones, “[w]hen we fail to ask ourselves whom we are leaving out, we continue to relegate the work of minority scholars to the margins of the field” (3). For me, this means that I ask at every juncture: Who am I leaving out? On whom am I placing the onus for access?

Inclusivity must be present in the learning goals as well as in the diversity of those whom you cite, of those whose work you assign, of the teaching practices that you engage in with the diverse groups of students that you teach. But thinking about inclusivity only in terms of diversity isn’t enough. Again, Walton, Moore, and Jones provide advice for avoiding the

diversity/inclusivity binary, “[w]e see diversity as a precursor to inclusion: Necessary but insufficient. Diversity brings a wide range of people to the table. But all too often, organizations and institutions remain unchanged by the addition of seats” (6). Rather, as Jung explains, we could reimagine inclusion and accommodation as “a willingness to attend to the unique needs of individuals within a discursive context that considers the subjectivities upon which such uniqueness depends” (171). In short, creating space for decolonization is a mode of inclusion. As we work to decolonize our methods and pedagogies, critical engagement with our own pedagogical practices—their intended goals, application, and impacts (articulated and submitted anonymously by those affected by them)—is important inclusion work we are all called to do.

These commitments to intersectionality and interventionary reimagination work in tandem to support my overarching pedagogical goal: That this decolonial approach helps users intervene in the violences enacted by classroom assessment practices by reimagining assessment through a decolonial self-decoding framework. When colonizing assessment practices are identified and eliminated from our pedagogies, we can reimagine them justly, and intervene in some of assessment’s violences.

CONCLUSION

With and beyond. That’s the line from this chapter’s introduction that compels my teaching, my researching, my human-ing. But what does it specifically call us to do? When we do this work—by engaging with and caring for students with and beyond our pedagogies—we acknowledge that pedagogy is not static or stagnant but, instead, it is contextualized and adaptable. With and beyond our pedagogies we can engage in important social justice work—like addressing the violences of colonization both inside and outside of academia—in our own classrooms. With and beyond our pedagogies we can create and use socially-just methodologies,

alongside nonviolent teaching methods, while we work to make/hold space for decolonization to continue and begin.

As teachers, we have to walk the walk when it comes to ensuring that our pedagogical commitments to social justice are reflected in our teaching and assessment methods, and the experience of conceptualizing and utilizing decolonial assessment methods has significantly impacted the social justice pedagogy that guides my teaching practices. Over the years, I keep coming back to the word “reflection,” a term that is significant to me both as a teacher and as a student. Before I became a scholar, I considered reflection to be such an insulated and solitary activity, one that was so passive that it almost became decontextualized. But now, after my own experiences reflecting and witnessing students engage in so many different methods of reflection, I understand it so differently. Now, I think of reflection as an actionable process of self-contextualization, one that acknowledges the labors of interdependency while celebrating diversities of interconnectedness. Through honest and substantive self-reflection—as well as understanding what I value in my own teaching and writing—I self-assess the pedagogical practices that I engage in to determine if they match the pedagogical values and commitments that I profess, while prioritizing and honoring embodied and experiential knowledges as foundational to this socially-just practice. This is how I self-decode.

By engaging with students in writing assessment in the ways that I have described, as a field we can intervene in violences done by inequitable and colonizing assessment practices. And by designing methods that encourage students to participate in self-reflection and self-assessment—and then respecting the value of these self-assessments by using them in determining students’ grades—I hope to create space for students to think about what they do, why they do it, and how their process takes place. My hope is that, through these activities,

students begin to pay more attention to embodiment as a critical part of valuing *all* bodies and of respecting diversity, as we all work together with(in) and beyond our classroom spaces.

In Chapter IV, I continue to apply this methodology to a pedagogical case study about the course creation, content, and decolonial practices used in ENG 248 Legal Writing.

CHAPTER IV: A PEDAGOGICAL CASE STUDY OF DECOLONIAL ASSESSMENT IN LEGAL WRITING

In Chapter III, I articulated a need for decolonial pedagogy and demonstrated an approach to, and framework for, doing decolonial writing assessment in introductory TPC courses. In this next pedagogy chapter, I create and hold space for decolonial pedagogy and assessment in advanced rhetoric and TPC courses. Specifically, I provide an example of how I decolonized a legal writing course using the framework established in Chapter II.

To be sure, decolonizing curricula and pedagogy demands critical attention to and discourse about: the course content selected, the intentions with which its chosen, how that course content is delivered, and the impacts of our curricula and pedagogy on students. This curricular case study aims to provide a model for employing decolonial assessment methods and pedagogical practice by discerning, scaffolding, and teaching decolonial content in legal writing and rhetoric courses. But when I was asked to teach ENG 248: Legal Writing at Illinois State University (ISU), I was completely unprepared for the depth of experience that it would provide me. As I taught this course throughout the spring of 2021, we focused on connections between bodies and policies while networking the violent impacts of policies on multiply marginalized bodies. What emerged were rich and diverse conversations about accounting for embodiment and embodied realities, about trauma and investments in trauma-informed pedagogies, and about reflecting on our own positionalities and privileges. It is my hope that this chapter articulates a framework that complements the approaches of others who do decolonial work.

In the chapter that follows, I share activities and assignments I designed and facilitated when I taught ENG 248. This includes my revisions based upon my reflections on the assignments and activities successes, their complications, and how I would like readers to take

up this work in their own curricular settings. To begin, I provide an overview of ENG 248 as a pedagogical case study of decolonial content and methods and articulate my exigency for creating this course. Next, I introduce the course and give a brief overview of its context and goals, before providing samples of assignments and activities that I consider foundational to its teaching. Finally, I discuss insights that I gained while reflecting on teaching this course as well as implications for other writing instructors.

WHY I DESIGNED ENG 248

I relegated ENG 248 to the “new prep” category of my winter break schedule, and once my Fall 2020 grades were submitted, I began conceptualizing the legal writing course. In the polarized climate of the 2020 election cycle—as Black bodies were being brutally murdered by law enforcement, alongside the devastating realities and impacts of COVID-19—the stakes felt particularly high. Breonna Taylor and George Floyd had just been murdered by police officers in the spring of 2020, and while spring 2020 protests transitioned straight into summer protests for racial justice and respect for every person’s civil liberties, little changed on most macro and micro levels. The police officer who recklessly discharged his weapon—during a no-knock warrant served at the wrong address—wasn’t charged in connection with Breonna Taylor’s death until late September, and then he was charged with wanton-endangerment rather than murder.

Coincidentally, those (incredibly disappointing) charges were announced on the same day that I was asked if I had any experience in “legal writing, broadly understood.” When I learned that I had the freedom to design the course in the ways in which I desired, as long as I maintained a policy writing focus in which legal texts are rhetorically analyzed and legal literacies are fostered, I immediately remembered my experience editing legal briefs for my best friend, a criminal defense attorney in San Francisco, who works with The Refugee And

Immigrant Center For Education and Legal Services (RAICES) and the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML).^{38, 39} Reflecting on the perspectives gained from this work, I was compelled to teach the course in ways that would foster critical legal literacies that would help students to think deeply about legal policies and the disproportionate impacts of and access to policy on/from (multiply) marginalized stakeholders.

I initially conceived the course as a space for analyzing legal rhetorics of citizenship by discussing related historic and contemporary laws and policies in relation to settler colonialism, racism, sexism, xenophobia, and disability. But at the time that I began designing this course, Andre Hill was murdered by a police officer in Columbus, Ohio for simply being on his phone while Black and sitting in his car outside of his friend's house. The murdering of Black people engaging in everyday practices—like sitting in a car, or shopping at a convenience store, or taking a jog, or sleeping in one's own bed—has become too common. Though some become numb to the ongoing state violences against Black people or feel immobilized to make positive change, the accumulation of grief from witnessing anti-Blackness in the legal system in my body, and calls for action from leadership of Association of Teachers of Technical Writing

³⁸ The Refugee And Immigrant Center for Education and Legal Services provides pro-bono legal services and representation to low-income immigrants who need asylum, residency and citizenship services, and DACA and removal defense.

³⁹ National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws advocates for federal and state marijuana legal reform, federal and state sentencing reform, and for equal and increased access to medicine and healthcare regardless of the state one resides in.

(ATTW), motivated me to use my proximity to privilege to pivot the focus of the course toward making anti-colonial and pro-Black curricular and pedagogical change.

In 2020 then ATTW President Angela Haas asked “our non-Black membership to mobilize our (proximity to) white privilege and use our rhetoric and technical communication skills to redress anti-Blackness in our spheres of influence” (Haas), while then ATTW Vice President Natasha Jones and ATTW Fellow Miriam Williams’ asked members to put our imagination to “just use” to make anti-oppressive and pro-Black change. In brief, “[t]he just use of imagination is praxis, where theory meets practices in service of re-shaping the lived experiences of marginalized and oppressed peoples” (Jones and Williams). This is more than a call for antiracist decolonial praxis—it is a roadmap for it. Jones and Williams go on to explain that a just use of imagination is what makes way for socially-just praxis, and “allows for a rejection of legal, economic, social, political structures that are founded on exploitation, colonization, disenfranchisement, and marginalization.”

As the just use of imagination is fundamental in doing conscientious antiracist work and rejecting colonial violences, Jones and Williams work is exigent and foundational to my decolonial antiracist pedagogy. In their discussion, they are careful to explain that “a just use of imagination is not destructive, even as it seeks to dismantle, because using imagination in this way also calls for the replacement of oppressive practices with systems that are founded on equality, access, and opportunity” (2020). Their call, alongside Haas’, gave me the vocabulary to use while responding to their calls for action and solidarity by making course design decisions that are explicitly decolonial, antiracist, anti-oppressive, and pro-Black. And their experiential knowledges teach me that I cannot guarantee safe spaces for multiply marginalized students.

Safer spaces, perhaps, but not safe spaces. I understand course design as a way to create a safer space to hold and process violences and oppressions with which we must contend.

I considered socially-just and ethical ways that I could use my own racial privilege and institutional access to make decolonial change in a sphere of my influence. In my role as instructor, and as decolonial accomplice and coalition builder, I tried to be an example to future attorneys, legal writers, and technical writers—all who will be communicating information with legal ramifications—of how to use our positionality and agency to make positive antiracist change, while also acknowledging that asserting the agency to make such change is too risky for some, and others have had that agency stripped from them, and thus it is not possible for all people in all situations based on one's positionality and proximity to privilege in different rhetorical contexts.

AFFORDANCES OF ACADEMIC FREEDOM IN COURSE DESIGN

Our positionalities and access to making positive change is rhetorical and contextual. That said, while I may not have much agency in some universities, I did at my university because of my ethos within our rhetoric, composition, and technical communication (RCTC) caucus and within the English Department as a trusted instructor. And as I continue to discuss my own pedagogical decision making, I want to acknowledge the privilege of the academic freedom I experience: even as a non-white, female, graduate student at a predominately white institution (PWI), I am free to design courses that seek to redress ongoing settler colonial oppression and the rhetorics that sponsor them using any and all theories, methodologies, and methods for doing so, including critical race theory (CRT). Thus, it is also important to underscore the intellectual freedom that the State of Illinois still currently affords me to discuss CRT in my university

classroom, a freedom that those teaching at public universities in other states don't have (e.g., Florida and Texas).

HOW I DESIGNED ENG 248

ENG 248 is a writing intensive course focused on studying the genre, context, practice, and impacts of legal writing. According to ISU's course catalog, ENG 248 is the "[s]tudy of the rhetoric of legal writing and the role of written communication within the legal profession." This very general description, though lacking substantial detail, provided me the space to design and teach a course responsive to the legal literacies necessary for the kairotic moment.

Taught at a midsized, Research II, PWI in the Midwest, the class I taught was populated largely by female identifying students from the Chicago suburbs (12 identified as female, 4 identified as male). Framed by a decolonial social justice approach, I broadly themed the course as rhetorics of citizenship. This overarching theme of citizenship gave me a frame for enacting my anti-colonial and antiracist approach to teaching ENG 248. With a broad understanding of citizenship as inclusion into/exclusion from a sanctioned group, students considered contemporary iterations and standards of citizenship. And we focused on responding to anti-Blackness and racism that became immediately apparent in their research. Students researched, analyzed, and debated legal writing examples, including historical and contemporary legal briefs and SCOTUS decisions. Key concepts foundational to a decolonial methodology—including intersectionality, disruption, and bearing witness—were crucial to fostering the kairotic literacies I was helping them to foster given the exigencies I have already explained. And by applying these key concepts to their analysis of legal texts, students gained greater understanding of the ways that legal policies and procedures sponsor racist and other oppressive and inequitable values and practices.

Taken by English, pre-law, political science, and history majors, there was considerable interest in the course content prior to the first class meeting, which led to many extensive conversations (both during and after class) about topics that elicited strong reactions (and often disgust). As explained on the syllabus and discussed on the first class meeting:

In this course we will study and analyze the rhetoric of legal writing, laws, and policies as well as the role and impact of rhetoric and written communication within the legal and policy-making processes. Throughout the semester we will focus our work together, as a learning community, to analyze genre, approach, audience, and rhetorical situation and to construct texts accordingly. Framed around laws and policies of citizenship, this course focuses on policies and laws that either includes or excludes certain individuals and groups from citizenship in sanctioned and privileged groups.

I further expounded that we would study and analyze the rhetoric of legal writing, laws, and policies—as well as the roles and impacts of rhetoric and written communication within the legal and policy-making processes—to better understanding the (un)usability and (in)accessibility of law, legal rhetorics, and legal writing for specific stakeholders.

Toward those ends, I focused our course on analyzing racist drug and immigration laws and policies, paying attention to the ways that they shape and are shaped by each other. To help foster students' antiracist literacies and inspire *antiracist* approaches to learning and doing legal writing, I assigned Kendi's *How to be an Antiracist* as we researched, discussed, and problematized racist policies steeped in settler colonial ideologies. As we slowly read this book over the course of the semester, we constantly contextualized Kendi's antiracist teachings in relation to anti-colonial efforts and approaches. We paid close attention to his articulation of antiracism, which he explains requires active efforts against racism, including racist laws and policies, not just a disavowal of racism. We tracked and analyzed oppressive rhetorics used by those in power toward managing nonnormative—including nonwhite—bodies and the colonial, patriarchal, white supremacist, ableist, and xenophobic values encoded therein. Beyond

acknowledgement, identifying, and denouncement of oppressive legal rhetorics, we worked toward accumulating and putting to use antiracist legal literacies in explicit ways.

Transparency is an important part of doing decolonial work. Thus, I began the course with a clear articulation of the course goals and learning objectives. These goals included:

- Encounter, analyze, and discuss the effects of multiple legal writing genres.
- Consider and discuss the impacts and implications of laws and policies.

Particularly on those who are multiply marginalized.

- Consider ethics, culture, and social justice and their impact on writing understanding, enforcing, and being subject to specified laws and policies.
- Develop respectful and responsible collaboration skills.
- Promote an understanding of legal writing as social justice.
- Meet and learn from guest speakers throughout the semester.

Course goals are explanatory of the work being undertaken this semester alongside ethical writing expectations that serve a social justice purpose. In addition, the following learning goals were explained:

- Discuss a variety of historical and contemporary laws, legal cases, and policies.
- Analyze the rhetoric of citizenship laws and policies.
- Identify rhetorical strategies utilized to attain specific policy goals.
- Consider and discuss the impacts of laws and policies.
- Identify stakeholders and understand their needs and expectations, including the impacts of legal policies and institutions on multiply marginalized communities.
- Gain a deeper understanding of legal writing, legal writing genres, and the rhetorical strategies used therein.

- Discuss shifts of public sentiment and the impacts on policy and laws.
- Focus on ethical and socially-just content, processes, and implications.
- Analyze texts for accessibility and effects.
- Work collaboratively in a respectful and responsible manner.

These learning goals required students to apply decolonial rhetorical strategies, identify stakeholders and the risks they encounter, and bear witness to violent laws and policies.

To reach these goals, I posed some overarching questions to consider when we engaged laws or policies:

- From what, whom, and where is the law/policy emergent?
- How is citizenship shaped and impacted by this policy or law? Are these citizenship designations shaped and impacted by the race, age, abilities, sex, identities of those subject to this law or policy?
- Who is included and excluded?
- Who are the stakeholders? Who is likely to benefit? Who is likely to be disenfranchised?
- Who is put most at risk? How can risk be mitigated?
- How is access (or lack thereof) increased/decreased for stakeholders? How can access be increased for those disenfranchised and excluded by this law or policy?

This heuristic scaffolded our legal analyses as we navigated the semester and was built upon and extended through the Legal Analysis Assignment spanning the entire semester. In small groups in class, through the assigned Analyses, and in their reaction journals, we identified coloniality in historical and contemporary law and policy in a variety of ways. And as students and I continually self-assess throughout the semester, we discuss and engage decolonial assessment

methods (journaling, self-determined project plans, etc.) as nonviolent and explicitly anti-colonial practice.

DECOLONIAL ASSIGNMENTS AND ACTIVITIES IN ENG 248

It is my highest priority to develop ethical assignments and activities—ones responsive to decolonial pedagogical praxis—and to engage decolonial and antiracist practices and processes. This section provides examples of what a decolonial legal writing curriculum and pedagogy can look like in practice. This said, the next three subsections contain sample assignments and activities foundational to the course that I designed.

EXPLAINING DECOLONIALITY ON DAY 1

Before any text or writing was assigned, we first discussed colonialism and its enjoyment to racism and ableism. Then we worked together to articulate common understandings of decoloniality and decolonial practice.

I place an Antiracist Classroom Statement at the beginning of every syllabus I design, immediately following my contact information, because antiracism is foundational to my pedagogy. As in other classes, I asked ENG 248 students to: read the Statement to themselves; note the parts that especially stood out to them; and reflect on their experiences with power, proximity to privileges, and the spaces and embodiments and that impact relationships to power and privilege. Next, we went line by line discussing this statement and defining its terms. In the process, we localized the Statement for legal writing contexts. This activity allowed us to talk about the intentional work we would do that semester to create and hold spaces for decolonization in our antiracist classroom in effort to better understand and redress the ways that laws get written on the bodies of multiply marginalized people and communities.

Immediately following, we transitioned into group work. Students were randomly assigned groups and were asked to come up with working definitions for the capitalized terms.

Here was the prompt that all groups were provided:

In this class:

- We will discuss both historical and contemporary laws, legal cases, and policies.
- We will consider laws and policies as forms of MICROAGGRESSION.
- We will consider and discuss the impacts and implications of LAWS and POLICIES, particularly on those who are MARGINALIZED and MULTIPLY MARGINALIZED.
- We will consider and discuss the impacts of laws and policies as SOCIAL JUSTICE.
- We will discuss shifts of public sentiment and that impact on policy and laws.

Throughout this semester:

- We will locate the case that created the law and its interpretation, looking at LEGAL PRECEDENT.
- Then, we will find recent cases that are relevant to that precedent and apply analysis.

This activity is a method of communicating context and active engagement in co-creating foundational definitions and understandings. This work is important because diversity of experience and acknowledgement of these contextualized embodied experiences should be discussed and woven through every lesson and every text rather than subheadings in a unit taught on inclusion, limited to chapters in a book, or to boxes being checked on a list of learning outcomes. From the authors that we choose to assign, to the laws and policies we select to discuss, to our considerations of whether texts are accessible and whether our classrooms and

teaching practices are accommodating, inclusion describes a way of teaching rather than a list of considerations to avoid.

UNIT 1: INTRODUCTION TO LEGAL WRITING

Citizenship processes and determinations are racist and encourage bias against non-whiteness. To address this in my spheres of influence, I explicitly center anti-Blackness in our citizenship discussions. And, in Unit 1 use citizenship analyses as examples of doing explicit anti-Blackness work.

On day two I describe the structure of the course and the focus of our legal rhetoric inquiry on policies and laws that include and/or exclude certain individuals and groups from legal (and human) rights. Next, I facilitated an activity to initiate this inquiry. I asked them to articulate their understandings of citizenship. Then, we discussed these understandings as a class. Afterwards, I briefly shared my understanding of citizenship both in general and in relation to legal writing.

To me, citizenship is the inclusion in and/or exclusion from sanctioned groups. More than a designation of whether one is a naturalized citizen, citizenship is a designation of power, for power, by power, to maintain power. Contingent on a variety of social, historical, cultural, and economic factors, citizenship is a function of—and response to—democracy. I am careful to remind students that while engaging in rhetorical analysis, they must consider the ways that designations of citizenship construct dominant public narratives about bodies whereas bodies are composed, prescribed, and managed. These designations also reveal the values of the rhetor in relation to how they understand citizenship and—most importantly—who counts as a citizen. Harkening back to those overarching questions to consider and apply, students apply these questions to in-class examples. Beyond briefly sharing their current understandings of

citizenship, students first concentrate their attention on the subject by mapping one of their own personal citizenship stories.

Looking to their own life-shaping embodied experiences, students were asked to tell one story of their citizenship (understood broadly as inclusion in or exclusion from a group) by dropping pins on a google map and labeling the plots in relation to the citizenship story that they're telling. After their story maps are completed, students were asked to share and engage with each other's maps. These are the instructions I gave:

Lived and embodied experiences are personal. Our stories are mapped in so many ways. We can read and understand our maps in relation to our own experiences and in relation to other peoples' lived experiences as well. We are now going to read our own Story Maps relationally with those of our classroom colleagues.

So, here's what you're going to do now:

- Make sure you included details (what that place has to do with your story) with your (6+) pins.
- Look at your colleagues' maps.
- Find connections between your map and others' maps.
- Articulate these overlaps framing your analysis in relation to the story YOU are trying to tell about YOU. What do other maps highlight and/or bring into focus about your map?
- Now think about these questions:
 - How does commonality of experience encourage a sense of community?

- What laws or policies can you think of that impact your creation of your own map? Your reading of your own map? The way that others may read your map? The way that you read someone else's map?
- Respond to other colleagues' maps in conversation with your own connections.

This process of personal story mapping put in conversation with the story maps of others generated conversation and connection during class, as well as before and after, amongst us all.

In addition to this mapping activity, students worked in small and large groups to engage analysis of racist and ableist contemporary laws, as we traced their origins to the violent anti-immigration and pseudoscientific eugenics movements from the very beginning of the United States. As students prepare together for more extensive rhetorical analyses of legal texts, their approaches become more antiracist in nature. As they more frequently engage decolonial frameworks throughout the semester, students gain confidence in their use and—instead of just *discussing* injustice, they start *doing* to proactively address real lived issues. I have witnessed classroom conversations turn into out of class meetups to support local antiracist community groups and participate in sponsored activities, and active antiracist work being introduced and engaged. This encourages me as a teacher and supports me as I continue to create and engage decolonial and antiracist approaches to teaching this course.

LEGAL ANALYSIS ASSIGNMENT

Students are asked to complete the following process in its entirety for each analysis. First, students watch an assigned TED Talk or video, making notes about laws and policies discussed therein. Next, they researched a related law or policy. Then—through a series of scaffolded questions—I encouraged students to engage with important social and justice issues, such as inequitable application of immigration policy on Black and brown bodies. Connected to

my decolonial methodology, the goal of this activity is to identify racist and colonizing laws and policies, and then center those made most vulnerable by that law/policy. This is the list of questions that we began with:

- What is the policy or law?
- Where is the law/policy emergent from? Who conceptualized and wrote it?
- What is the process to amend or remove it?
- Who enforces it? How is it enforced? When is it enforced? When is it not?
- When this law or policy is enforced, who is included and who is excluded?
- Who is directly and indirectly harmed by this law or policy?
- What happens to a person who violates it?
- Who are the stakeholders? In other words, who has a vested interest in this law or policy existing, and can affect others by it?
- What does this law or policy have to do with citizenship? Who is denied inclusion/citizenship and access to resources that those included (citizens) have?
- What is the reason/justification for using this law or policy to determine haves (citizens) and have-nots (non-citizens)? What is the impact on those excluded by being designated noncitizens?

After working through this heuristic, students considered the relationships between this law/policy and citizenship statuses, and responded to the following questions:

- What is citizenship in this context?
- Who determines citizenship status in this context?
- What impacts citizenship status in this context?
- Who is allowed to be considered for citizenship in this context?

- What does “citizen” mean in this context and who does that include? What does “noncitizen” mean in this context and who does that include?
- What does a declaration of “non-citizen” do to the person being declared a non-citizen in this context?
- How is citizenship shaped and impacted by this particular policy or law?

Students completed three or four of these analyses throughout semester.⁴⁰ These analyses total a significant twenty-five percent of student’s final semester grade.

SITUATING CITIZENSHIP IN HISTORICAL LEGAL POLICY

History matters. And knowing the history of oppressive legislation in the U.S moves us toward better understanding how the U.S. has a history of using law and policy to (further) oppress the marginalized, effectively legislating hate and supremacist and deficit rhetorics through historic and contemporary colonization. To learn this history, I asked students to research U.S. naturalization policies dating back to the beginning with our nation’s first, The Naturalization Act of 1790, where Congress articulated the first rules that govern the granting of U.S. citizenship. This is of particular import in terms of racist and anti-white policy as it only allowed for citizenship to be granted to “free white persons.” Another area of concentration is on the first comprehensive U.S. immigration law: the Immigration Act of 1882. This set the stage for US immigration and naturalization policy in the future. Federal oversight was granted to the department most invested in this debate—the U.S. Department of the Treasury—who established a system of financial standard by which to evaluate immigrants for entry. This Act prescribes and

⁴⁰ Analysis #4 is optional and offered to “either replace your lowest Analysis (1, 2, or 3), or to add ten percentage points (a full letter grade) to an assignment (not project) of your choosing.

justifies exclusive rhetoric vis-à-vis its delineation of “undesirables” and addition of the “public charge” identifier. The power to enforce this immigration policy was granted to the Secretary of the Treasury, further correlating citizenship to financial privilege.

To support students’ acquisition of decolonial and historical legal literacies as they relate to citizenship law, I assign readings and create analytical activities that reveal the relationships between immigration policy and eugenics. Explicit in its aim to improve the genetic quality of the human stock, eugenics played a major role in identifying, marking, and excluding immigrants trying to gain access to the resources available in America. Beyond researching and analyzing historical laws and policies, students considered how these historical laws and processes are still influencing legal policy and practice today.

An important part of enacting my decolonial assessment pedagogy is that students set and prioritize their work, as it happens, in real time. Sometimes—in real life—the best way to support others is to hold space for them to create a plan and carry it out with success. This prerogative considered, perhaps it’s not my place to articulate an immovable project timeline. So, students decide when to turn in individual components of a project, and I don’t count things late. Because life is lived in in ever-changing real time, I tell students to use this class as a cushion if they need one. Not exempting them from doing the work but empowering them to determine a schedule that works for them rather than requiring them to adhere to someone else’s strict one. If they would like to try again, I fully support that decision as well and give credit for revisions through the end of finals week.

There are four units in all, and each unit is composed of multiple components: a central project, in class group discussion work, a decolonial legal analysis of the historical policy/law

they researched, and journaling. In the subsections that follow, I explain these components relative to the work being done in the unit and in preparation for the deliverables assigned.

PROJECT 1

This first project is a legal memo and presentation assignment based upon student research on a law or policy that relies upon a snapshot diagnosis. A snapshot diagnosis—made in an instant—assesses bodies for non/normativity, and then identifies a problem or issue from an incomplete and/or decontextualized “snapshot.”

Working from Jay Dolmage’s explanation of snapshot diagnosis in his article “Framing Disability, Developing Race: Photography as Eugenic Technology,” we aimed our attention towards historical understandings of snapshot diagnosis—and how it continues today—by locating a current law or policy that relies upon snapshot diagnosis (for example, stop and frisk laws and policies). Students then composed a memo about a recent/contemporary Supreme Court decision relating to their selected law/policy before concluding the project with an interactive class presentation about an organization engaging in antiracist work. This project called to the forefront colonizing and racist origins of U.S. immigration and naturalization laws and policies—the same ones that continue to espouse adherence to racist ideologies and co-opt identity so as to justify exclusion, oppression, and disproportionate access to wealth and application of the law. Students read Jay Dolmage’s book *Disabled Upon Arrival*, where he connects immigration policy to assessments of race and dis/ability, framing racism and ableism as parallel efforts of early 20th century eugenicists empowered by their assumed duty to maintain American genetic “stock” as white, able-bodied, and western European as possible. In addition, I introduced Dolmage’s article “Framing Disability, Developing Race: Photography as Eugenic Technology,” where he provides an extended example of eugenic technologies when he

discusses the eugenic purpose that photography fulfilled during the same time frame of the early 20th century.

In taking a decolonial disability studies approach to legal writing, snapshot diagnosis provides an illustrative example to draw from. The intersection of the decolonial and inclusive understandings of bodies and their varied abilities stands in stark contrast to Dolmage's explanation of snapshot diagnosis. There, at the intersection of photography and immigration, emerged ableist policies that relied upon snapshots/photographs of immigrants compiled into reference manuals that directed immigration officers assessing newly arrived immigrants in terms of their potential to become a "public charge" and, thus, costly to the state.

In this legal writing course, we expanded upon this concept of snapshot diagnosis and consider contemporary forms of "snap" visual assessments that threaten damage to (non-white/immigrant/disabled) bodies. In line with this approach, the following rationale was included in the overview of Unit One:

You have been reading Kendi's *How to be an Antiracist* throughout the semester. In addition, you just finished Jay Dolmage's article "Framing Disability, Developing Race: Photography as Eugenic Technology." In some ways, both texts explore the concept of snapshot diagnosis. While Dolmage describes the process of snapshot diagnosis that was historically used as a means of assessing bodies and determining whether or not one would be considered for citizenship, I think that Kendi argues that snapshot diagnosis is still very much taking place today.

After reading through the project's overview, I asked students to consider this: What is snapshot diagnosis, and how is it still happening today? Identify a contemporary example of it.

Considering "photographs" as any captured image and "photographers" as anyone who captures images in some way, I asked students to consider what it means to engage in snapshot diagnosis. What kinds of images are captured, by whom, and in what ways? To promote further understanding and for contextualization purposes, students answered the following questions:

- What image is captured?
- Who is the photographer?
- Why is the image being captured?
- Where are the images displayed/posted/shared?
- Who is viewing the images?
- What sort of evaluations and assessments are being made by viewers?
- Who is doing the evaluating and assessing, and for what purpose?

During classrooms discussions, journaling, and conferences, students made lists of contemporary examples of snapshot diagnosis. Drawing upon Kendi's *How to be an Antiracist*, they located laws and policies that rely upon/use snapshot diagnosis.

Students were taught to search their topics on Cornell Law's site as well as on Oyez before composing a response, in memo form to the following questions about the law/policy selected: ^{41, 42}

- What is the contemporary policy or law you chose that uses snapshot diagnosis in the example that you have given?
- Who conceptualized and wrote it? Who enforces it?
- Where is the law/policy emergent from?
- Who are the stakeholders? In other words, who has a vested interest in this law or policy and can be affected by it or affect others by it?
- When this law or policy is enforced, who is included and who is excluded?
- What happens to a person who violates it?

⁴¹ <https://www.law.cornell.edu/supremecourt/text>

⁴² <https://www.oyez.org/issues>

- How is citizenship shaped and impacted by this policy or law?

About citizenship in this context:

- What is citizenship in this context?
- What does it mean to be a citizen in this context?
- Who determines citizenship status in this context?
- What impacts citizenship status in this context?
- Who is allowed to be considered for citizenship in this context?
- Who is considered a citizen/noncitizen in this context? Why or why not?
- What does a declaration of “non-citizen” do to the person being declared a non-citizen in this context?

After reflecting upon and responding to those, students focused their attention on a recent/contemporary Supreme Court decision—relevant to the creation, enactment, and/or enforcement of the law/policy they selected. Students then engaged their selected research, put it in conversation with the bulleted questions above, and then synthesized it in the genre of a legal memo.

The final component of Project 1 was to create a presentation about local antiracist resources, and to share the information with our classroom community through a digital presentation about an organization doing antiracist work. The following directions were given to students for preparing and presenting about their selected antiracist organization:

- Now, locate a local organization that advocates for those impacted by this law or policy. If there are no local grassroots organizations that exist, try to find a local chapter of a larger national organization.

- Remember that organization you located? Research them! Figure out who they are, what they do, who they serve, how they are funded, what their mission is, how to get help from them, and how to help them fulfill their mission.
- Now, your research is going to help your classroom community. Make a Google slideshow—with at least 6-8 slides—and tell us all about the organization that you learned more about.

Through these discussions of (in)equitable laws and policies and presentations focused on the actionable decolonization, I tried to help students engage with important social and justice imperatives. With a requirement to do in-depth legal research and writing analysis, followed up with presentation components that create opportunities to share their learning with colleagues, it was my hope that students were able to locate resources that they didn't know existed, and then share these resources with members of their communities.

DECOLONIAL REFLECTIONS

As I have posited throughout this chapter, reflection is a cornerstone of my self-assessment practices, moving toward a more full and complete understanding of the ways I witness and support decolonial processes. Since reflection is an ongoing and active a process, it is best discussed in terms of praxis. While I worked to intentionally design spaces for reflection for students in the ways in which I taught this course, I created and held this space as my response to the institutional hierarchies and power at play at my university.

REFLECTING ON POSITIONALITY AS DECOLONIAL PRACTICE

As a teacher who impacts students with my pedagogies, my positionality is both modeled and communicated to students in intended and unintended ways. I self-reflect (through journaling, analysis of my evaluations, and self-assessment practices) on the degree to which my

teaching is decolonial and responsive, and I encourage my students to engage in socially and culturally responsive self-reflection as a means of advocacy for social justice. But I also reflect on the myriad ways my positionality and privilege impact the pedagogical decisions that I make, and realize that in a different role at a different institution—especially at a PWI—I may not be able to make the same decisions due to the institutional hierarchies and/or embedded exclusionary policies that put non-white, non cis-male, differently abled bodies at risks never experienced by my normatively abled, white, male academic counterparts. And this is exactly why as pedagogues we should self-reflect on our position and our power. We must assess our own bodily risks (or lack thereof) in proposing, supporting, and engaging decolonial action. In acknowledging these risk factors, we need to localize our findings and incorporate our realizations into our plans for decolonial coalition and changemaking. Let me provide you an example.

I have come to realize that I can better discern insights gained through classroom interactions as I reflect on the (re)generative potential of decolonial academic spaces. By reaction journaling with intent, we can learn more about our own processes and the ways that they change over time and place. And, while so much pedagogical journaling transpired while teaching this legal writing course, one of the most significant moments was when I acknowledged (in a reaction journal entry) the justice in recognizing one's own privilege and positionality in relationship to others. This felt uncomfortable, but in sitting with this unease I made it a priority to reflect on the pedagogical and curricular decisions that I made as I designed and taught *this* course in *this* context at *this* institution.

SELF-REFLECTION AND SELF-ASSESSMENT AS DECOLONIAL PRACTICE

This subsection argues for the value of engaging in decolonial self-reflection practices alongside decolonial self-assessment practices.

Reflection is a process that is significant to me as a teacher, as a student, and as a human being. Before I became a teacher and a scholar, I considered reflection a solitary process. But now I understand that it can also be conversational in nature, emergent from a community. Through conversation and self-reflection, I work to ensure that the pedagogical practices I engage match the commitments I espouse, and that the teaching that I do is informed by my pedagogical research and understandings of embodiment and embodied practices.

To do this decolonial self-reflection work, I kept a teaching journal—a physical journal that I write in with a black pen after I taught each day. How did I use my ENG 248 teaching journal? I articulated and parsed expectations for myself, by myself. Through my written reactions, I held the space to deeply engage with important social and justice issues and better understand how and why and what I learn and know and teach others. Reading back through my journal, I recognize that: I reflected on my own downfalls and accomplishments; I used my journal to vent, worry, and occasionally celebrate; there's so much (non-quantifiable) value in all of this learning/realization/understanding going on.

I don't just promote self-reflection for those professing, but also for students. By designing methods that encourage students to participate in self-reflection and self-assessment—and then to respect the value of these self-assessments by using them in determining students' grades—I try to create space for students to think about what they do, why they do it, and how their process takes place.

Students use their project plans and reflections in combination with the project prompt that I provide, and engage assessment as self-directed decolonial practice. After being asked to review their project plans, they read through their project's components and make note of both values and pitfalls referred to in the plan. They are then given the following instructions:

- Look over the assignment prompt. Review the assignment criteria in terms of both content as well as formatting/design/etc. that was articulated by the instructor. Read through your work and mark instances of both adhering to/diverting from these criteria.
- Evaluate each component of your project in terms of content, mechanics, and adherence to your project plan as well as to the assignment criteria.
- Articulate the grade that you think you should receive. Give specific examples, quoting from both your submitted project as well as from your project plan and the assignment prompt, of support for the grade that you have articulated. Remember, recognizing your strengths as well as your pitfalls is incredibly important.
- Compose a Self-Assessment narrative (essay) that covers all these specifics.

The explanations of writing processes previously unarticulated, and the moments of self-understanding that have resulted from these decolonial practices have taught me so much—professionally and personally. Instructing this course changed my teaching, further informed my pedagogy, and reinforced my own understanding and use of the methodology and methods I created. And in reflecting upon this, I will continue to be mindful the next time I teach this class of the sacred spaces of journaling, how historical contextualization gives insight to contemporary issues, and of the ameliorating impact of nonviolent self-assessments.

PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

As teachers, rhetoricians, and TPC practitioners, it remains important to continually think about introducing nonviolent decolonial assessment methods into our writing classrooms; and to consider what these methods may look like, specifically, in a legal writing classroom.

Importantly, the implications of this chapter for teaching and assessing legal writing are different for everyone. The implications are different because we all have different positionalities and different access to institutional power to teach writing in these ways. What we all need to do is to discern what we can each individually do when we teach legal writing that is tactically decolonial. The implications that I identify are emergent from my understanding of my own contextualized positionality, power, and risks.

In living my commitment to accessible pedagogy, I thought that this semester's work could be additionally framed in relation to the contextualized and nonviolent teaching methods and frameworks I was utilizing, and that my discussion of this course I taught—ENG 248 Legal Writing—could provide a good access point to engage decolonial practice in writing classrooms. Moreover, for some instructors to “walk the walk” rather than just “talk the talk,” they need specific examples of how to act nonviolently and to decolonize the classroom, and in this case the ways in which we assess as we localize assessment in our own rhetoric and technical writing classrooms.

Just as our teaching is adaptable and contextualized, this teaching experience reflects a process of reconsidering and reflecting on embedded decolonial values, my own embodied experiences, and pedagogical discussions and scholarship that informs my own teaching and learning. In researching my own pedagogy, ENG 248 was a terministic screen of sorts—shining a spotlight that illuminated the malleability of my scholarship and pedagogy. Teaching this

course demonstrated to myself that the teaching labor I do, the content I choose to cover, and the intentions I lead with, while elucidated through my pedagogical practice, continue to resonate throughout my own body after the course concludes. And that the content design and decolonial methods used matter as much right now as when it was taught; maybe even more—since our rights continue to be constantly under attack. Disproportionately so for some over others.

In this chapter and previous ones, I discussed classroom pedagogy, colonizing academic assessment methodologies and methods, and reimagined decolonial frameworks for nonviolent classroom assessment practices. In the next chapter, I discuss public pedagogy and the impact of a growing neoliberal mind-set that seeks to control—and thereby do violence to and harm—students' bodies across their lifetimes. Maintaining a focus on neoliberal assessment practices that mark student bodies to colonize the embodied identities of those subjected to assessments, I push back against this management of autonomy and call for fellow teachers and scholars to intervene in these violent practices.

CHAPTER V: ACT'S EXPANDED FRAMEWORK FOR READINESS: RECOGNIZING SLOW VIOLENCES AND DECOLONIZING NEOLIBERAL ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

I have a question: How careful and cooperative, creative and disciplined are you? Here's another: To what extent do you exude goodwill, optimism, and savvy? Without knowing you—or anything about you and your lived embodied reality and experiences—would a complete stranger evaluate you the same way that you evaluated yourself? Or, instead, would that stranger have to know more about you in order to evaluate the degree to which you exhibit these behaviors? Now, what if the data gathered about you was aggregated over a continuum of kindergarten through your career and you were marked and tracked over this period of time as normative or non-normative, prepared or unprepared, likely or unlikely to be successful? Here's a final set of questions: If, through a series of assessments, you were evaluated as “unready” and “unprepared”—marked as having either little potential for success or less potential than “normal”—and then this data affixed to your embodied identity⁴³ was made available to educators and prospective employers, what sort of damage could it do? Is there a possibility, even the probability, that your career prospects could be diminished, thus affecting your quality of life? What about the impact to your psyche if you began to believe that you have decreased potential for success? What violences happen when assessments of worth and potential have material and psychological consequences?

The social/emotional characteristics mentioned above (carefulness, cooperation, creativity, discipline, goodwill, optimism, and savvy) are just a few of the behavioral

⁴³ Embodied identity is contextualized identity, emergent from the cultures, histories, ethnicities, and interactions that impact and shape one's life and experiences.

characteristics evaluated by the assessments that comprise ACT's Expanded Framework for Readiness.⁴⁴ Decontextualized and disembodied social/emotional behavioral assessments—which pose threats of violence through the misalignment between one's personal potential for success and a stranger's assessment of this potential—are exactly what ACT is marketing to parents, educators, and employers as predictive of normativity and success in students' future careers. Because of the far-reaching and harmful consequences for embodied identities assessed as “unready” and potentially “unsuccessful,” I understand these assessments as contemporary violences. ACT is marketing decontextualized testing that marks some bodies for failure in the neoliberal market-driven economy.

Before they ever enter our college classrooms, the students we teach have already been assessed in unfair, inequitable, and harmful ways. As such, we as scholars, professors, and rhetoricians should be thinking about pedagogy beyond university classrooms. We should consider the assessment practices that have shaped our students before they reach higher education, including the standardized testing industry. This is an important pedagogical site of decolonial rhetorical analysis because it greatly impacts the students we teach—students who have been completely socialized in a testing culture. Our expertise and ethics hold us responsible

⁴⁴ Also known as “ACT Behavioral Skills Framework” and “ACT Holistic Framework,” for the purposes of this chapter, I will refer to it as the “Framework” or as “ACT's Framework.” This is a framework proposed by ACT to administer and record standardized tests from kindergarten through career to determine and track one's potential for success.

for recognizing⁴⁵ and attending to any kind of assessment that impacts our students—paying particular attention to the methods that do violence, no matter the level of education at which the violence occurs. And as pedagogues in rhetoric, composition, and technical communication studies, we must become more involved in policy discussions and implementations so that we can positively (re)shape the rhetorics of assessment circulating at those levels.

As explained in Chapter I, I understand assessment as classification through evaluation with the objective of assigning value. That when these evaluations are tasked with marking deficit and deviation from an assumed “norm,” bodies are classified as average/normal or the inverse, atypical/abnormal. And that, within this kind of assessment framework, average/normal bodies are upheld as standard while non-normative bodies are othered and discounted (Dolmage *Disability; “Writing;”* Gould). These sustained violences of assessment are outgrowths of colonization, and take place when humans are denied the right to govern themselves and are instead managed by another. And as discussed in previous chapters in this dissertation, the history of colonization is narrated by violent accounts of domination, oppression, and (white) supremacy. From forced migration and enslavement to disenfranchisement and marginalization, colonization has landed with brutal impact on those assessed as “non-normative” (i.e., non-white, non-cisgender male, non-Western, non-heterosexual, non-normatively abled) and weaponized for violent assault. Haas notes that colonization “has a long history of prescribing personal and community identities and the values associated with those identities” (“Toward” 191), and

⁴⁵ Recognizing is an act of intervening and, in the case of ACT’s Framework, is the first step in disrupting its attendant slow violences.

colonized bodies—along with their cultures and their identities—were (and still are) appropriated for use by colonizers.

Certain bodies determine who is acknowledged and who is not, whose story is told and whose is ignored, whose bodies are upheld by privilege and whose are discounted and marginalized, who counts as a witness to these violences, and (more importantly) who does not. Colonization's slow violences occur when a person is evaluated, interpreted, and reduced to the characterization made by another, and then is acted upon because of that decontextualized depiction. These persistent slow violences circulate through countless colonizing assessment practices. While I argue in this dissertation that violences saturate colonial assessment practices through the management of bodies, I (even more importantly) also contend that mitigating violent impacts and enactments of violences requires that we recognize violences as they permeate assessment. One set of violences to pay attention to are the neoliberal, market-based tenets violently acted out upon people so as to locate (un)desirable characteristics, evaluate them in terms of profitability, and designate one's potential for success (and governance) as related to maintaining (and furthering) neoliberal rationalities.

It is my argument in this chapter that assessments, such as those included in ACT's Framework, commit acts of slow violence effected by the growing neoliberal mindset that seeks to control and thereby harm young bodies. Such neoliberal practices effectively colonize the embodied identities of those subjected to the Framework, and it is crucial for us as teachers and subject matter experts to push back against this active management and colonization by learning about, bearing witness to, and intervening in these violent practices. Witnessing involves recognizing violences, intervening in the acts of violences, and ameliorating the effects and impacts of violences. It requires illuminating while fulfilling all those responsibilities.

With this goal in mind, in this chapter I discuss ACT's Framework in relation to my argument. In response to these types of violent assessment practices, I proceed through this chapter in the following manner: First, I discuss ACT's Framework. Then, before analyzing the Framework as an enactment of slow violence, I discuss a key factor: neoliberalism and neoliberal assessment practices as an arm of colonialism. Next, I demonstrate those practices and describe the harm that they cause. Finally, I expand upon my own call to change our violent neoliberal assessment practices and to use nonviolent assessment methods in all our pedagogies.

WHAT EXACTLY IS ACT'S FRAMEWORK?

ACT's Framework is a suite of assessments designed to chart and quantify qualitative data about individuals from kindergarten through their time in the workforce, marking bodies relevant to a prescribed version of "success" and "potential" from an early age and then following them until retirement. The aggregated behavioral data are purported to predict academic performance, career readiness, and proclivity to become useful (i.e., profitable) employees. Introduced in 2014, ACT's Framework was designed "to provide a more holistic and integrated picture of education and work readiness from kindergarten to career" (Camara et. al. 3). Marketed to K-12 educators, parents, and corporations, this suite of assessments attempts to connect measurable results to social emotional and psychosocial behavioral characteristics to mark one's propensity for college and career success. Organized into four domains—core academic skills, cross-cutting capabilities, behavioral skills, and education and career navigation skills—the Framework combines preexisting and newly created cognitive and noncognitive assessments to evaluate and "articulate what students need to know and be able to do at numerous points along the K–Career continuum" (3).

In a 2015 ACT Research Report, Wayne Camara, Ryan O'Connor, Krista Mattern, and Mary Ann Hanson focused our attention on the job tasked to ACT's Holistic Framework of Education and Workplace Readiness. Discussing this Framework through the examples of ACT's WorkKeys Suite and Engage, amongst other suites of assessments, the authors explain that the Framework features "assessments, curriculum, and skill profiles that build and measure essential workplace skills." Like ACT WorkKeys Talent, an "assessment to measure behaviors and attitudes related to important workplace outcomes," and ACT Engage,⁴⁶ "a measure of a student's level of motivation, social engagement, self-regulation" (6), these assessments identify "at-risk" students who may benefit from (profitable) interventions to support them throughout their education and beyond. Attempting to justify this charting and tracking of bodies, Camara et al., on behalf of ACT, give the following explanation:

The Framework describes what individuals need to know and be able to do to be successful. A hierarchical taxonomy within each broad domain organizes the more specific dimensions and the knowledge and skills and provides a common language for describing the precursors of success. The focus is ultimately on knowledge, behaviors, and skills because these are amenable to change. (9)

Based on a set of standards developed by ACT, and through the performance of neoliberalism within a colonial agenda, normativity is evaluated subjectively and prescribed as a precursor to a neoliberal sense of academic and career preparedness and success. As in all colonial endeavors, these standards are both articulated and assessed by those in positions of power and privilege. In this case, the standards being evaluated are explained, perhaps unsatisfyingly, by Camara and his colleagues:

⁴⁶ ACT Engage, a social emotional learning assessment, has recently (2017) been rebranded ACT Tessera. I will refer to it as ACT Engage since the reports referenced use that name.

Ideally, we prefer to develop standards through an analysis of actual—not expected—student performance. Unfortunately, such empirical data do not currently exist for many of the constructs of interest; therefore, the approach we have taken is to establish a set of standards linked by hypothesized learning progressions that can then be validated empirically. (63)

This moment of clarification—where the authors admit that the arbitrary standards by which bodies are evaluated, marked, and (potentially) othered are being established (through hypothesis rather than based on any actual analysis of performance) by a testing agency (that has a vested interest in articulating standards which reify their privileged position as arbiter of knowledge)—is offered in service to neoliberal market “sensibilities” rather than serving those being assessed.

In trying to establish neoliberal behavioral values in the interest of predicting potentiality for success, social/emotional behavioral characteristics—carefulness, cooperation, creativity, discipline, goodwill, influence, optimism, order, savvy, sociability, stability, and striving—are evaluated to identify and weaponize “normativity” and to quantify bodies with the goal of “amending” them in relation to their speculative, hypothesized, normative expectations and assumptions. These behavioral skills domains are subjective, often gendered, and racialized character evaluations, shaped by histories of colonization and domination. Positioned as the “selling points” that ACT touts as predictive of patterns of success, standardized assessments to indicate such qualities as acting honestly, getting along with others, keeping an open mind, maintaining composure, socializing with others, and sustaining effort are set up as straw men in ACT’s argument to draw attention away from the incendiary violences inflicted on bodies by assessments of normalization. Furthermore—as Camara et al. explained—incorporating these biased non-cognitive behavioral assessments further entrenches expectations for self-regulatory behavior. Acted upon by these assessments as early as grade school, this violent Framework works to codify behavior from a young age.

NEOLIBERALISM ENACTS VIOLENCES

Although I touch on neoliberalism and its relationship to violence in the previous section, I begin now to discuss that relationship in more detail. To do so, I want to first clarify how I'm using the term "neoliberalism." My understanding draws on scholarship by Chandra Mohanty, Cathy Chaput, Rebecca Dingo, and Valentina Capurri, who explain how neoliberalism governs bodies and manages everyday activities through specific practices tasked with intervening in lives and impacting bodies. According to Chaput, it "functions through a series of political and cultural interventions designed to implement competition as an economic rationality that counters purportedly irrational social practices" (4). Dingo clearly articulates the reach of neoliberalism from capitalist-market logic to infiltration into all facets of life, explaining that "the *ideology* of neoliberalism trickles into our everyday lived experiences and manifests within particular values: entrepreneurship, competition, individual choice, self-interest, and self-empowerment" (10). This seepage of neoliberal ideology has informed the narrative of what it means to be a "good worker" in the neoliberal economy.

Neoliberalism is market-based governance that values consumers only if they are economically profitable; significance is assigned in relation to one's ability to support the economy. Sheri Stenberg explains in *Repurposing Composition: Feminist Interventions for a Neoliberal Age* that because of this connection between human value and economics, the "seemingly 'standard' neoliberal subject: one who is rational, competitive, autonomous, and productive" is a "decontextualized individual" (98) and "diversity is embraced so long as it is marketable, entertaining, and unproblematic" (99). Disrupting this narrative is essential and includes identifying neoliberal constructions of "valuable" bodies, engaging in witnessing as an act of recognition, and confronting the slow violences of neoliberalism.

Since scholars in violence studies examine both “the use of violence and the legitimation of that use” (Galtung, “Cultural Violence” 291), then neoliberalism fits well into this purview of study. It is, in many ways, a self-fulfilling prophecy: neoliberalism enacts a slow structural violence, covertly setting up scenes of inequality that privilege some through the facade of “choice” while punishing others who have been excluded. These violences occur when evaluations of inferiority impact both financial sustainability (like being hired for a job) and access to education and fiscal opportunities (like loans and grants) and classify for the purpose of determining advantage and opportunity. Through the guise of choice, systems maintain power with exclusionary practices of classification and categorization that materialize through neoliberal assessment.

Neoliberalism is one vivid occurrence of colonization, one that makes visible the slow violences of colonization and assessment. The violences carried out through neoliberal assessment practices are particularly evident in ACT’s Framework of classification. Although seldom viewed as violence, classification categorizes with intent; through classification, power is consolidated as “the other” is named (Dolmage *Disability*, “Writing;” Gould; Tuhiwai Smith). Classifying—the entire project of the Framework—can be understood as one way of acting out the slow violences of assessment’s neoliberal colonial agenda. By prescribing valued behavioral characteristics—and by purportedly measuring the extent to which an individual embodies these valued identities, locating these bodies on a continuum of potentiality for success, and then disclosing this information to potential future employers—the neoliberal assessment practices carried out through ACT’s Framework rely heavily upon systems of de-contextualized evaluation and classification and provide but one example of assessment as slow violence.

NEOLIBERAL SLOW VIOLENCES AND THE EDUCATIONAL TESTING INDUSTRY

With the above understanding of neoliberalism in mind, I turn now to discussing its connection to the classification schemes inherent to the ACT Framework and the testing industry more broadly. Understanding how such assessments enact neoliberal slow violences provides the necessary context for my next section, where I rhetorically analyze specific parts of the ACT Framework.

We are subjected to an arc of being normed our entire lives. It starts early. When easily categorized and processed bits and bytes drive industry (like the testing industry), then quantification supports its neoliberal machine; and the system compels participators to assign value to bodies (and categorize that value) from a very young age. In service of these goals, educational testing and tracking begin almost immediately. Unfortunately, early assessments have negative lifelong consequences for many. And in priming students and parents early on to accept decontextualized methods, inattentive one-size-fits-all engagement, hierarchical comparison, and classification with consequence, these evaluations are used to colonize and govern bodies. But the testing industry is not dissuaded by arguments from pedagogues like myself who point to the damage done by these assessments, and instead pushes to test (with consequence) so as to begin accumulating data on individuals as early as possible.

The exigency for this management, then, is that bodies who can be predicted are more effectively governed. So, assessment is authorized early to identify non-normative behaviors and to begin work on amending them, leading to plans (with lasting imprints) for all bodies being evaluated. With this pejorative intent, the testing industry's grip on gatekeeping assessments (with all its problematic impacts and consequences) loses sight of big picture issues at all levels of evaluation. Rather, assessment conditions bodies to be invested in a model of "subjective

outsider evaluation” from an early age. And since we are disciplined across our entire lives to accept these violences, there is a mutually reinforced understanding—across generations—that these predictions of (ab)normality are acceptable.

This industry-wide hyper focus on data collection—and developing quantifiable equation for achievement—fuels the testing industry and serves as their model of normativity. From this decontextualized process of classification, embodied differentiators between kids and development are prescribed as we are conditioned to believe that kids should act/control themselves/respond in specific ways, which are (supposedly) indicators of future behavior, potential, and success—setting up the conditions for surveillance and longitudinal tracking to happen, existing conditions that are accepted individually and societally.

Other than the testing industry and its executives leading this surveillance effort, no one feels empowered by these standardized assessments—not the students, not the teachers, not the parents. While many feel that it’s wrong, for various reasons they often still participate in some ways. So then, if we are all complicit, then who failed? Well, power operates in a way that’s circulatory and self-fulfilling. This said, the system in place will never consider accountability or accept fault because to do so would threaten its influence, power, and capacity to act directly on bodies with violence and impropriety. Systems of colonization such as this engage violently with dissent, because too much is at stake if circumstances change. Instead, they exist to determine the contours of “normal” and uphold the colonizer’s asserted status quo. The earlier the testing industry is able to begin aggregating data on individual students, the sooner they can classify and categorize them. By accepting these classifications, and by choosing not to advocate for change, all parties become complicit in furthering power’s reach and entrenchment. But recognizing complicity is not always enough to break through power’s pressure campaigns.

Within a neoliberal culture of standardization, success is uniform, and prescriptive normativity is valued. As Gallagher explains, “[w]hen education is viewed only ‘in terms of’ the market, accountability becomes a matter of providing data to feed that market. And assessment becomes the means by which those data are collected and reported” (456). In effect, the neoliberal economic obsession with measurable results and outcomes is performed in the name of gathering data for the purpose of standardization. We need to bear witness to the violences sponsored by neoliberal assessment methods and identify violent methods as such. This connection between measurable outcomes, standardized job preparedness screenings, and a neoliberal sense of success (i.e., monetary accumulation) is important for us as teachers—who have a responsibility to our students—to identify, to complicate, and to actively work in opposition to.

In the case of ACT’s Framework, the neoliberal understanding of success (accumulated wealth) drives the creation, promotion, and use of career readiness screenings (like the Framework’s suite of assessments) to identify normal (privileged positionality) and manage (colonize) those determined to be abnormal. These assessments—and subsequent tracking—reduce test takers to quantifiable and measurable attributes that can be hierarchically categorized in relation to potential for success in the neoliberal economy. The impacts and violences of categorization are extensive, in this case potentially marking bodies for most of their lives. It is through neoliberal assessment practices, like ACT’s Framework, that quantifying ability and potential becomes big business.

A DECOLONIAL RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF DOMAINS, COMPONENTS, AND SUBCOMPONENTS IN ACT’S NEOLIBERAL BEHAVIORAL FRAMEWORK

Though the Framework includes a variety of assessments developed to measure and remediate students’ social/emotional behaviors and skills, for the purposes of this chapter, I will focus on ACT WorkKeys Suite and ACT Engage⁴⁷. Through these assessments, the Framework shapes itself in response to a neoliberal exigency, participating in violences in the process. This evaluation requires a format. A report included in the 2017 ACT Research Report Series explains the format:

The highest level contains broad domains of personality. The following and more detailed level contains components, or “facets.” Next...are the subcomponents. The final and most specific level of the Behavioral Skills framework is composed of Performance Level Descriptors, which are specific observable behaviors that can lead to success in applied settings. (Colbow et al. 1-2)

The visuals that follow (Figure 1 and Figure 2)—the Domains, Components, and Subcomponents of the ACT Behavioral Framework—were included in the report as a visual depiction of the Framework.

⁴⁷ I choose to focus on ACT WorkKeys Suite and ACT Engage due to their early implementation (beginning in grade school) and their claims to establish and evaluate social-emotional learning characteristics.

Domains	Components	Subcomponents
Acting Honestly (Honesty-Humility) Describes the extent to which a person values and adheres to ethical and moral standards of behavior, as well as personal level of humility	Genuineness Being sincere and truthful in interactions, appropriately giving others credit, and acknowledging his or her mistakes	Truthfulness Acceptance of Responsibility
	Fairness^a Acting in ways that are intended to be unbiased and fair to everyone	Fairness
	Modesty^a Being humble about achievements, presenting a realistic view of himself or herself, and avoiding boasting or acting superior to others	Modesty
Keeping an Open Mind (Openness to Experience) Describes a person's level of open-mindedness and curiosity about a variety of ideas, beliefs, people, and experiences	Creativity Generating original ideas, using existing ideas or things in new ways, and having an active imagination	Originality Active Imagination
	Curiosity Seeking out information to better understand a wide range of topic areas and/or obtaining a depth of understanding in one topic area that goes beyond what is required	Information Seeking Depth of Knowledge
	Flexibility Adapting to new environments and making adjustments to accommodate changes	Environmental Adaptability Accommodation
	Accepting Differences Being open-minded and accepting of ideas, cultures, and ways of doing things that are different from his or her own	Open-mindedness Embracing Diversity
Maintaining Composure (Emotionality) Describes the extent to which a person is relatively calm, serene, and able to manage emotions effectively	Stress Tolerance The degree to which a person can control feelings of anxiety and other negative emotions in order to function effectively in a range of situations	Worry Management Negative Feeling Management
	Self-Confidence A tendency to be self-assured and to make decisions without needing a lot of input from others	Decisiveness Independence
Socializing with Others (Extraversion) Describes a person's preferred level of social interaction, behavior in interpersonal situations, and optimism	Assertiveness Influencing others and preferring to be in charge in social interactions and group activities	Taking Charge Influence
	Optimism The degree to which a person expresses a positive mood and a positive outlook	Cheerful Mood Positive Outlook
	Sociability Seeking out and enjoying situations involving interpersonal interaction and building relationships with others	Interacting with Others Networking

Figure 1: Domains, Components, and Subcomponents of the ACT Behavioral Framework

(Camara et. al 32)

Domains	Components	Subcomponents
Getting Along with Others (Agreeableness) Describes the extent to which a person interacts positively and cooperates with others, and is generally kind, friendly, and tactful	Cooperation Being respectful, polite, collaborative, and skilled at working through conflict with other people	Respect for Others
		Collaboration
		Conflict Management
	Perspective Taking Identifying, acknowledging, and understanding the emotions of others, showing concern for others, and considering the audience when providing information	Interpreting Emotional Reactions
		Showing Concern
		Considering the Audience
	Goodwill Assuming others have good intentions, trusting others, being able to forgive and not holding grudges	Forgiveness
		Trust
	Helpfulness Helping others and being generous with his or her time and/or resources despite personal cost	Assisting Others
		Selflessness
Patience Tolerating frustrations presented by others or by situations without expressing irritation or hostility	Tolerating Frustrations with Others	
	Tolerating Situational Frustrations	
Sustaining Effort (Conscientiousness) Describes a person's level of diligence, effort, organization, self-control, and compliance.	Dependability Reliably fulfilling responsibilities, meeting deadlines, and producing quality work	Timeliness
		Follow Through
		Quality
	Order Planning and organizing tasks and materials, creating schedules, monitoring progress, and paying close attention to details	Organization
		Planning
		Monitoring
	Persistence Working hard, making progress on relevant tasks, and maintaining focus despite setbacks or difficulties	Overcoming Challenges
		Maintaining Effort
		Focusing
	Rule Consciousness Following rules and procedures and complying with authority	Compliance
		Respect for Rules/Authority
	Goal Striving Setting challenging goals, doing tasks without being told, and working to improve or learn new skills	Self-Improvement
		Initiative
		Goal Setting
Self-Control Managing impulses and weighing the consequences of one's behavior before acting	Restraint	
	Thinking Before Acting	

Figure 2: Domains, Components, and Subcomponents of the ACT Behavioral Framework (Camara, 33)

Though normativity is asserted, and success is predicted by evaluating the social/emotional behavioral characteristics/identities ACT has hypothesized about, the “subcomponents” category does a great deal of this rhetorical work by offering a list of things that one *is not* if they should be assessed poorly on one of the behavioral characteristics (located

in the components category) being evaluated. For example, in the “Getting Along with Others” domain, “Helpfulness”— defined as “helping others and being generous with his or her time and/or resources despite personal cost”— is listed as a normative behavioral characteristic required for success. Based on the inverse relationship set up by this chart, being poorly evaluated in this category means that the individual is both selfish and uncooperative. By setting up this inverse relationship, the Framework prescribes a sort of violent normativity in which the test taker feels more and more to blame as they are evaluated as less and less successful. In addition, the focus on sacrifice “despite personal cost” is foundational to both enactments of colonization and structural violence—placing the responsibility on the individual rather than on the system—while framing helpfulness in relation to sharing resources monetizes contributions which reflects the neoliberal focus on economics.

Another example is in “Maintaining Composure.” In this domain, “Stress Tolerance”— defined as “the degree to which a person can control feelings of anxiety and other negative emotions in order to function effectively in a range of situations”—is identified by ACT’s Framework as normative behavior required to be successful. Again, the subjective duty of determining what it means to “control feelings” in order to “function effectively” falls on the testing company’s algorithm’s determination of success and achievement rather than on the real teachers interacting with the real students being unnecessarily assessed. Also, after looking at the subcomponents for this domain—worry management and negative feeling management—I am even more concerned that students’ mental health is being assessed and litigated by non-mental health professionals while negatively impacting students’ mental health with such assessments. Not only does administering these assessments have the potential to have a negative impact, articulating inverse relationships between performance on a standardized test and ones’ ability to

“control feelings” of anxiety and stress to “function effectively” sets up a spurious correlation. A correlation that can do great damage to someone experiencing and/or working to mitigate and manage anxiety, negative feelings, and trauma. Unfortunately, this reality remains unconsidered by testing companies focused on marking those with their corporate designed and developed standard of success.

So, if neoliberalism is all about governmentality through market-based logic, then there is an enormous stake in determining which individuals will be the most desired contributors to participate in and bolster the economy. And ACT’s Framework serves a neoliberal colonialist agenda of conformity and control to identify and achieve economic viability articulated in terms of its concept of success. For example, consider the domain of “Sustaining Effort.” The subcomponents assessed to determine capacity for successful sustainability of effort include compliance, restraint, and monitoring.

Establishing a parallel relationship between success and compliance, success and restraint, and success and monitoring works to locate bodies that will accept, as a function of the norm, governmentality. Like colonization, this established relationship is sneaky and covert but enacts violence on bodies assessed as deficient in compliance, restraint, and self-monitoring (in the neoliberal sense). For example, if incorrect (or less correct) answers are given to the questions posed to determine to what degree an individual is compliant, restrained, and self-regulated, then an evaluation of “less likely to be successful” will be made. Especially as their future professors, it is of great import to keep in mind the lifelong consequences of such assessments for the being of students and in support of their learning and self-awareness, regardless of the standards perpetuated by violences of normativity.

THROUGH ASSESSMENTS OF NORMALITY, ACT'S FRAMEWORK IMPOSES VIOLENT SANCTIONS ON STUDENTS

When measurements are amassed, as through ACT's Framework, bodies can be tracked and classified indefinitely. And, because of these assessments, individuals can lose access to a variety of opportunities. Establishing normative standards/characteristics for success is justified when identifying those in need of support (or amendment) to be more successful, or as a tool that can be used to boost corporate productivity by locating and marking workers destined for success. At a base level, these assessments inflict harm and enact slow violences difficult for non-victims to understand the damage until it has been done.

Most often violence is blamed on the one being subjected to it, rather than with the system where it belongs. And, in marking out and marginalizing, violences impact those being assessed, as the burden to fit in is placed on "non-normative" bodies. This neoliberal enactment of power, where "normalcy is used to control bodies" in relation to the results of these assessments and assessment practices, such as ACT's Framework, "marks out and marginalizes those bodies and minds that do not conform" (Dolmage, "Writing Against Normal" 110). Because access to opportunity is most often determined by privilege, violence is often obscured by systemic pressures to overlook it. And when a structural violence like the one just described occurs—where value, potential, and success are evaluated through neoliberal assessment practices—the burden "lies on individuals to acclimate to the existing structures of the institution" (Stenberg 99). These violences are imposed through neoliberal discourses that "have us believe that individuals, not values or structures, are in need of change" and furthermore that "individuals are best served by acclimation to a more standard mode of being and doing" (Stenberg 102). When bodies are evaluated in relation to neoliberal values—as they are in ACT's suite of evaluative

tools—then assessments become both the means and ways by which systemic values are upheld and served. This narrative of normativity—maintained throughout neoliberal discourse—pushes bodies to adapt to violent systems to maintain systemic power and privilege.

In thinking about educational systems, and the acclimation coerced/forced upon bodies by ACT's Framework, individuals are targeted without their embodiment or embodied experiences ever considered. When success (a monetized neoliberal value) is articulated as a goal to be adopted and maintained, one that can (and should) be evaluated (through the means of a standardized assessment) to reaffirm one's ability (or to locate the lack of ability) to contribute (economically) to the system (of neoliberal capitalism) in place, it is decontextualized and weaponized to serve the interests of others rather than self. In these common scenarios, individuals are pressured to adapt to violent (in terms of the potential negative impacts) assessment practices (like the Framework) so as to (possibly) be assessed as normal which, in turn, publicly affirms one's potential to appropriately (normatively) participate in (maintain) the system.

This is precisely how neoliberal assessment practices, as demonstrated through this Framework, impact the students we work with, the programs we work in, and the corporate values that direct the institutions we work at. In the September 2016 issue of *College Composition and Communication*, editor Jonathan Alexander critiques the neoliberal model for education and reminds practitioners in the field to “consider the dominant cultural sponsorship of literacy, reading, and writing as skills needed for ‘success’—and even survival—in school, on the job, and in one's career” (5) while warning of the “growing complicity of corporations and educational systems in sponsoring education primarily, if not exclusively, as job prep” (6). This hyper-focus on education as job prep for career success is clearly evidenced in the neoliberal

model for education, one that many of us participate in. In this model education has only one purpose: “to prepare the future workforce and bolster the economy” (Stenberg 8). And only one measurement: return on investment.

FINAL REFLECTIONS ON DECOLONIAL ENGAGEMENT WITH NEOLIBERAL ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

As discussed throughout this dissertation, violence is not just common to neoliberalism, but to all colonizing assessment practices. Through my discussion of ACT’s Framework in this chapter, I have been able to focus my larger focus on neoliberalism’s relationship with assessment. This is of particular import since neoliberal-endorsed assessment practices introduce violences that impact the students that we work with, particularly those that are multiply marginalized. And, since assessment practices writ large are implicated in this critique of colonizing methods, I continue to make the call to analyze—carefully, critically, and compassionately—the assessment methodologies, methods, and approaches that we use in our own classrooms as one way to identify colonial assessment methods in our own purview, and to engage in decolonial analysis as we conceptualize pedagogies that respect and uphold *all* students.

Neoliberal assessment practices need decolonized. At the beginning of the chapter, I posited neoliberal assessment practices inflict layered violences on those being assessed. And I contended that it is our responsibility as pedagogues in our fields to recognize and redress it. As illuminated by this chapter, such practices code bodies—by marking them, ascribing their value, and assigning subjective meaning through methods of quantification and location on a continuum of normativity—and, in doing so, propose a monolithic experience promulgating essentialism

and universalization. As we understand, colonial assessment practices prescribe, substantiate and perpetuate a cycle of violent normativity that requires decolonization (Gomes).

So then, in response, advocating for non-stigmatized acknowledgement of non-normative bodies and experiences means arguing against culturally determined bodies and the othering process that makes this determination possible; it means arguing for the multiplicity of embodied realities and experiences. But how can this be reframed in a way that's more relevant in circulating conversations about assessment? Banks and his colleagues, alongside Asao Inoue and Mya Poe, posit rethinking assessment as social justice. If, in recognizing violent assessment practices and utilizing non-violent methods, we can diminish the reach of violences and reduce their further impact and material consequences on our students, then as compositionists, rhetoricians, and technical communication pedagogues committed to social justice, we should bear witness to and disrupt these violences.

This witnessing can be done in a variety of ways modeled in this chapter: performing rhetorical analyses of slow violences present in neoliberal assessment practices in an attempt to direct attention to some of the ways that constructions and evaluations of abnormality do violences to those being assessed; and also, as a response to calls made by Banks et al., Inoue and Poe, and Gomes's for assessment to be considered in terms of social justice. Though ACT's Framework isn't classroom teaching, it impacts it in significant ways. And the responsibility for "success" and "achievement" —as articulated and determined by educational testing companies—is placed on teachers and local administrators, though there is nothing localized about the assessments being created, sold, and administered. As rhetoricians, compositionists, and technical communicators we must respond by getting more involved at all levels. We need to become more involved in issues of national educational policy as policy makers, policy advisors,

and scholars focused on educational policy rhetorics and their real-life consequences and impacts. And although the problem of the Framework itself remains, as decolonial pedagogues we have the skills and responsibility to develop nonviolent and anticolonial/decolonial assessment practices. Prescribing and coding do exist as violences of neoliberalism, yet decolonial engagement with assessment practices, such as those discussed in Chapters III and IV—practices that involve conceptualizing, articulating, and utilizing assessment methods that contextualize, situate, and elucidate rather than prescriptively assign meaning—also exist. Engaging such practices in our classrooms can acknowledge and help repair some of the damage done to students by the educational testing industry.

Decolonial engagement impacts how one writes and reads, which narratives they amplify, the methods they conceptualize, the curriculum they design, the pedagogy they practice, the assessment practices they utilize and problematize, and which sites become the focus for decolonial disruption. Specifically, I understand this work that I engage in throughout this chapter as the work of illumination; work that emerges from my commitments to decolonization and to altering the colonialist orientation within which neoliberal assessment practices damage so many.

As scholars and teachers in the fields of rhetoric, composition, and technical communication studies, we need to be asking:

- Whose agenda is served by these evaluations of potential, and through what means do they gain velocity?
- What neoliberal values are reflected in these assessments and whose bodies are—and are not—privileged through the sanctioning of these values?

- What are the consequences—the violences—resulting from the circulation of the results of these assessments, especially as they are accumulated over a long period of time?

In asking these questions we are pushed to consider embodied identities more closely, understanding that they are shaped by a multitude of different realities and experiences and impacted by a variety of cultural and belief systems.

To mitigate the impact of slow violences and engage in decolonization, we must reimagine our fields, our academic institutions, and our pedagogical commitments through the use of decolonial methodologies, pedagogies, and practices. Building off this discussion, in the next and final chapter I will discuss my post-dissertation research trajectory. Additionally, I will detail the Decolonial Toolkit for Assessment that I designed.

CHAPTER VI: EVERYDAY PEDAGOGICAL JOURNALING

I grew up in a home filled with love . . . and reminders. My mother—a now retired second grade teacher—was (and still is) a master at encouraging learners (of all kinds): to take a minute and get their plan of approach made; to (learn how to) use the resources (literally) at hand to create a space generative for their own contextualized learning; to recognize *this all* as learning—from its inception and plan through its occurrence and development and on to its impacts and implications. And post-it notes; Mom’s also a master of post-it notes.

I realize now that all this hyper-focus on process is what shaped my interest as well as my understanding of its immense value. And how, for always, I have appreciated and honored the significance of individualized and differentiated approaches to learning from what my mother modeled—and still does. As I reflect on my mom’s pedagogy—especially on the ways that she creates and holds space for students—I connect with the importance of reflecting on pedagogy; on mine and on others’. In engaging these reflective practices, I more fully recognize the value (and variety) of the everyday (pedagogical) journaling I engage as decolonial practice.

But why now? What does this story, and marginalia in general, have to do with my larger project and methodology? Actually, it has everything to do with it. This story is about finding a way to understand the world and ourselves more. It’s about understanding our own context clues and paying close attention to the context clues of others, so as to be empathetic and positioned to work in coalition with others more vulnerable than ourselves. This story is about how we can—and should—shape our pedagogical practices (in all spaces and places) in ways that are contextualized, and anticolonial, and nonviolent. And how to engage in simple self-assessment practices.

This final chapter discusses some implications of this dissertation and proposes future work. I circle back to my decolonial methodology and discuss implications for rhetoric, composition, and technical communications studies in recognizing value and lessons in everyday pedagogical journaling, while giving examples of my favorite kind of journaling—marginalia. I then discuss three specific examples of mentorship through marginalia. Next, I discuss the Decolonial Assessment Toolkit and its questions to consider. Finally, I make a call for future research that could emerge from this project—for myself and our fields—as we engage and consider future decolonial pedagogy alongside assessment research and praxis.

MARGINALIA: PEDAGOGICAL POST-IT NOTES

I give myself textual reminders throughout my lived roles as a planner (on schedules and in reminders written all over), as a reader (for research, for instruction, for pure enjoyment), and as a teacher (as curriculum designer and feedback giver). Throughout my everyday life, in so many ways, I manage and synthesize reminders and notations. But as far as my thoughts and musings go, the real information is found in the margins.

Simply put, marginalia includes all marks made in the margins of a text. It's kind of like talking to myself (which I do a lot of), or leaving myself post-it notes reminders (which I also do a lot of. Thanks, Mom). Part life practice turned pedagogical practice—and all parts processing and synthesis—marginalia is the way that I think through complexities. It's like a processing post-it note: it helps me to visualize and explain as I organize and self-code and decode. Marginalia is about talking to (and back to) myself, or an author, or to other assumed audience members, or to general assholes. And it's the marginalia that directs my reading and writing processes. The notes I make in the margins give insight into—sometimes explicitly

articulating—the ways I react and understand, my approach to teaching and the pedagogical and methodological commitments my processes honors.

Pedagogical marginalia has been modeled for me through their feminist ethics of care by my three primary feminist mentors—Drs. Angela M. Haas, Julie Jung, and Elise Verzosa Hurley—in three very different ways. In the subsections that follow, I briefly describe an interaction with each of the three, and its impact on me.

JULIE: CONTENT FOOTNOTES

During a particularly difficult period of writing—while I was completing my comprehensive exams—one of my mentors and dissertation chairs, Dr. Julie Jung, taught me about content footnotes. She explained them as a removal strategy—of which I needed one that worked—and as a method to use in lieu of my preferred “rabbit hole” way of processing, which only leads to another thing to look up which then leads to another. I needed to stop, but I was having a hard time setting and maintaining those boundaries. So, Julie taught me this strategy to use when I felt compelled to write and research to an excess that distracts from the actual work at hand. I simply write enough to feel satisfied that I will remember my train of thought, and then I footnote the content. Later on, I can go back through and remove them and put them into my “further research” or “future projects” or “think more about this” folders. By teaching me these content footnotes and about this kind of marginalia, Julie taught and modeled pedagogical self-decoding by modeling self-restraint through editing. She reminded me that I was the one who should edit my work and not leave it to others—because in outsourcing that decision-making I am turning over some of my power—and she helped me to create space for my processing process and encouraged me to hold that space in nonviolent ways that felt satisfying.

ELISE: JOB MATERIAL CHARCUTERIE

Two of my friends (and cohort members) and I were nervous about the prospective job market, and feeling very unprepared. Dr. Elise Verzosa Hurley, one of my mentors and dissertation committee members, invited the three of us over for a job material workshop. She fed us iced tea and charcuterie and went over all of her job market information while explaining her process in detail. From her individual job materials to her color coded spreadsheets, and from our discussions to my shorthand in the margins of my teaching philosophy, Elise taught and modeled a pedagogical organization through her understanding of context that provided assurance and bolstered our determination. She reminded us about the inherent value of a process, and explained the logistics, encouraging us to create and hold space for work and writing and life throughout the entire experience, explaining it as vital.

ANGELA: PEDAGOGICAL PROCESSES

I took ENG 452 with Dr. Angela Haas.⁴⁸ Through her teaching about teaching, and specifically through her marginalia comments on my teaching materials, Angela taught and modeled pedagogical care through her contextualized feedback, most often trailing from the front margins to the open back page. She reminded me about (un)realistic structural and systemic expectations that exist and held space for me to articulate my own. Angela encouraged me to think deeply through the questions I ask myself about my teaching processes, and then

⁴⁸ ENG 452: The Teaching of Technical Writing. From the Illinois State University course catalog (2022), this graduate-level course is an “[i]nquiry into the issues, methods and resources involved in teaching technical writing at the college level.”

encouraged me to create methods and to use just practice that addresses changes I acknowledge must be made.

Angela, Elise, and Julie's examples—of intentional mentorship and ethical models of pedagogical practice—have compelled and encouraged me to create socially-responsible and just pedagogical materials, like the Decolonial Assessment Toolkit that I explain in the next section.

DECOLONIAL ASSESSMENT TOOLKIT

Pedagogically speaking, a decolonial toolkit is a guide for instructors to use when creating their courses, pedagogies, and assessment practices. It is meant to help make our courses and pedagogies safer and less violent for the most vulnerable in our classes. I created the following decolonial assessment toolkit to be a method of decolonial accountability that—through an individualized process of self-understanding—honors embodied experiences as expert knowledges. In reflecting on the questions asked and self-analyzing the honest responses we give, this process creates, uses, and holds space for everyday pedagogical journaling and acknowledges its tremendous value. These questions are not meant as simply a precursor, and are arguably more important than any assessment happening at the end of the course. Demanding self-accountability at all points, this decolonial toolkit has become a major component of my own self-assessment practices.

Being transparent is vital to doing decolonial work. So, from the methodological tenets I identify, I reflect on the following questions at the beginning of and throughout each semester:

How is this course intersectional?

How does this course hold teachers and students to bear witness to settler colonization and the violences it brings?

- How does this course disrupt settler colonial constructions of spaces and identities?

- How is decolonial reimagination interventionary in this course? Whose experiences, narratives, etc. do I amplify? Why? How?
- How can we determine what decolonial work is/has been done? What more/different decolonial work can we do that's not being done?
- How can we move toward a more active engagement of decolonial praxis? What future decolonial possibilities and revisions can we imagine?

As I plan the course, journaling often in response, I repeatedly turn to the Decolonial Assessment Toolkit questions that follow.

Created to self-assess and analyze my teaching of course content, assessment methods, and impacts on others, the following toolkit frames my approach to socially-just pedagogical responsibility and accountability. And by engaging with this toolkit throughout my course design, I continually check my approaches and privileges. As I journal in response to my course design, I can go back and respond to my toolkit interactions (through marginalia, of course). In these overlapping and intersecting checks and rechecks, self-conversations and self-disagreements, my curricular design, assessment and pedagogical practices, and reflection/praxis is interrelated. And all parts engage together to inform my future teaching and course revisions.

DECOLONIAL ASSESSMENT TOOLKIT: QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

From those five framing questions posed above, I have developed a list of specific inquiries that attempt to more deeply antagonize our own participation in coloniality and to evaluate our pedagogical practices in terms of their violent impacts.

- What impact do colonizing assessments of normal/abnormal have on the bodies being assessed?
- What violence is being done to bodies being assessed?

- What bodies aren't being assessed and why?
- What are these assessments being used for?
- What data is aggregated, over what time period, for what purpose, to serve whose interests?
- What preconceived assumptions have been made about the bodies being assessed?
- What's at stake for the assessor, the assessee, and those accessing assessment results?
- Which bodies are expected to assume the most risk? To whom is the most risk delegated?
- What material effects could/do assessments have on bodies?
- How does one's proximity to privilege impact these assessments?
- What makes an assessment methodology, method, or practice socially-just or unjust?
- What nonviolent assessment methods can be used?
- Whose bodies are most vulnerable and how can they be protected?
- What kinds of systemic changes need to be made?
- What should we be asking in the field to support and engage decolonial assessment work?
- What is assessment's dominant narrative in the field? How can this narrative be disrupted?
- In this application, what is assessment's antenarrative?
- What kind of decolonial intersectional coalitional work could happen that isn't already?

WHERE TO FROM HERE?

I concluded the last section by listing a bunch of questions. And included absolutely no answers. Not even a single response. And while I try to engage meaningfully with all (or at least many) of these questions as my decolonial method of self-assessment throughout planning and teaching this course—in the interest of opening trajectories for others to take up decolonial work—I will offer a tentative response to one question as both an example and a foundation from which others hopefully build. “What kind of decolonial intersectional coalitional work could happen that

isn't already?" This final question on the Toolkit list is such an important one, because it asks what work is not happening that *could*. It's about imagination's trajectory of activity.

I've been talking about decolonial intersectional and coalitional efforts throughout this dissertation, while articulating a new assessment methodology and methods that can be used to do this work in our classrooms. But specifically, what does this mean for the trajectory of my future research and practice? Knowing that I want my work to travel in a way that serves teachers, I plan to turn part of my dissertation (Chapters I-IV) into a book on decolonial assessment methodology and instructional methods. By making a plan to extend my writing process, I find it easier to let go of a project at hand. Fortunately—drawing from the bounty of content footnotes that I have accumulated throughout this years' long process—there are multiple rabbit holes left unwritten.

As should be evident by this point in my dissertation, teaching is so important to me. It has to do with how I understand my role and my value, and it's a way that I live and honor my commitments to others and myself. This said, my work and research trajectory are deeply impacted by the teaching I do, by where I'm teaching at, and by what I'm teaching to whom. As I continue to focus my attention going forward on my teaching and scholarship, my pedagogical journaling—and its accompanying marginalia—will continue to inform and drive my work and research trajectory, just as the scholars and pedagogues that have influenced my trajectories. Finally, paying forward what was given to me, I would like for my work to inspire the future work of other RCTC scholars who are interested in decolonial writing assessment. With the questions of the toolkit provided, future scholars can interrogate violences of assessment, use them to create and hold space for themselves and others, and continue to make sustainable plans

for a future of nonviolent assessment practices. By having this conversation and encouraging its continuance, I hope to make an impact on assessment in our fields.

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APPENDIX A: COURSE DOCUMENTS

Antiracist Classroom Statement

This is an antiracist classroom.

The difference between being nonracist and antiracist is ACTION. Being “not racist” is not enough. Antiracism is not just a rejection or disapproval of racism. Rather, it involves: sincere and resolute intersectional response to racism; acknowledging your own bias; identifying inequalities and disparities; actively confronting and challenging racist and xenophobic ideologies; and engaging in actionable efforts to create and support antiracist policies and objectives.

Antiracism must be practiced in all spaces and places that we meet, interact, post, and engage with each other. It is our priority to create a classroom environment that fosters and encourages questioning and critical thinking about important social issues. Throughout the semester, we will be encountering and discussing subject matter that may seem controversial to some members of our classroom community. Please keep in mind that each person’s life has been shaped by a multitude of different experiences and impacted by a variety of belief systems; let this knowledge guide you to always respond to each other with consideration and dignity. In all of our discussions, we must remain respectful of everybody in our learning community. Choose your words wisely and think through the implications of the statements that you might make and the judgment that you may pass. Though disagreements will occur—and all colleagues must be treated with respect—there are certain non-negotiables that will not be tolerated. For example, racist, sexist, xenophobic, homophobic, transphobic, and ableist microaggressions are never allowed and will be immediately addressed and sanctioned, resulting in grade reduction and possible dismissal from the course.

ENG 249 Course Journal

Course Journals – the what’s, how’s, and why’s
15% of semester grade

The reaction journal is an important component of ENG 249. Completing the assigned journaling each week is imperative for productive discussion and successful completion of this course.

The what’s...

So what is this journaling thing all about? First of all, this course is all about technical communication. By examining a variety of texts and communicative and rhetorical situations, we will consider the use and impact of these texts and the multiplicity of ways that communication happens across a variety of business groups and circumstances. In other words, there is a great deal of critical thinking going on in the course. This means that we must figure out a way to parse through the substantive content that we encounter. Reacting through a mode of journaling is a great way to begin this work.

The how’s...

Every time you are assigned a text, you will be asked to react with a series of hashtags in your digital journal in your private reaction journal channel on slack.com. And react is exactly what I want you to do. Reaction is a deeply personal response to something that one comes into contact with. Thesaurus.com gives the following synonyms for the work “react.”

acknowledge, act, answer, behave, claim, clarify, counter, defend, deny, disprove, dispute, elucidate, explain, feel, perform, plead, proceed, reply, resolve, respond, revert, backfire, boomerang, echo, function, operate, rebound, reciprocate, recoil, remark, retort, return, settle, take, work, answer back, be affected, bounce back, get back at, give a snappy comeback, give back, have a funny feeling, have vibes, talk back, work through

Let these words serve as a guide for you as you react. They can help answer the question “What does it mean to react to a reading?”

The why’s...

So why is journaling such a major part of this course? Well, I strongly believe that it is absolutely crucial to understand what you believe and why you believe it. This is easier said than done, though.

So how do you go about planning time to think about this stuff? With such busy lives and full schedules, when do we find time to schedule in thinking, considering, understanding, and reacting to the things that we encounter? This is what journaling is all about, making time to think about and react to things that we confront and experience. By reacting through the genre of the hashtag—in this case a series of hashtags—you will consider more fully what you think and why you think what you think. This is important: Your journal is comprised **ONLY** of hashtags. You **DO NOT HAVE TO SUMMARIZE THE READINGS**. In other words, **ONLY REACT WITH HASHTAGS**.

You will find that in going back through your journal reactions you will begin to understand, to a greater degree, what you value. You will begin to recognize patterns of thought and reaction as well as patterns of writing and articulating thoughts. These are incredibly significant realizations, ones that you can track throughout your life and your work.

The specifics...

The only way for this journaling space to work, though, is to write in it. Pose questions, pick apart answers, make connections, get mad—do whatever you need to do, just don't hold back on your reactions.

It is impossible to assess such a space in terms of content and rigor, so I won't even try. Instead, your journal will be evaluated on its completion...just work on it consistently and react to everything that we read and discuss.

If your work results in a complete journal you will get full credit for each entry. If you have an absent entry, you will get no credit for that entry. Entries will be evaluated on completion and will be combined when figuring your final journal grade at the end of the semester.

Assessment Rationale

I believe that the classroom should be a place and a space where students interact with an instructor committed to creating an environment that reaffirms student agency and choice, empowers students with knowledge rooted in the opportunity to be assessed fairly and values students' writing process over the products they produce.

Assessment

Decolonizing assessment is a big part of my research so I have been thinking a lot about this in relation to this course. In thinking through what this means, I have been developing assessment methods that encourage contextualization, and foreground self-knowledges gained through self-reflection and self-assessment. The opportunity to contribute and to be acknowledged, as well as to listen critically and to be critically listened to, are important components in a classroom cognizant of the coexistence of languages, literacies, and cultures while taking into consideration the different times, places, and spaces that comprise students' histories and experiences. I see the classroom as a pivotal space to reject prescriptive coding practices and, instead, as a space to envision and enact change.

Assessment – some general ideas...

- There will be journal reactions to readings. Discussion of reactions lead class discussion. This falls into “Journal” category.
- At beginning of every project, you will create a project plan
 - This is a goal sheet which includes a value (this is what I value in my writing) list, and pitfalls (things-to-avoid) list. This will become the criteria that is used to evaluate the completed project. This is a form of grading that emerges from what each individual student values.
- Self-assessment
 - Rather than instructor analysis of work, students critically evaluate their own work. Students assess their writing in terms of content, mechanics, adherence to project plan. Students determine what they value rather than being evaluated in relation to the values of another.
 - Evaluate your writing based on what you value and your project plan. Articulate your grade as it relates to the contract that you wrote
- Group projects
 - Group member will discuss each others' contributions as well as their own

Project Plan Sheet

Throughout the semester, you will each critically evaluate your own work, self-assess your own writing (in terms of content, socially-just impact, mechanics, adherence to project plan), and determine what you value instead of being evaluated in relation to the values of another.

This is a framework of self-articulated assessment. You determine what you value in your writing (mechanics as well as content) and are assessed based on your values as well as the pitfalls that you identify as things to avoid.

Project Plan Specifics

At beginning of every project, you will create a project plan.

- This is a goal sheet which includes a value (this is what I value in my writing) list, and pitfalls (things-to-avoid) list.
 - Value lists include the components that you identify as good, effective, clear, and concise writing. It indicates characteristics of the type of writing that you strive to produce. Make sure to discuss content as well as structure and mechanics.
 - Pitfalls lists include things to avoid in your writing. Make sure to consider your areas of struggle and difficulty as well as your strengths.
- This will become the framework that is used to evaluate the completed project.
- This is a form of self-grading that emerges from what each individual student values. You will be assessed based on your value list and pitfalls list.
 - Assessment includes self-assessment as well as instructor feedback.
 - All assessment is based on the project guidelines you receive and on the project plan that you articulate.

Due dates

- Project plans are to be completed immediately after the project is introduced. It is imperative that it is completed at the beginning stages of the project.

****The next page includes a genre example of a project plan. This is meant to provide guidelines, not to be replicated in terms of your own values and pitfalls.**

Project 1:

Values Section

Values Paragraph: This is a paragraph that articulates the components and characteristics that you value in your own writing/project/composition. This is more of a general articulation of that which you value in your own writing.

Values List: This list is specific to the values that you value in the writing for this specific project, so make sure to relate it to the project. It includes values paired with questions to help you assess whether or not you are adhering to those values. Now, here's an example of a Values List:

In my writing I value...

- **Honesty:** Am I writing for myself and my beliefs or for someone else?
- **Authenticity:** Am I writing from a place genuine motivation or simply parroting someone else?
- **Social justice:** Whose narratives do I center? Who do I collaborate with and what communities do my writing impact? Is my writing ethical?
- **Strength:** Do I make a compelling/cogent argument?
- **Logic:** Is my argument sound?

Pitfalls Section

Pitfalls Paragraph: This is a paragraph that articulates the components and characteristics that you identify as pitfalls in your own writing. This is more of a general articulation of the pitfalls you see emerge in your own writing.

Pitfalls List: This list is specific to the pitfalls that you value in the writing for this specific project, so make sure to relate it to the project. It includes pitfalls paired with questions to help you assess whether or not you are avoiding those pitfalls. Now, here's an example of a Pitfalls List:

In my writing/this assignment I would like to avoid...

- **Redundancy:** Am I repeating myself too often?
- **Obscurity:** Is my argument/point clear?
- **Not meeting the assignment criteria:** Three page, double spaced, twelve point font, one inch margin, paper. It will be ready for grading by the day it's due
- **Perpetuating injustice:** Whose bodies and stories do I ignore? Are there any assumptions, representations, and/or marginalizations that I participate in?

Self-Assessment

Rather than assessment being the sole responsibility of the instructor, students should take an active role in this process. In this course, self-assessment will be a means by which projects are evaluated and grades are assigned. This means that you must critically evaluate your own work and articulate a grade for your project based on collaboratively constructed criteria.

So how will this work?

At beginning of every project, you will create a project plan. This takes the form of a goal sheet and includes both value (this is what I value in my writing) lists, and pitfalls (things-to-avoid) lists. It is this value sheet, in addition to the assignment prompt provided by the instructor, that becomes the criteria that is used to evaluate the completed project. In other words, this is a form of grading that emerges from what each individual student values in addition to the parameters of the assignment as put forth by the instructor in the assignment prompt.

In this scenario, you are required to critically evaluate your own work. You assess your writing in terms of content, mechanics, adherence to project plan and assignment criteria. You determine what you value rather than being evaluated in relation to the values of another. In the case of group projects, group members will assess each other as well as themselves.

So here's the procedure that you, as a student, will follow...

- Look over your project plan. Review the values and pitfalls that you identified at the beginning of the project. Read through your portfolio and make note of both values and pitfalls. Remember, values are things that you take pride in/identify as strong in your writing while pitfalls are things to avoid in your writing.
- Look over the assignment prompt. Review the assignment criteria in terms of both content as well as formatting/design/etc that was articulated by your instructor. Read through your work and mark instances of both adhering to and diverting from this criteria.
- Evaluate each component of your project in terms of content, mechanics, and adherence to your project plan as well as to the assignment criteria.
- Articulate the grade that you think you should receive. Give specific examples, quoting from both your submitted project as well as from your project plan and the assignment prompt, of support for the grade that you have articulated. Remember, recognizing your strengths as well as your pitfalls is incredibly important.
- Compose a Self-Assessment narrative (essay) that covers all of these specifics. It should be **at least 2 pages**, double spaced.

Final journal entry

Well, you made it to the point in the semester that you will be composing your final journal entry. I hope that this journal has/is/does become a space of self-reflection and self-understanding. For this final entry, take a minute to reflect upon your writing and the work that you've done in this class and the things that you reflected on in the space of your journal and how you reacted.

Now, here's what to do from here:

- Read through all of your journal entries.
- Reflect on your reactions and responses to the texts you have read, discussions you have engaged in, and projects you have completed
- Jot notes about this and label them "What I value"
- Now, think about what you value and how it changes, evolves, strengthens, weakens, and builds critical mass.
- Write a relevant self-assessment addressing the work (intellectual labor, composing, reacting, discussing, etc.) that you have done (in the spaces of the classroom, your journal, on slack.com, etc) throughout this semester.