The Possibilities of Indigenizing Rhetorical Theory

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ABSTRACT

The field of rhetoric is dominated by Western thought shaped by predominantly white and male thinkers. This bias has limited what and who can qualify as viable subjects of inquiry within the rhetorical field. While contemporary rhetorical scholarship has expanded its scope and embraced new subjects and methods, more work should be done to challenge the hegemony of traditional rhetorical studies. I argue that Indigenous studies is an area scholars of rhetoric can engage with to continue unsettling the Western rhetorical tradition and make the discipline more inclusive by asking new questions that expand the theoretical and methodological scope of rhetoric. Conversely, the field of rhetoric could be of service to Indigenous studies by looking into the role Indigenous rhetorics play in the larger Indigenous sovereignty and decolonization project. I take theoretical inspiration from Lloyd Bitzer who argued that "rhetoric is a mode of altering reality, not by the direct application of energy to objects, but by the creation of discourse which changes reality through the mediation of thought and action" (4). I also offer some conceptual considerations in conducting rhetorical research with Indigenous peoples, which includes redefining the "rhetorical" by using an Indigenous paradigm and privileging Indigenous methodologies. Indigenizing rhetorical theory allows us to rethink our understanding of the world and reject the colonial dichotomies of the primitive and the modern, or the savage and the cultured, that have defined our knowledge systems.

Keywords: Indigenous studies, rhetoric, rhetorical theory, Indigenization, decolonization

Rhetoric as an academic discipline is skewed towards Western sensibilities. Dominant is the notion that the systematic study of rhetoric began in ancient Greece when Greek city-states were transitioning from aristocracy to democracy. These political reforms afforded citizens, albeit only native-born males, the right to participate in political affairs in public assemblies, which effectively required skills in public speaking and persuasion. This had a profound influence on the practice and instruction of rhetoric (Herrick 34-38; Brummett 6-11; Borchers and Hundley 29-33). The practice and study of rhetoric survived different time periods in European history, eventually finding its contemporary mecca in Western academia. Lipson and Binkley argued that "the western world has canonized Aristotelian/Platonic rhetoric as Rhetoric, with its sanctioned principles, goals, and conventions" (1). To say then that the Greek rhetorical tradition continues to inform rhetoric as a discipline to this day is an understatement.

The Exclusionary Legacies of Western Rhetoric

The canonization of the Greek rhetorical tradition, however, is problematic on several counts. First, it supposes that rhetoric began with the Greeks, which effectively assumes that other cultures have not developed similar and equally-complex communication systems (Lipson and Binkley 2-3; Lipson 3-5; Borchers and Hundley 237-238). Second, Greek rhetoric was clearly a response to the cultural and socio-political context of its time. It is therefore heterogeneous and situated and cannot be universalized (Mao 65; Mao et al., 249). Lastly, classical Greek rhetoric is exclusionary. It is male-centric, individualistic, and parochial, only considering public, argumentative, and persuasive discourses as the only legitimate forms of rhetoric (Foss and Griffin 2; Foss et

al. 6-7; Royster 149-150).

In his essay "Textual Recovery, Textual Discovery: Returning to Our Past, Imagining Our Future," Davis Houck discussed problems that rhetorical scholars face against a disciplinary tradition that legitimizes public address. He posited that

> … as a discipline initially grounded in Aristotle's *On Rhetoric*, for example, we for many years favored the civic address — the politically consequential speech delivered by a white male, typically well educated and upper class. At the same time, we typically overlooked speeches by women, gays and lesbians, blacks, and other ethnic minorities, speeches of only local or regional concern, and those delivered in a local, regional, or ethnic vernacular. In short, our disciplinary traditions limited the scope of speeches we thought worthy of preservation and serious study. (114)

Since speeches—and other rhetorical artifacts for that matter—of minorities have been obscured and excluded in the rhetorical canon, rhetorical scholars often must contend with problems of recovery and, more importantly, discovery. Houck defined the former as an act of confirming the existence of a text whose rhetorical value has already been deemed significant while the latter is an act involving initial judgment on the part of the scholar: "it is to argue that a heretofore unknown speech demands attention" (114). While Houck questioned the metric for importance of the discipline, the use of the term "speech" seems to reinforce the notion of rhetoric as public address.

This disciplinal privileging of the public address delivered by a politically important figure seems to present us with a contradiction. Rhetoric is often called the most humanistic discipline because it is concerned with human symbolic experiences at specific places and points in time as well as the human character (e.g., our judgments, choices, decisions, and values) articulated through language (Nichols 30; R.M. Weaver 51; Wrage 452). However, despite the expansive scope of human experience, rhetorical scholarship remained largely focused on political rhetoric, even as the traditional definition of public address had been reconceptualized to go beyond oratory and more critical methods had been adopted (Medhurst, "The History of Public Address" 47). That the human experience and condition are best studied through "great" orators proves this contradiction. While rhetoric as a humanistic study is supposed to give us insight on the human spirit and character, the human spirit and character is represented in the rhetorical canon by selected men that hail from the side of the establishment. While there have been important works that have included the rhetoric of women in the rhetorical canon (see Campbell's *Man Cannot Speak for Her*), these women still fit the label of being politically important. Biesecker argued that while these attempts at inclusion are groundbreaking, they do nothing to change the canon (141). Hence, the rhetorical tradition largely dominated by public address is exclusionary and does not provide a full picture of the highly complex and culturally diverse human existence.

In this article, I will discuss Indigenous studies as an area with which rhetorical scholars can engage. Specifically, I will discuss the contemporary directions scholarship in rhetoric have taken; the idea of rhetoric as a potential area of inquiry within the field of Indigenous studies; the possibilities of Indigenizing rhetorical theory and possible areas of inquiry; and some conceptual considerations. As a non-Indigenous researcher who is trained in an institution of

higher learning that has privileged Western ways of knowing, I bear in mind Aveling's position not to speak about what I do not know, and that being an ally "does not mean speaking for Indigenous peoples" (211). As I will discuss in this article, Indigenous research unsettles "the nexus of research-knowledge-colonialism-power" (Smith et al. 142) by recognizing Indigenous peoples as knowledge holders, affording them more control with decisions, and ensuring that research is accountable to all relationships formed.

New Rhetorics, New Subjects

Rhetoric, up to this day, is still largely equated with persuasion, which implies "a desire for control and domination, for the act of changing another establishes the power of the change agent over that other" (Foss and Griffin 15). This view of rhetoric, however, has not remained unchallenged. Rhetoric as persuasion has been interrogated by rhetorical scholars as early as the 1930s. Richards, for instance, argued against the combative nature of old rhetoric and advocated for a study of rhetoric aimed at understanding, redefining its scope to include inquiry on how context shapes meaning (3, 32-36).

Contemporary rhetorical scholars have also looked into the role of rhetoric in the social construction of reality. Burke, for instance, opined that the worlds we live in are rhetorically constructed (i.e., we use language and other symbol systems to construct our realities) (5). Fisher challenged the prevailing elitist rational world paradigm and argued that no single individual exclusively possesses the most rational knowledge ("Human Communication" 59-62). He further argued that since humans are natural storytellers, all narratives can be rational. Bormann also echoed the argument that we use rhetoric to construct our perceptions about the world, which are always subjective (400). The works of Burke, Fisher, and Bormann all reject the notion of truth as absolute. Fisher particularly noted that what we know to be true is often the truth held by selected "experts" ("Human Communication" 68). Truth, argued Scott, must therefore be viewed as contingent and knowledge as something that rhetoric creates rather than communicates (13).

Several contemporary rhetorical scholars have also begun to focus their attention on the relationship between rhetoric, power, ideology, and hegemony. This shifting emphasis was arguably crystallized in Wander's germinal essay, "The Ideological Turn in Modern Rhetorical Criticism." He ended the essay by arguing that

> An ideological turn in modern criticism reflects the existence of crisis, acknowledges the influence of established interests and the reality of alternative world-views, and commends rhetorical analyses not only of the actions implied but also of the interests represented. … What an ideological view does is to situate "good" and "right" in an historical context, the efforts of real people to create a better world. (18)

As rhetorical scholars embraced critical studies, scholarship in rhetoric has begun to be more explicitly political. For instance, McGee brought into rhetorical vocabulary the concept of ideographs or abstract terms that function as arguments, steer behaviors, and shape public perception (5). McKerrow extended this critical approach to rhetoric by proposing a theoretical perspective that he called the critique of domination. For him, rhetoric carries ideologies that "[create] and [sustain] the social practices which control the dominated" and that a critic's function is to challenge unequal social structures that are created rhetorically ("Critical Rhetoric" 92).

This shifting emphasis on theorizing rhetoric along with the new methods for criticism has resulted in the field starting to embrace new subjects. No longer confined to the great man speaking framework, studies on rhetoric and subjects of rhetorical criticism have started to include women, queer people, and non-Western peoples. Rhetorical studies have also expanded its scope to cover social movements and the non-oratorical (Medhurst, "The Contemporary Study" 497-498; McKerrow, "Research in Rhetoric" 201-205; Childers 408-409). Feminist scholars such as Karen Foss and Sonja Foss *(Women Speak: The Eloquence of Women's Lives)*, Sonja Foss and Cindy Griffin ("Beyond Persuasion: A Proposal for Invitational Rhetoric"), and Karlyn Kohrs Campbell ("The Rhetoric of Women's Liberation: An Oxymoron"; *Man Cannot Speak for Her: A Critical Study of Early Feminist Rhetoric)* have pioneered works that sought to include women's rhetoric in rhetorical history and that reconceptualized the scope and function of rhetoric to reflect differences in ways men and women communicate. Several scholars have also examined non-Western rhetorics. Specifically, Lipson and Binkley's edited works (*Rhetoric Before and Beyond the Greeks*; *Ancient Non-Greek Rhetorics*) contained essays that examine rhetoric as culturally situated and advance the argument that rhetorical practices are varied and diverse and are best understood by looking into their specific historical contexts.

The field of comparative rhetoric, popularized by George A. Kennedy in his seminal work, *Comparative Rhetoric: An Historical and Cross-Cultural Introduction*, was an attempt to look into the similarities and differences of rhetorical practices across the globe and their inherent connection to peoples' cultural values. The emergence of comparative rhetoric has challenged the long-standing, perceived universality of the Western rhetorical canons and has cemented the centrality of culture in rhetorical studies. As Lu argued,

> …culture provides the backdrop and schema for the enactment of rhetoric. Rhetoric is a means through which a culture or tradition is mirrored and manifested, and cultural traditions have great power to influence speech, modes of argument, persuasive strategies, and the use of rhetorical discourse. (34)

The field of comparative rhetoric has thus far provided a groundwork for situating rhetorical practices of non-Western cultures in their specific cultural contexts and invited scholars to understand rhetoric from an emic perspective. Yet Kennedy's work, along with the other works on comparative rhetoric it inspired, has also been met with criticisms, particularly on the premium it gives on testing whether Western rhetorical canons are applicable in non-Western contexts and on discovering Asian equivalents to Western concepts (Garrett et al. 431; Oliver 3). Comparative rhetoric then, to a large extent, still contributes to the privileging of Western notions of rhetoric. Comparative rhetoric, at least in its original conception, focuses on rhetorical traditions of different nationalities. As Hum and Lyon argued, a tradition is always "a politically motivated construct" (155); hence, the task of discovering the rhetorical tradition of a nation state effectively includes silencing non-dominant voices in multicultural, multiethnic, and multilinguistic nations like the Philippines.

Indigenous Studies, Indigenous Rhetorics

Rhetoric has been defined in a variety of ways, and this diversity has raised important questions on the future directions of the discipline. Critically reflecting on the future of the field, I take inspiration from McKerrow's words:

> It is just as important to remember the classical influences on modern theory as it is to revise judgments about its extent. It is just as critical to recover silenced voices as it is to alter the landscape in which they are placed. ("Research in Rhetoric" 207)

In our attempts to keep the discipline of rhetoric alive and healthy, we should push disciplinal boundaries by reinterpreting and revisioning what we know about rhetoric, its history, its theories, and its methods. McKerrow argued that the vitality of rhetorical studies will depend on its openness to embrace theory and methods from outside the discipline ("Research in Rhetoric" 206). An important area that rhetorical scholarship can engage with is Indigenous studies.

Indigenous studies, a relatively recent academic discipline, is an interdisciplinary field of study, one that integrates theory and methods from the social sciences (e.g., anthropology, history, and sociology, and even the humanities (e.g., literature, cultural studies) (Tarquini and Abbona 1). But what separates Indigenous studies from other disciplines is its agenda of putting the Indigenous experience at the heart of the inquiry and rejecting the traditional hierarchical binary of researcher-researched by acknowledging Indigenous peoples as knowledge holders and research partners (Smith 162-163; Sillitoe 6-14). Indigenous studies also stem from an Indigenous paradigm that employs research methods consistent with and respectful of Indigenous worldviews, knowledges, and values such as relationality and reciprocity (Weber-Pillwax 34-35; Chilisa 51-57; Held 4-8; Datta 11-12; Drawson et al. 12-15; Wilson, "Indigenous Research Methodology" 176-177).

But who exactly are Indigenous peoples? Even with attempts by intergovernmental organizations to define Indigenous peoples and what constitutes Indigeneity, no international consensus has been reached on who exactly are Indigenous peoples. Indigeneity as a concept remains, up to this day, ambivalent and contested. However, one can view this ambivalence as a recognition of the dynamic nature of Indigeneity and as a manifestation of the principle of self-determination as enshrined in landmark resolutions such as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), which maintains that "Indigenous peoples have the right to determine their own identity or membership in accordance with their customs and traditions" (24).

Several elements and themes, however, are consistently found in various definitions of Indigeneity. Among these constants is that the claim to Indigeneity necessitates communal occupation of ancestral domains since time immemorial and cultural continuity with precolonial social structures (Béteille 190; Bowen 13; Merlan 304; Sefa Dei 296-297). In the Philippines, these markers of Indigeneity have legal bases as articulated in Republic Act No. 3871, or the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act of 1997 (IPRA), which defines Indigenous Cultural Communities/Indigenous Peoples (ICC/IPs) as

> a group of people or homogenous societies identified by self-ascription and ascription by others, who have continuously lived as organized community on communally bounded and defined territory, and who have, under claims of ownership since time immemorial, occupied, possessed and utilized such territories, sharing common bonds of language, customs, traditions and other distinctive cultural traits, or who have, through resistance to political, social and cultural inroads of colonization, non-indigenous religions and

> cultures, became historically differentiated from the majority of Filipinos. ICCs/IPs shall likewise include peoples who are regarded as indigenous on account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country, at the time of conquest or colonization, or at the time of inroads of non-indigenous religions and cultures, or the establishment of present state boundaries, who retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions, but who may have been displaced from their traditional domains or who may have resettled outside their ancestral.domains. (chap. II, sec. 3)

IPRA's definition puts Indigenous peoples in the Philippines in a double bind. On the one hand, the legislation, which predates the UNDRIP by a decade, supposedly protects the rights of Indigenous peoples to their ancestral domains and promotes the integrity of their social, cultural, political, and economic systems. On the other hand, the protection the law assures is contingent on the ability of Indigenous peoples to prove their Indigeneity based on state-defined terms, which Hirtz called "bureaucratic Orientalism" (889). State definitions of Indigeneity often emphasize cultural and material aspects that affirm the popular imaginary of Indigenous peoples as people frozen in time and disregard the dynamism of Indigeneity.

It is also crucial to note that the Philippines is home to an estimated 17 million Indigenous peoples coming from more than 100 distinct ethnolinguistic groups (United Nations Office for Project Services). While an official count is unknown, a report by the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs shows that the country's Indigenous population is estimated to be between 10 and 20 percent of the 110 million national population based on the 2020 census (Mamo 269). In their country profile of the Philippines, Erni et al. noted that according to the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), around 60% of the Indigenous population are the Lumad of Mindanao, 30% are the Igorot of the Cordillera and Northern Luzon, and the 10% are smaller groups in Southern Luzon and the Visayas islands (427-428). These data show the diversity and distinctiveness of the Philippines' Indigenous peoples.

However, while aboriginality and cultural differences from the mainstream population are not necessarily contested, many scholars of Indigenous studies have argued that cultural markers are only among the many determinants of Indigeneity. For instance, Baird ("Indigeneity in Asia" 502) and Sefa Dei (296-298) argued that defining Indigenous peoples from non-settler states in Asia and Africa should also include experiences of ongoing oppression and injustice because of colonialism, both external and internal. Limiting one's view of the Indigenous as original occupants of land means succumbing to Western discourses of Indigeneity and Indigenousness (J. Weaver 227-232; Sefa Dei 296-298), and this myopic view sets the precedent for some national governments, particularly in Southeast Asia where there is no significant settler population, to claim that everyone is indigenous (Baird, "Indigeneity in Asia" 502; "Introduction" 2). The concept of Indigeneity in non-settler states is therefore much more nuanced and, to a large degree, relational and political.

In defining who Indigenous peoples are, the aboriginality argument does not apply to the Philippines. According to Reid, the groups recognized today as Indigenous peoples are not the original occupants of present-day Philippines (8). For instance, the Ifugao have occupied Cordillera for only about 4,500 years whereas the Negrito, who are nearing extinction, have been around for 50,000 years. The IPRA includes crucial

clauses that characterize Indigenous peoples as having resisted colonial cultures, resulting in differentiation from the majority of the population. So, while it is true that the Tagalog are as indigenous to the Philippines as the Ifugao, the former has fully assimilated into the contemporary nation-state and world economy whereas the latter, having retained significant aspects of their pre-colonial systems continue to experience land dispossession, development aggression, and militarization (Erni 275; Alamon 8-9; Theriault, "Unravelling the Strings" 108-109). Indigeneity in non-settler states, therefore, should be understood not through essentialist criteria but through the Indigenous peoples' relations within their communities, the mainstream population, and the larger contemporary state (Kenrick and Lewis 5; Merlan 305).

In as much as Indigeneity cannot be confined to a single, universal definition, the same can be said about rhetoric. Lunsford put forward an argument in favor of multiple rhetorics and provided a compelling rationale for a diverse and inclusive look at the discipline. According to Lunsford there are "widely varying and contrasting approaches, methodologies, scholarly styles, and individual voices" that need to be heard (7). Among such voices that have been obscured by the Western tradition are those of Indigenous peoples. Recognizing both the limitations and plurality of definitions of rhetoric in Western academia, as well as the lack of an organized body of rhetorical tradition among Indigenous peoples that is similar to Western rhetorical theory, Stromberg proposed a definition of rhetoric that can be applied in the study of Native American rhetoric: "the use of language or other forms of symbolic action to produce texts (in the broadest possible sense) that affect changes in the attitudes, beliefs, or actions of an audience" (4). As with any definition, Stromberg's definition has limitations he himself acknowledged. Yet the definition, for its admittedly Burkean undertones, is open enough to account for the various symbolic actions of Indigenous peoples. The broadness of Stromberg's definition opens a starting point for scholars of rhetoric to reimagine what a rhetorical text is within the context of Indigenous cultures, although it would be wise to also heed Hum and Lyon's caveat that such broad definitions run the risk of considering all symbolic action as rhetoric (154).

There is a dearth of literature on the rhetorics of Indigenous peoples, and most of them are about Indigenous peoples in settler states. Lake described Native American rhetoric as manifested in the Red Power Movement during the late 1960s to early 1970s, the objective of which was to call for the right to self-determination (128). The collection *American Indian Rhetorics of Survivance,* which was edited by Ernest Stromberg, contains essays on the rhetorical tradition of American Indians against the backdrop of colonialism, highlighting the Indigenous peoples' persuasive strategies against colonizers for the past three centuries. While they have not explicitly classified them as rhetorical, Indigenous scholars from North America have written about acts of survivance and resurgence that include reclaiming Indigenous lands, Indigenizing curricula, decolonizing diet, asserting the use of Indigenous languages, protesting for laws that are consistent with Indigenous values, among others (Alfred and Corntassel 612-614; Corntassel 97-99). While these works reflect an intellectual engagement in alternative readings of rhetoric as a discipline and theorize about Indigenous rhetorical traditions, they do not reflect Indigenous rhetorical practices in the Global South, especially in Asia where the concept of Indigeneity remains contested (Baird, "Indigeneity in Asia" 502; Sefa Dei 296-298). Theorizing about the rhetorical traditions of Indigenous peoples in the Philippines is more herculean given the distinctiveness of the country's different Indigenous groups

and the varied ways they communicate their Indigeneity.

Indigenous Movements as Potential Sites for Rhetorical Inquiry

According to Corntassel, "[b]eing Indigenous today means struggling to reclaim and regenerate one's relational, place-based existence by challenging the ongoing, destructive forces of colonization" through "processes of resurgence" (i.e., ways in which Indigenous peoples live their truths and resist colonial intrusions) (88). Among these acts of resurgence are movements. Griffin argued that movements begin when people feel dissatisfied with their environment and take form when they desire change and work towards changing the status quo ("The Rhetoric" 184). Throughout history, several cases had been won, landmark laws enacted, and intergovernmental resolutions passed because of Indigenous movements (Ludlow et al. 2). In the Philippines, years of struggle and movements from Indigenous peoples resulted in two significant legal frameworks: the 1987 Constitution and the IPRA, which are among the first laws in Asia to legally recognize Indigenous peoples (Hirtz 899-903). Flaws and contradictions notwithstanding, these legal frameworks are testaments to the rhetorical power of movements. Indigenous peoples of the Philippines have long been engaged in movements against oppressive groups and social structures, first from colonial rulers, and now from business and political elites and other powerful groups in the contemporary Philippine state (Alamon 8).

Here in the Philippines, transnational corporations and other big businesses encroach on Indigenous ancestral domains and displace Indigenous peoples in the name of development. According to Clarke (424), contemporary nation-states pursue development projects in the quest to be modern, reaching the point of being ethnocidal on minorities and Indigenous groups. These development and modernization projects, informed by capitalist thought and operationalized through large scale resource extraction projects, stem from the colonial dichotomies of the primitive and the modern, or the savage and the cultured. Yet modernity, for all its appeal and supposed advantages, stems from a Western worldview and an ethos of individualism. As Gomes argued, "the experience of modernity tends to be fraught with contradictions: growth and disintegration, progress and deterioration, freedom and domination, hope and despair" (42).

Indigenous peoples have always responded with opposition and dissension to these state-sanctioned injustices through mobilizations that have been suppressed through legal and violent means (Delina 5-7; Mijares; Tauli-Corpuz; Belisario). In his germinal work "The Rhetoric of Historical Movements," Griffin argued that by venturing into movement study, rhetorical scholars broaden the traditional focus of the discipline on the single speaker, thereby enriching the field by recognizing the plurality of rhetors, audiences, and contexts (188). While movement studies in rhetoric started with the study of public addresses in historical movements, it provides a general framework in approaching the study of the rhetoric of Indigenous social movements. According to Griffin, a historical movement—whether it is social, political, intellectual, religious, or economic—begins with the people's dissatisfaction with the status quo, progresses when they make efforts toward altering the situation, and ends with either success or failure ("The Rhetoric" 184). For students of rhetoric, the concern lies in persuasive discourses within a particular movement. In a later work, Griffin argued that "[t]o study a movement is to study a drama, an Act of transformation, an Act that ends in transcendence, the achievement of salvation…hence to study a movement is to study its form" ("A Dramatistic Theory" 246).

Cathcart extended Griffin's pioneering work on movement study by looking into the characteristics movements have that make them rhetorical. A movement, argued Cathcart, is confrontational ("Movements" 233). Confrontation, in this sense, is characterized as an "agonistic ritual" (i.e., one that unsettles the normative and hegemonic social structures and is committed to changing the status quo). Movements as confrontations cause "the establishment to reveal itself for what it is…The response of the establishment to confronters is to treat them as moral lepers: to isolate them and pin the anarchist label on them" (Cathcart, "Movements" 246). In a rhetorical movement, two agents are involved in the confrontation (i.e., the movement and the established system) and the end goal is not to reform but to reject the status quo and establish a new order. In a later essay, Cathcart argued that a movement can be said to have emerged "when the languaging strategies of a change-seeking collective clash with the languaging strategies of the establishment and thereby produce the perception of a group's operating outside the established social hierarchy" ("Defining Social Movements" 269).

Movements are often seen as unrhetorical (i.e., it is a negation of reason). Jensen noted that rhetorical scholars in the 1960s were faced with this dilemma in that much of the rhetoric during the time were "unrhetorical" since these use strategies that do not conform to rational argumentation (372). Examples of these include marches, performances, and even profanity. This shift resulted in several studies that interrogated social movements as rhetorical. Studies on the civil rights movement, Black Power, and women's rights, among others, have enriched the discipline's exploration of dissent (Jensen 373; McKerrow, "Research in Rhetoric" 201-203). These studies are indicators that the field of rhetoric, while still largely dominated by the study of orators and their speeches, is expanding and being self-reflexive by studying how rhetorical communication takes many forms, confronts social structures, mobilizes people, and challenges power structures.

Approaching Indigenous social movements rhetorically offers possibilities for rhetoric to contribute to Indigenous studies. We can take a theoretical grounding from Lloyd Bitzer who argued that "rhetoric is a mode of altering reality, not by the direct application of energy to objects, but by the creation of discourse which changes reality through the mediation of thought and action" (4). Indigenous movements function as assertions of Indigenous self-determination against the backdrop of extractive, development projects. Indigenous-led movements that confront the system have been instrumental in putting Indigenous issues in the public agenda, especially those related to the environment such as logging and mining, agribusinesses, and construction of dams and power plants (Delina 5; Theriault, "The Micropolitics" 1418-1419).

Indigenous movements, then, are rhetorical because they are carried forward through language and other symbol systems. They are also agonistic because they aim to change the status quo maintained by the privileged establishment. Yet Indigenous movements differ from other social movements because their rhetoric stems from Indigenous epistemologies of relationality and reciprocity and highlights their rootedness to their lands and the larger ecosystem that sustains their existence. As Simpson argued, "being tied to land also means being tied to an unwritten, unseen history of resistance" (20). The field of rhetoric could be of service to Indigenous studies by looking into the role Indigenous rhetorics, operationalized through movements, play in the larger Indigenous sovereignty and decolonization project. Conversely, Indigenous studies can also be of

service to the discipline of rhetoric by asking new questions that require new answers, expanding its theoretical and methodological scope.

Indigenizing Rhetorical Theory: Some Conceptual Considerations

It is interesting to note that in the Philippines, the project of "indigenization" that decenters Western ways of knowing began as early as the 1970s with the birth of Sikolohiyang Pilipino (Filipino Psychology), a framework based on the Filipino experience (Enriquez 61). While not rhetorical, Sikolohiyang Pilipino—which exhibits characteristics typical of indigenized research frameworks (e.g., rooted in local languages, relational, egalitarian, ethically responsible, and reciprocal)—shows us the academic engagements of the Global South that resist the hegemony of Western disciplines. The framework, however, uses the term "indigenous" as an adjective to describe the movement as originating from the Philippines and is premised on "foster[ing] national identity and consciousness" (Pe-Pua and Protacio-Marcelino 51). A similar conceptualization of a Filipino Indigenous rhetoric can be inimical to Indigenous peoples' ways of knowing since it implies a homogenous Indigenous identity, a pitfall that must be resisted in the work on Indigenous rhetorics.

I echo Scott's position that rhetoric is contingent and epistemic, for if we accept rhetoric as simply a vehicle for communicating a fixed truth, we fail to recognize the function of rhetoric to modify the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of people, implying, in effect, the homogeneity among responders to symbolic action (13). I also affirm the position of various scholars that rhetoric, being concerned with choices, decisions, and values, is the most humanistic of the disciplines. Guided by contemporary perspectives on rhetoric, particularly the role of rhetoric in the social construction of reality, the embracement of new subjects of the discipline, and an Indigenous research paradigm, I offer some conceptual considerations for doing Indigenous rhetorical research.

Indigenous Paradigm and Social Epistemology as Conceptual Foundations

When doing Indigenous rhetorical research, we must be cognizant that it should primarily be for and by Indigenous peoples and not about them. Hence, it is imperative that we use an Indigenous paradigm because it informs the ontological, epistemological, axiological, and methodological assumptions of our research. An Indigenous paradigm employs research methods consistent with Indigenous worldviews and allows for more respectful ways to conduct research with Indigenous peoples. The use of an Indigenous paradigm in research is a crucial step towards decolonization, which, according to Smith, means putting the Indigenous experience at the heart of the inquiry and treating Indigenous peoples not as curious "Others" but as knowledge-holders and co-researchers (119-122).

Indigenous rhetorics are best investigated by adopting a social epistemological approach. Fricker et al. defined social epistemology as "the interdisciplinary inquiry into the myriad ways humans socially acquire, create, construct, transmit, store, represent, revise, and review knowledge, information, belief, and judgment" (xvi). Meanwhile, Goldman characterizes it by its collective nature and its recognition that cultural groups are epistemic agents capable of producing knowledge as shaped by social forces (14-16). Doing Indigenous rhetorical research should not be about appraising the form and structure of Indigenous peoples' symbolic action, nor should it be an evaluation of the

effectiveness of their symbolic action. Rather, as an inquiry about symbolic action of Indigenous peoples, its foundations, and desired ends, one should consider how the internal worldview of Indigenous peoples and their external historical, economic, and socio-political structures come together to shape their rhetorics.

A social epistemological approach, specifically collective social epistemology, allows us to understand how these symbolic actions, which do not conform to what would conventionally be considered rhetorical, are justified and equally-valid based on Indigenous worldviews. This entails a deep understanding of the collectively-held beliefs of the Indigenous groups. The question "Are the symbolic actions they employ in their resurgence strategies consistent with their Indigenous worldviews?" may be an overarching guide in the rhetorical inquiry. We can gather insights from Lake's analysis of the Red Power movement on how integrating cultural parameters and rejecting the perspective of the dominant culture would result in better understanding Indigenous rhetorics. He argued that "failure to acknowledge this [Native American] worldview leads to the condemnation of Native American protest rhetoric" (141). A social epistemological approach in the study of Indigenous rhetorics privileges Indigenous worldviews and resists the pitfalls of Othering.

Indigenizing rhetorical theory does not aim to invalidate Western canons; rather, it aims to reject what Cushman et al. call the "colonial matrix of power" that canonized one rhetorical tradition and excluded non-dominant voices in rhetorical scholarship (2). As Indigenous philosophies are embedded in Indigenous rhetorics, which are, in turn, epistemic (Scott 13), an inquiry about Indigenous rhetorics allows us to rethink our understanding of the world and reject the colonial dichotomies of the primitive and the modern, or the savage and the cultured, that have defined our understanding of what knowledge is. A social epistemological approach in the study of Indigenous rhetoric is likewise consistent with the principle of self-determination enshrined in various resolutions and legislation worldwide.

Redefining the "Rhetorical"

I argued in the earlier sections that rhetoric as a discipline has embraced new theories, methods, and subjects. No longer confined to the study of the politically significant public addresses delivered by the great orators of history and how these speeches were structured to achieve persuasion, contemporary rhetorical scholars have adopted more explicit political positions and have interrogated the ideological function of rhetoric. In our attempt to engage Indigenous cultures and their knowledges within the discipline of rhetoric, a dramatistic view (i.e., the idea that rhetoric creates social reality) can provide an open, initial definition in the project of Indigenizing rhetorical theory. We can adopt Stromberg's definition of rhetoric as "the use of language or other forms of symbolic action to produce texts (in the broadest possible sense) that affect changes in the attitudes, beliefs, or actions of an audience" (4). I, however, take caution in using this definition as Stromberg himself recognized that the definition is largely based on the work of Kenneth Burke, himself a canonical figure in contemporary Western rhetoric.

In Indigenizing rhetorical theory, one should take rhetoric to go beyond speech and oral language and acknowledge other forms of symbolic action. Based on Stromberg's definition, I take rhetoric to mean any form of action that has meaning that is aimed at some kind of purpose. In this sense, we expand the scope of rhetoric. In

the context of social movements, these may take the form of strategies such as protest speeches, performances and rituals, and other acts of resurgence, both public and private, that are, based on Cathcart's characteristics of a social movement, confrontational and agonistic, aiming to disrupt the normative structures of the system ("Movements" 235). As I will discuss in the next section, however, Indigenous research requires power sharing. These definitions and conceptions, while broad and open, should be subjected to scrutiny by Indigenous community members.

Privileging Indigenous Methodologies

Smith argued that Indigenous peoples have an aversion to "research" given its ties with imperialism and colonialism, where the researcher occupies a position of superiority, authorized by the colonial system, that enables them to make judgments that marginalize the Other (44). Hence, Indigenous scholars, notably Kovach ("Indigenous Methodologies" 56-63), Smith (143-164), and Wilson ("Research is Ceremony" 62-79) have advocated for Indigenous methodologies that are grounded in Indigenous worldviews and consistent with the principles of self-determination and decolonization, thereby arguing for the recognition of these methodologies as valid approaches to research. Ultimately, Indigenous methodologies are empowering since these approaches put Indigenous peoples, along with their experiences, beliefs, and values, at the heart of the inquiry and see them as co-equals in the research process. Using Indigenous methodologies transforms the hierarchical power dynamics in traditional research by fostering relationships and giving the "researched" control over the decisions that were made throughout the research process. By giving the research participants actual agency in the studies about them, we develop a more authentic understanding of Indigenous rhetorics and the processes from which their rhetorics emerge.

An Indigenous methodology is "participatory, liberatory, transformative, [and] positioned in Indigenous knowledge systems" (Held 5). Hence, the purpose of research in the Indigenous paradigm is to empower and emancipate Indigenous peoples by resisting and dismantling traditional hierarchies in research through a centering of Indigenous knowledge systems and lived experiences. Kovach outlined three overarching premises of an Indigenous methodology: (1) the relational (i.e., our relationship with all life forms); (2) the collective (i.e., our responsibility and accountability to all our relations); and (3) methods (i.e., data-gathering tools consistent with relationality and collectivism) ("Emerging from the Margins" 30-32).

In the essay "Decolonizing Projects: Creating Pluriversal Possibilities in Rhetoric," Cushman et al. discussed the imagining of "pluriversality" in rhetorical scholarship, a project that aims to epistemologically delink researchers from the colonial matrix of power (2-3). The principle of pluriversality, they argued, "offers options, rather than alternatives" since the latter is an acknowledgment "that a totalized reality of rhetoric already exists; therefore alternatives to that reality are the only option for making rhetoric more representative and responsive to the lived realities of all people" (2). One of the key emphases of the essay is to advocate for a decolonial methodology in the study of Indigenous rhetorics.

Transrhetorical methodology is a decolonial method we can explore in studying Indigenous rhetorics. Developed by Rachel Jackson, a Cherokee scholar, the aim of transrhetorical methodology is "to understand rhetorical patterns and strategies of resistance occurring across Indigenous locations" (Cushman et al. 5). Jackson's

transrhetorical analysis makes use of stories, which are central in most Indigenous cultures that pass down histories, values, and knowledge systems to next generations (Welch 23; Corntassel et al. 137). Stories in Indigenous cultures, however, are characterized by their collaborative nature where the storyteller is not an all-knowing sage that simply instructs listeners; rather, the storyteller allows the listeners to determine the meanings themselves through time by fostering relationships (Welch 33; Cushman et al. 6). In this methodology, Jackson listened to stories of Indigenous peoples and did archival research on rhetorical activism across Indigenous locations to locate the similarities and differences in their rhetorics of survivance that have transcended time and space.

I see Jackson's transrhetorical methodology as a strong method that we can employ in the study of Indigenous rhetorics. We can look at Indigenous narratives as ethnographic sites that would allow us to understand how Indigenous communication works. I would like to believe that Indigenous rhetorics are distributed knowledge systems that are not confined to a single person, place, or point in time. If one wishes to contribute to the "disciplinary landscaping" (Royster 148) of the field of rhetoric, multi-sitedness could unsettle traditional assumptions about rhetoric and its relationship with reason and persuasion.

Conversation is another research method we can employ. Kovach noted that the conversational method flows from an Indigenous paradigm because it fits well with the orality of Indigenous cultures and puts a premium on relationships and reciprocity ("Conversational Method" 42-43). Whereas traditional research promotes distance and objectivity, Indigenous research requires the researcher to foster genuine relationships with Indigenous peoples before the "research" can commence. Discovering web of relationships and sharing stories over meals are some ways to create a sense of community and contexts of trust among research participants. As Wilson argued, healthy and strong relationships build the foundation for equally strong and healthy research ("Research is Ceremony" 86). In an Indigenous paradigm, it is through relationship-building that one generates meaningful insights. Conversations are reflective, dialogic, and narrative, which are in stark contrast with the transactional, extractive nature of interviews and even focus group discussions (Kovach, "Conversational Method" 43). Since it honors Indigenous philosophies and realities, the conversational method, then, is a decolonizing tool that allows the researcher to conduct an inquiry in a way that is respectful, relational, and reciprocal.

For rhetorical scholar Walter Fisher, humans are storytellers. He argued that "[t]he ground for determining meaning, validity, reason, rationality, and truth must be a narrative context: history, culture, biography, and character" ("Narration" 3). Hence, stories communicate the human experience. Similarly, conversations in Indigenous cultures are not simply informal discussions; as Kovach argued, the conversational method is a means to gather knowledge ("Conversational Method" 44). In Indigenous conversations, stories become vehicles for Indigenous knowledges to be passed on intergenerationally and have long been means for Indigenous peoples to make sense of their world (Cruikshank qtd. in Kovach, "Indigenous Methodologies 95"; Chubb et al. 2). Therefore, conversations and stories are culturally epistemic. The relational nature of the conversational method also emphasizes that the knower cannot be abstracted from the known and that being is knowing (Kovach, "Conversational Method" 42).

Indigenous Research: An Exercise on Humility

Indigenous scholars have highlighted the researcher's ethical responsibility in

doing Indigenous research. We are primarily listeners. Doing research with Indigenous peoples requires that we acknowledge the social positions we occupy and the biases that come with these positions. Indigenous research demands that we set them aside for a meaningful interaction to take place. In doing research with Indigenous peoples about their rhetorics, we abandon "assumptions about who the speaker should be… and listen to who they are" (Cushman et al. 8). Indigenous research has a moral function too, as Indigenous knowledge is shared to us within a framework of mutual trust.

Rhetorical scholarship is largely evaluative. We analyze and evaluate rhetorical texts guided by frameworks that are mostly based on frameworks derived from Western academic traditions. While far from being positivist research, rhetorical criticism puts premium on the researcher in that it is the critic who decides what rhetorical text is to be analyzed and how to analyze it. While contemporary rhetorical criticism has embraced critical approaches aimed at demystifying unequal power relations, rhetorical analyses have largely remained scholarly constructions confined within university gates. A pressing question remains: who benefits from rhetorical scholarship?

In this article, I laid out a conceptual groundwork on the possibilities of Indigenizing the study of rhetoric. But what exactly does an Indigenized study of rhetoric look like? Indigenous scholars have espoused that Indigenous research interrogates the very nature of research as knowledge production. In articulating an Indigenous research agenda, Smith argued that Indigenous research should create spaces for Indigenous mobilization, healing, decolonization, and transformation leading to Indigenous survival, recovery, development, and self-determination (119-122). Wilson was more succinct in his conceptualization of what Indigenous research ought to be: one whose ontological and epistemological assumptions are based on all our relationships and whose axiological and methodological assumptions are rooted in relational accountability ("Indigenous Research Methodology" 177; "Research is Ceremony" 69-79). Following these articulations of an Indigenous research paradigm, I envision an Indigenized study of rhetoric as advocative rather than evaluative, participatory rather than isolated. To Indigenize the study of rhetoric is to let Indigenous peoples set the research agenda, and let them, on their own terms, tell their stories of survivance (i.e., survival and resistance) (Vizenor 11), within the context of meaningful relationships established between the researcher and the Indigenous community. In an Indigenous research paradigm, the means matter more than the ends. Regardless if we look into the rhetoric of contemporary pan-Indigenous movements such as the Lakbayan ng Pambansang Minorya, the rhetoric of customary justice systems such as the bodong of the Kalinga, or the rhetoric of how the Subanen predict natural disasters through animals, the research must be built upon respectful relationships and equal participation.

Defining what Indigenous rhetoric(s) is(are) is not something I seek to answer in this article. Rhetoric has been defined by different people in relation to time, culture, and politics, among others, and a staple definition of Indigenous rhetorics akin to Aristotle's famous definition is something that I do not see advancing our understanding of rhetoric, Indigeneity, and Indigenous peoples. What I hopefully addressed here are the possibilities of rhetoric being a subject of inquiry within Indigenous studies and how its study can potentially advance our understanding of Indigenous issues. Within the framework of reciprocity and relational accountability, studying Indigenous rhetorics provides various possibilities for improving their lives, both in small and significant ways.

Studying the rhetorics of Indigenous peoples is not an extractive, transactional

endeavor. In the words of Wilson, "I am gaining knowledge in order to fulfill my end of the research relationship" ("Indigenous Research Methodology" 177). To Indigenize the study of rhetoric is to be accountable to the Indigenous communities, not to the academic institutions we belong to. Indigenous research always asks questions of benefit and while it is premised on mutually-beneficial relations, scholars agree that the research endeavor should benefit the Indigenous community more (Snow et al. 367). Ultimately, scholarly attempts to Indigenize rhetoric must be primarily motivated not by the prospect of revitalizing the discipline but by its implications on Indigenous peoples.

Smith put it succinctly when she said that decolonizing research is about Indigenous peoples "rewriting and rerighting [their] position in history" (29). Indigenous studies reimagines the role of the rhetorical scholar from someone who interprets symbolic action rather remotely and based on established theories to someone who engages in dialogue and privileges Indigenous voices. These Indigenous spaces for dialogue might generate a rather overwhelming, seemingly disparate, corpus of data for the researcher, but as we endeavor to understand the rhetorics of Indigenous peoples who use language and other symbol systems for a specific end, I see the potential plethora of data generated through more engaged methods crucial in resisting the dominant rhetorical tradition that tends to essentialize rhetoric as persuasive discourse. By engaging in spaces of conversation and dialogue with Indigenous peoples (i.e., spaces where they narrate their stories and explain them based on their own terms), we honor the orality, relationality, and reciprocity that define Indigenous cultures.

In my journey as a non-Indigenous researcher, I need to be always reflexive, constantly confronting my biases and the privileged institutions I belong to. Research on Indigenous rhetorics is advocacy work and takes place on the ground. Frey et al. emphasized the need for rhetorical scholars to be engaged, for "research is never a politically neutral act…[and] [s]ocial justice most certainly is a communication issue" (114).

Still, bigger issues loom. Does Indigenizing rhetorical theory matter on the ground when "sheer physical survival [of Indigenous peoples] is far more pressing" (Smith 4)? Will this stop corporations from grabbing their lands? Will this stop the militarization of their communities and the red-tagging of their leaders? Will this bring food to the table? Low and Merry's (207-211) discussion of engaged anthropology reminded me of Alfred and Corntassel's (603) view that solidarity is a means to confront imperial control. Perhaps research with Indigenous peoples, an engaged one at that, is advocacy work that is part of the larger Indigenous resurgence project. Perhaps acts of assistance can aid like writing letters, joining dialogues, or providing modest help, all of which are rhetorical, thereby helping in resurgence efforts. Perhaps by studying Indigenous rhetorics, we can recover Indigenous epistemologies that have been obscured and rendered irrelevant by an extractive economy. There are many challenges that rhetorical scholars must contend with and many choices that need to be made should we decide to chart the path of Indigenizing rhetorical theory. But in the end, Indigenous research should ground us for it is "a humble and humbling activity" (Smith 5).

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