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# PLATFORM

Journal of Graduate Students  
in Anthropology

UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA

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# PlatForum

Journal of Graduate Students in Anthropology

UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA

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## INTRODUCTION

The 2012 PlatForum editorial team welcomes you to the 13<sup>th</sup> volume of PlatForum, the longest running student organized Anthropology publication in Canada. We are proud to continue the legacy of providing an open platform for discussion for all Anthropology students across the country. The range of papers presented in this volume speaks to the rich and multifaceted diversity of the authors' academic and personal backgrounds, while highlighting the holistic and sub-disciplinary approach of the discipline as a whole.

Themes of power relations and production are prevalent throughout this volume. The authors examine how historical power dynamics permeate into the present, and how they affect individuals and groups of people to internalize and reinforce, modify, reject and subvert, observe, and make social commentary of these underlying structures. Forouz Salari positions herself within a North American society that normalizes and idealizes a slim female figure. She addresses historic religious, medical and ideological perspectives that play a role in influencing women to perform their gender and reproduce their physical bodies in alignment with the slim bodily ideal.

Alex Pysklywec, in his paper, presents the underlying patriarchal power structure that continues to marginalize and racialize poorer classes in post-apartheid Namibia, from the persistent yet de-formalized segregated communities to the use of language by municipal powers that act to marginalize poor and largely black communities. Adrienne Mann looks at how similar overarching

power dynamics are internalized, tailored and re-enacted by employees at a seafood processing plant in the Pacific Northwest. Here, she shows how the use of obscenities to create humour and entertainment both rejects the social norms of the broader community and maintains a social hierarchy within the workplace. Both papers show how communities perpetrate discrimination through socially tolerated lines of sex and/or class though other contributing factors such as race, age, or seasonal employment may be present.

Kelsey Timler's paper shows how sensitive socio-political topics can be explored in a socially sanctioned space through hyperbole and humour by contemporary stand-up comedians. She draws parallels between the role of contemporary anthropologists and comedians and suggests ways in which they can learn from each other. David Fargo puts into practice issues of representation through his archaeological analysis of stone tools from a site in southern British Columbia. His research included analysis of lithic waste material, which is commonly overshadowed by formed tool analysis. Though the scope of his paper specifically looks at general patterns of tool manufacture at the site, he also points to depositional and cultural complexities and other variables that should be taken into account in order for archaeologists to make informative assessments of human agency through material remains.

We invite readers to draw connections and distinctions between themes in this volume in hopes of fostering an exchange of ideas that contribute to broader discussions in Anthropology. Anthropology is a discipline that continually renews itself through an adaptive capacity to reposition itself along shifting theoretical foundations and through applied techniques. In turn, this enriches how we come to know the world in which we live - through collaboration and circulation of ways of seeing and shared knowledges and practices. As part of PlatForum's goal in facilitating dialogue, we have created an online version of this volume to make readership more accessible and as a tool for open anthropological debate. You can find this and

earlier volumes from previous years at <http://journals.uvic.ca/index.php/platform>. We hope you enjoy!

Sincerely,

Jenny Cohen  
*Editor-in-Chief*





## CONTRIBUTORS

### 1. DAVID FARGO

David Fargo is a Masters of Arts student in Anthropology at the University of Victoria. While his Master's research focuses on patterns of animal domestication and animal husbandry in northern China during the Early Bronze age, his research interests also include Northwest Coast archaeology. His specific interest in lithic material stems from a number of courses relating to archaeology within British Columbia that he took during his time as an undergraduate at the University of Victoria.

### 2. ADRIENNE MANN

Adrienne Mann is a fourth year undergraduate student pursuing a major in Anthropology and a minor in Indigenous Studies at the University of Victoria. Born and raised in a small and rural community, Adrienne has a passion for increasing child advocacy and social justice in remote areas across Canada. Her topics of interest include cultural appropriation and the dissection of the colonially created "Other," examining underlying linguistic ideologies, and supporting cross-community collaborations.

### 3. ILEANA DIAZ

Ileana I. Diaz (Illy) is a PhD student in Anthropology at the University of Victoria, specializing in biological anthropology. Her research explores anthropogenic impacts on the environment, forest fragmentation, disease and effects on primates. Diaz received a BA in Film, and a BA/MA in Anthropology from universities in the United States.

#### **4. KELSEY TIMLER**

Kelsey Timler is an Anthropology honours student at the University of British Columbia. Her research interests focus within medical anthropology, specifically the improvement of pediatric healthcare through engagement with the narratives of vulnerable populations. Through her research into these sensitive topics, as well as through personal experience, the therapeutic uses of humour have become one of her interests.

#### **5. FOROUZ SALARI**

Forouz Salari completed her Master of Arts degree in Social Anthropology at York University. She has a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Toronto in Anthropology and Psychology. She plans to continue her studies in Social Work and Education. Her areas of interest include gender and sexuality, religion, and transnationalism and diaspora studies.

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John Alexander Pysklywec is in his first year of the Master of Arts program at the University of British Columbia, and graduated from UBC with a Bachelor of Arts in (Human) Geography. His research interests primarily involve interactions within and between state and non-state actor(s) in a North American context. His three main areas of focus are: race, gender, and identity politics; nationalism, national imaginaries, colonialism; and peace, oppression, and contestation. He specifically is researching the social/cultural impacts of increasing militarization and (fear of) violence along the US/Mexico border using an embodied queer, feminist, anti-colonial, and anti-racism lens.

# AN ANALYSIS OF DEBITAGE AT KOSAPSOM PARK SITE (DCRU 4)

*DAVID FARGO*

## **ABSTRACT**

In this paper, lithic debitage from the Kosapsom Park site (DcRu-4) in Victoria, British Columbia is analyzed in order to investigate the use of local raw materials and stone tool manufacturing methods over the past 3000 years in the area around the Gorge waterway. An analysis of broken flakes and shatter produced strong evidence for late stages of tool manufacture and retouch. An analysis of cortex cover and dorsal flake scars revealed the presence of early, middle, and late stages of lithic reduction. Therefore, the debitage from Kosapsom reveals an entire sequence of tool manufacture, from core reduction to eventual retouch.

## **Introduction**

### **KOSAPSOM PARK SITE (DcRu 4)**

In 1994 and 1995, excavations at Kosapsom Park (DcRu 4) uncovered the material remains of an ancestral village of the Songhees and Esquimalt First Nations (Mitchell 1995:2). These excavations were undertaken over two field seasons by Archaeological Society of British Columbia (ASBC) volunteers as well as a number of field school participants from the University of Victoria. The site is located along the Gorge waterway in Saanich, on the heritage grounds of the old Craigflower Schoolhouse (Mitchell 1995:2). While the upper

layers of the site were disturbed by historical events relating to the activities at the nearby schoolhouse and the more recent Gorge Waterway Beautification Project, the site represents around 3000 years of continuous occupation (Mitchell 1994:3). While historic materials relating to the schoolhouse were also excavated and documented, the material remains of pre-contact occupation at the Songhees and Esquimalt First Nations ancestral village are the focus of this study.

Among the roughly 3500 artifacts uncovered, 1300 were found in pre-contact contexts. Many of these artifacts were lithic tools associated with both Gulf of Georgia (1800-250 BP) and Locarno Beach Culture Type phases (4000-2200 BP). In addition to tools, a large amount of lithic debitage (stone flakes that are the by-product of stone tool-making) was also collected across many different parts of the site. Since this debitage represents a significant portion of the excavated material, it provides a suitable sample size for analysis. This project will attempt to use certain diagnostic characteristics of debitage flakes in order to identify different stages of stone tool production, also known as the “lithic reduction process.”

## **EXCAVATION HISTORY**

In 1994, during the first of two field seasons at Kosapsom, a total of 23 units were excavated along the site of a proposed walkway (Mitchell 1994:4). In 1995, during the second season of excavations, nine of these units were reopened and 15 additional units were excavated. Due to time constraints, excavations did not expose the full extent of cultural deposits within these units (Mitchell 1994:3). Initial excavation units were 1x1 m in size and excavated in 5 cm arbitrary levels, although several larger amalgamated units were created during the 1995 field season (Mitchell 1995:4). All artifacts found in situ were recorded through the use of three dimensional point records. Faunal material was also recorded and collected by level (Mitchell 1995:4). All excavated cultural material was water-

screened through aluminum fly-screen and brought back to the University of Victoria for further analysis (Mitchell 1995:4).

## **DEBITAGE ANALYSIS**

Broadly speaking, retouched stone tools (tools that have been re-sharpened or altered along the working edge through flaking) only make up around 3-5% of an entire lithic assemblage at a prehistoric habitation site, although this percentage fluctuates depending on the type of screening that is undertaken during excavation (Odell 2003:118). The vast majority of an assemblage falls into the category of lithic debitage. This term refers to any flake or flake fragment that has not been retouched or formed into a tool (Odell 2003:118). Since debitage constitutes such a large portion of the lithic assemblage at many archaeological sites, including Kosapsom, it represents a critical source of information relating to the activities of a site's inhabitants. The process of creating a flaked stone tool can be broken up into several stages that are associated with various activities including core reduction (primary reduction stage) and tool retouch (tertiary reduction stage). It can therefore be used to reconstruct the process of creating and maintaining a lithic tool (Kooyman 2000:51). Lithic material goes through a series of reduction stages that produce debitage with particular characteristics (Kooyman 2000:51). The way in which these stages are defined and identified is discussed below. By analyzing the characteristics of debitage, both on an individual and mass scale, researchers can gain insight into the stages of production that occurred at a site or an area within a site.

In order to conduct an effective analysis, flakes are broken down into several diagnostic features that can be examined on an individual basis. Information about each of these diagnostic features can be taken together and used to classify a piece of debitage as being the result of a particular activity or set of activities. Pokotylo (1978) and Magne and Pokotylo (1981) identify that an examination of the width of striking platforms

(the area where a flake is struck in order to remove it from the original core) provides important information for identifying the stage of reduction that is represented by a flake. This is an example of one of the many examinable diagnostic features of a flake (Figure 1). Andrefsky (1998:20) identifies a number of diagnostic characteristics relating to the distal end of a detached flake. This type of analysis is concerned with identifying feathered terminations, step fractures, hinge fractures, and plunging terminations, all of which are used to determine specific manufacturing techniques. For example, while a feathered termination means that the distal end of a flake tapers off into a sharp edge, a step fracture happens when breakage occurs perpendicular to the original direction of force, leaving a squared bottom edge, rather than a tapered one. Lithic debitage has been an important source for analysis at a variety of sites in British Columbia. Magne (1985) as well as Sullivan and Rozen (1985) each devise systems by which debitage can be classified into early, middle and late stages of reduction. As elements of both of these systems are incorporated into my research, it is necessary to provide a brief overview of each method.

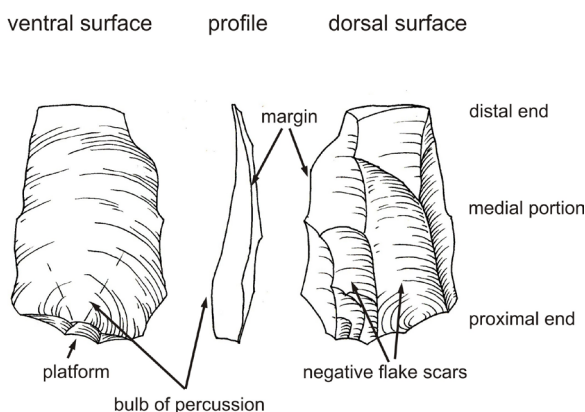


Figure 1. Schematic of a flake showing features discussed in the study. Illustration by Jenny Cohen.

Magne's (1985) system accounts for the amount of cortex (the unworked raw outer surface of lithic material, produced by chemical and mechanical weathering), and the number of flake scars on the dorsal surface of a flake. Magne (1985) also outlines a number of other characteristics, such as weight, platform scar count, and platform width, although none of these diagnostic features were used within the confines of this study. Previous studies have utilized a quantitative analysis of dorsal cortex cover in order to shed light on lithic reduction stages (Morrow 1984; Sanders 1992). These stages are commonly conceptualized through the categories of primary, secondary, and tertiary lithic reduction. The idea behind this method is that flakes that are the result of core reduction or other primary stages of lithic reduction are more likely to have cortex cover on the dorsal surface (Andrefsky 1998: 115). Secondary flakes will have less cortex than primary flakes, and tertiary flakes will have less cortex than secondary flakes (Andrefsky 1998:115). Flakes with a greater number of scars on the dorsal surface are also associated with later stages of lithic reduction, including tool manufacture (Magne 1985:113). Since the completeness of a flake is such a contributing factor in terms of how many flake scars will be present on the dorsal surface, only complete flakes may be used for this sort of analysis. Although the use of these categories for debitage analysis is widespread, there are some issues with this approach. Some researchers have pointed out that cortex may be removed at any stage of reduction, not just earlier ones (Jelinek et al. 1971:199). Therefore, there is no definitive package of traits that is representative of a particular stage of reduction. Rather, identifying a particular set of flake characteristics simply suggests that a certain stage of reduction is more likely.

Sullivan and Rozen's (1985) analysis of debitage from an Archaic Period site in east-central Arizona focuses on examining debitage on a more macro scale. Rather than looking at the various diagnostic characteristics of individual flakes, they instead categorize the flakes very broadly as either complete or broken (Sullivan and Rozen 1985:759). In this case, all debitage is taken into account, as are cores and core fragments. The idea that Sullivan and Rozen (1985:759)

present is that complete flakes and cores are more associated with earlier stages of reduction, while broken flakes and non-orientable lithic debris (shatter) is more likely the by-product of later stages of reduction, including tool manufacture. This is because the larger primary flakes produced by primary stage core reduction are less likely to break or be classified as shatter. As the manufacturing sequence continues, and more precise shaping of lithic material is required, smaller and thinner flakes are produced (Sullivan and Rozen 1985:764).

## **Research Question**

This project is aimed at providing a comprehensive analysis of the debitage at the Kosapsom Park site (DcRu-4) in order to shed light on the use of local raw materials and the subsequent manufacture of stone tools in the area around the Gorge waterway over the course of the past 3000 years. An analysis of this material will determine whether the inhabitants of the Kosapsom site were bringing large amounts of raw material to the site to engage in core reduction, or whether large cores were more often reduced elsewhere and brought to the site. More generally, this research is aimed at determining whether the debitage assemblage at Kosapsom represents the by-products of earlier stages of core reduction, or the later stages of tool manufacture and retouch (tool repair or resharpening). If the lithic assemblage at Kosapsom reflects earlier stages of manufacture, one would expect to find a large number of cores and complete flakes with significant cortex cover on the dorsal surface. Alternatively, if the assemblage was dominated by smaller broken flakes with complex patterns of flake scars on the dorsal surfaces, this would indicate more secondary and tertiary stages of stone tool manufacture.



## Methodology

### THE SAMPLE

In order to conduct this analysis, efforts were taken to make the sample of debitage as inclusive as possible. For this reason, I examined flakes with and without remnant platforms. Following Sullivan and Rozen's (1985) quantitative analysis of lithic material, cores were also examined within the confines of this study. Any retouched material that was found during the course of cataloguing and recording was removed from the sample. Evidence of bipolar reduction was also found during the cataloguing process. These flakes are marked by two points of percussion. Bipolar flakes and cores have certain diagnostic characteristics that differ in comparison with the bulk of flakes at the site, which were marked by a single point of percussion. It is therefore problematic to combine multiple methods of reduction within the same quantitative analysis. Due to time constraints, I was unable to conduct a separate analysis for flakes that were reduced using bipolar technology. For this reason, best efforts were made to remove the products of bipolar reduction from the sample. However, since these characteristics have varying degrees of expression within debitage assemblages, it is likely that some less obvious examples of bipolar reduction remain in the sample. In order to limit error due to small sample size, material from various excavation units, levels, and layers were combined and analyzed together. As a result, this study represents a general analysis of lithic debitage and cores at the Kosapsom site as a whole, rather than a comparison of different areas of the site or different time periods.

The sample consisted mainly of basalt flakes. Dacite was also present in significant numbers. Chert, andesite, and quartzite were present within the sample in very limited quantities. The abundance of basalt suggests that there was a nearby source. There were a number of flakes that showed evidence of having been burned, which suggests that they may have been found in association with a hearth feature. While length and width measurements were not

taken, the flakes were qualitatively noted as being quite variable in size.

## CLASSIFICATION OF DEBITAGE

In order to facilitate the quantitative analysis of lithic material at Kosapsom, debitage was classified and recorded using the hierarchical scheme outlined in Figure 2. Sullivan and Rozen (1985:769) and Jelinek (1976:19) suggest that lithic assemblages with higher proportions of complete flakes represent the by-products of core reduction and earlier stages of lithic reduction. In contrast, they suggest that assemblages with a higher proportion of broken flakes and shatter signify later stages of lithic reduction and tool manufacture. The classification scheme illustrated in Figure 1 identifies flakes as complete or broken, while further differentiating incomplete flakes into the more specific categories of: proximal, split platform, crushed platform, medial, medial/distal, flake fragment, and shatter.

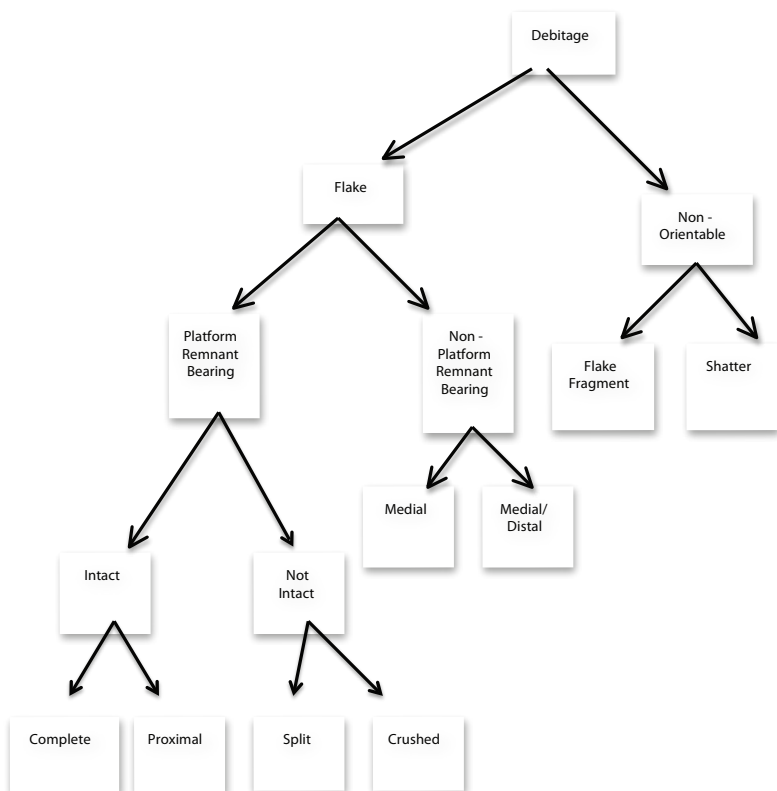


Figure 2. Debitage Classification Scheme.

While non-orientable flakes are often classified as shatter (Shott 1994:70), they have been split into two categories for the purposes of this study. The ‘shatter’ category refers to lithic material that is not orientable and lacks diagnostic flake characteristics like a visible conchoidal fracture or bulb of percussion. The category of ‘flake fragments’ refers to material that I was unable to orient, but appears to have diagnostic characteristics that someone with more experience may be able to use to identify the portion of the flake. Any broken flake that could be oriented was categorized as proximal, medial, medial/distal, or split. While the categories in Figure 2 are much more specific than the ones used in the actual

analysis, the sorting and recording of debitage in this way creates a more comprehensive pool of data that makes future inter-site comparisons more viable. It also facilitates future analyses of the Kosapsom material that are beyond the scope of this research project. For the purposes of analyzing the proportions of complete flakes and cores in comparison with broken flakes and shatter, the categories of split, proximal, medial, and medial/distal were combined into a single 'broken flake' category. Flakes with crushed platforms could fall into the 'complete flake' or 'broken flake' category, depending on their completeness. Cores were also counted and classified, but no further analysis was undertaken on them.

## ANALYSIS OF COMPLETE FLAKES

During the classification stage of analysis, complete flakes were set aside for further analysis based on Magne's (1985) diagnostic criteria for analyzing debitage. Here, a number of quantitative secondary flake characteristics can be used to identify the stage of reduction that a particular flake represents. These categories include: weight, dorsal scar count, dorsal scar complexity, platform scar count, platform angle and cortex cover (Magne 1985). Due to project constraints, only the weight, dorsal scar count, and cortex cover categories were recorded for each flake, with a dorsal scar count and cortex cover analysis being the focus of this second stage of analysis. The thickness of each complete flake was also measured, but as with the weight category, this information was not used for the purposes of this study. The amount of information collected during the cataloguing stage of analysis went beyond that necessary for the purpose of this study; this was done, however, in the interest of facilitating further research on this material.

There are a number of different methods for recording the amount of dorsal cortex within a debitage assemblage. Andrefsky's (1998:115) method of recording the presence or absence of cortex does not account for the varying degrees of cortex that tend to be present at different stages of lithic reduction. For example, an assemblage of

ten spalls (flakes with 100% cortex cover on the dorsal surface) would be statistically indistinguishable from an assemblage of ten flakes with less than 10% cortex cover on each. For this reason, Magne's (1985) method of creating four categories that represent increments of 25% as well as two independent categories for 0 and 100 percent cortex cover was utilized. This system employs categories that are specific enough to allow for a reasonable estimation of cortex cover in the assemblage while not being so specific as to create a large amount of error relating to the estimation of cortex cover on an individual flake.

A dorsal scar count was also undertaken with the view that flakes that are the by-product of later stages of tool manufacture (including retouch) would have a greater number of dorsal flake scars when compared to earlier stages of core reduction (Magne 1985:114). In many ways, this measurement is an extension of the idea behind measuring cortex cover. Flakes from early stages of reduction are much more likely to have some degree of cortex cover on the dorsal surface. As the sequence of tool manufacture continues into advanced stage of reduction, more cortex is removed as material is flaked away, creating a complex pattern of flake scars on the dorsal surface of each new flake that is removed. Within the confines of Magne's (1985) study, data from a series of experimental debitage assemblages was used to determine the number of flake scars that best fit the categories of primary, secondary, and tertiary reduction. Using this data, flakes with zero or one dorsal scar were categorized as representing early stages of reduction; flakes with two dorsal scars were categorized as representing a middle stage of reduction; and any flakes with three or more flake scars on the dorsal surface were categorized as the by-products of late stage reduction. As mentioned in the introduction, there is no inherent link between a specific number of dorsal flake scars and a specific stage of reduction. Rather, these categories simply represent the most likely stage of reduction, as illustrated by experimental flint-knapping studies (Magne 1985).

# Results and Discussion

## MASS ANALYSIS OF DEBITAGE

I utilized Sullivan and Rozen's (1985) framework for the categorization and subsequent analysis of debitage and cores for the first part of the analysis. The results of the first stage of analysis are presented in Table 1. The entire sample of lithic material is included in this table, and the percentage of material that falls into the categories of complete flakes, cores, broken flakes, and shatter/debris are listed. The shatter category is the largest of the four, representing approximately 40% of the entire sample. It should be noted that although best efforts were made to ensure the correct categorization of flakes and flake fragments, a conservative approach was taken in order to minimize error. Therefore, since the shatter category encompasses any non-orientable material, it is likely that the shatter category is overrepresented. However, the effects of this possible overrepresentation of shatter is minimal within the confines of this study because the first stage of analysis focuses on the combined numbers of complete flakes and cores versus the combined numbers of broken flakes and shatter/debris. It is much more likely that broken flakes as opposed to complete flakes would be incorrectly classified as shatter due to the possible absence of a platform or bulb of percussion.

Table 1. Classification of lithic material by general category

Lithic Category	%	Number of Flakes
Complete Flakes	22.04	95
Cores	9.51	41
Broken Flakes	28.54	123
Shatter/Debris	39.91	172
Total		431

Together, broken flakes and shatter represent over 68% of the entire sample of 431 flakes. This is compared to just over 30% that is represented by complete flakes and cores. Viewed separately, shatter makes up almost 40% of the sample, while broken flakes account for 28.54%. Complete flakes represent 22.04% of the sample, while cores make up the smallest portion of the sample at less than 10%. A smaller number of cores are expected, as they are generally used to produce multiple flakes. These percentages are further illustrated in Figure 3. Following Sullivan and Rozen's (1985) debitage analysis, the large amount of material attributed to the broken flake and shatter categories suggests that the debitage material at Kosapsom, as a whole, is more indicative of advanced stages of tool manufacture and retouch, as opposed to early core reduction. However, the amounts of complete flakes and cores are still quantitatively significant, suggesting that in at least some cases, raw material was brought directly to the site, where the entire sequence of manufacture took place.

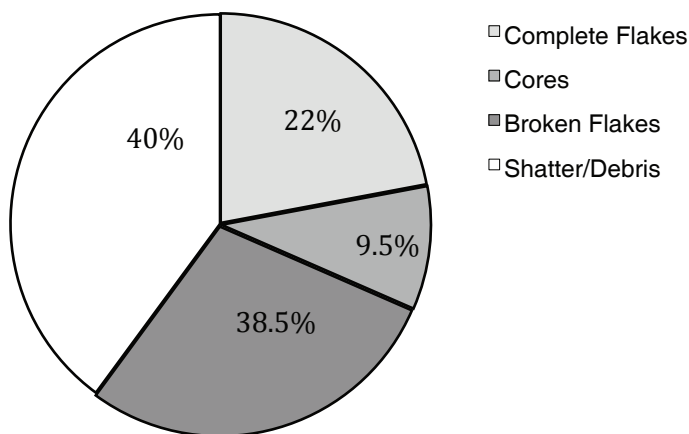


Figure 3. Percentages (%) of diagnostic categories within the sample.

## DORSAL SCAR COUNT

The second part of the analysis more closely examined the complete flakes, which were identified during the first stage of analysis. The results of the dorsal scar count are displayed in Table 2. Out of the total 94 flakes, I identified 37 complete flakes with zero to one dorsal scars, 20 flakes with two dorsal scars, and 37 flakes with three or more dorsal scars.

Table 2. Dorsal scar count by category.

	Stages of Lithic Reduction			
	Early (0-1 dorsal scars)	Middle (2 dorsal scars)	Late (3+ dorsal scars)	Total
Number of Flakes	37	20	37	94

It should be noted that the second category is the least inclusive in terms of the number of flake scars that are attributed to a particular stage of reduction. Therefore, the smaller number of flakes attributed to the second category may be partially explained by these categorical inequalities. Each category is represented by a significant amount of flakes, while the early and late reduction categories are especially evenly distributed. The results of the dorsal scar count, therefore, do not provide any strong indications that a specific stage of reduction dominated the manufacturing activities at Kosapsom. However, the relatively significant number of flakes with little or no evidence of dorsal scarring suggests that raw material was brought to the site and that core reduction did occur there. As with the results of the first stage of analysis, these results suggest that the entire sequence of stone tool manufacture is represented within the debitage assemblage at Kosapsom.

## ANALYSIS OF DORSAL SURFACE CORTEX

The third part of the study involved the quantitative analysis of cortex on the dorsal surface of complete flakes. As stated earlier,



the presence of cortex is generally associated with earlier stages of lithic reduction (Magne 1985:114). The results of this analysis are displayed in Table 3.

Table 3. Amount of cortex cover by category

	Percentage (%) of Cortex Cover on Dorsal Surface						
	0	1-24.9	25-49.9	50-74.9	75-99.9	100	Total
<b>Number of Flakes</b>	50	19	10	3	6	6	94

The majority of complete flakes did not have any cortex cover on the distal surface. It is important to remember, however, that there are a number of other possible variables that can affect the amount of cortex in a lithic assemblage. Quarried rock, for example, may not have as much cortex as a piece of river cobble. The size of the cobble can also affect cortex amounts. Nevertheless, the number of flakes with significant dorsal cortex cover is fairly low in comparison to flakes that have either very little or no cortex cover, suggesting that the assemblage is more representative of later stages of tool manufacture as opposed to core reduction. This is in line with the analysis of broken versus complete flakes, which also pointed to more advanced stages of manufacture. However, the presence of a significant amount of cortex on a number of flakes, including six spalls, suggests that all stages of lithic reduction occurred at the site. This evidence therefore also supports the conclusions drawn from the dorsal scar count portion of the study.

## Summary and Conclusion

The results of this study highlight the complex nature of debitage analysis. While there are certain diagnostic flake characteristics that can be quantitatively analyzed, such as the amount of cortex or the number of flake scars on the dorsal surface, it is difficult to definitively characterize an assemblage as representing a particular stage of reduction. It is also important to consider that this project

did not address the spatial or temporal aspects of lithic distribution at the Kosapsom Site. Further analysis of site material may result in the identification of different site activity areas, representing different stages of manufacture. In addition, the ongoing process of lithic reduction can often obscure evidence for the early stages of tool production, such as primary core reduction. In the future, a more complete debitage analysis that incorporates formed tools and bipolar technology would be a valuable source of data for the analysis of lithic technologies as well as manufacturing techniques at the site.

An analysis of the numbers of complete flakes and cores in relation to broken flakes and shatter produced strong evidence for late stages of tool manufacture and retouch. An analysis of cortex cover on complete flakes also produced evidence for late stages of lithic reduction. Alternatively, the analysis of dorsal flake scars revealed the presence of early, middle, and late stages of lithic reduction. The relatively large number of cores found at the site also points to earlier stages of reduction. Therefore, the analysis of debitage from Kosapsom reveals an entire sequence of tool manufacture, from core reduction to eventual retouch. It is likely that large amounts of local basalt were brought to the site in raw form and reduced on site. Due to the larger amount of material within the assemblage that is attributed to later stages of reduction, it is possible that only some of the raw material was reduced at the site, and the rest was reduced elsewhere and brought to the site for final shaping and eventual retouch.

## **Future Research**

A large amount of data was collected that could not be analyzed within the scope of this research project, including weight and thickness measurements as well as information about the portions of broken flakes that remained (i.e. proximal, medial, distal). Information about the specific excavation units that material came from also was not utilized, and therefore future research could focus

on whether or not specific areas of the site are linked to specific stages of tool manufacture.

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# AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC EXAMINATION: OBSCENITY AS A REGISTER WITHIN A WORKPLACE SPEECH COMMUNITY

ADRIENNE MANN

## ABSTRACT

By method of autoethnographic examination and Dell Hymes' *Ethnography of Speaking*, this linguistic study focuses on the development of a specific register within a speech community of a seafood-processing establishment. Workers employed a register of obscene language in this setting to create intense and multifaceted relationships, revealing a greater language ideology determined by the establishment's setting. In association with the obscene register and language ideology, specific language tools were exposed by individual employees' salient and personal utilization of them. The author concludes with an analysis of whether this register, language ideology, and instrumentalities, are representative of a greater hidden social consciousness and metaphor.

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provides its community and workers with many benefits and an excellent support system. Lastly, I would like to thank Professor Chad Uran for the inspiration and encouragement to write this paper. During his time at the University of Victoria, Dr. Uran provided me with innovative, alternative methods of exploring my education in anthropology through a critical lens. His ingenuity, visions, and passion for linguistics and other subjects in anthropology are contagious.

## **Introduction**

Since the age of 15, I have worked in customer service. My everyday attitude was defined by the expectancy to be chipper and polite, all smiles, and no bad days. This behavioural expectancy for the workplace was turned on its head as I transitioned into working at a seafood-processing establishment on a night crew. In this paper I demonstrate that, as a blue-collar employee at a seafood-processing plant, I was part of a speech community and a greater language ideology that utilized a register of obscene speech to produce humour and entertainment, to create strong relationships, and to establish seniority within an otherwise tedious workplace (Uran pers. comm. Sept 13, 21 2011). Language instrumentalities such as code switching, including shocking language and privileged jokes, defined the members of this speech community and produced solidarity while excluding those who did not labour in the same setting, or engage in the same language (Fuller 2005; Khosroshani 1989). Finally, such dialogue illuminated the community's rejection of social norms surrounding prestigious language in the work place setting (Uran pers. comm. Oct 7 2011).

## **Methodology and Motivation**

Autoethnographic research has developed in response to the ultimate goal of analyzing and understanding underlying cultural

systems while still addressing researcher bias and interpretation (Chang 2008). Autoethnography utilizes ethnographic research methods in union with autobiography to study the cultural connections between one's self and others represented in society (Chang 2008). By situating my research within my own experiences as primary data, I hope to present an intimate perspective on this subject while also providing an engaging piece of writing. In this way, the material presented is liberated from what has been traditionally believed to be the easily attained "objective" and impersonal data collection that pervasively seeks to define the "Other" (Chang 2008). Autoethnography helps me, as a researcher, to examine and self-reflect over my own preconceptions. In turn, I hope to share a comprehensible and non-exclusive (as in, easily understood and utilized by those outside of the "ivory-tower" of academia) methodology that others can employ to also increase their self-awareness and cultural consciousness (Chang 2008). It is important to emphasize that all mistakes and assumptions are my own, reflecting only the understandings of one employee from this community who tried their best to conceptualize potential underlying ideologies.

This study was conducted using Dell Hymes' model of *Ethnography of Speaking* (1962). Through Hymes' *Speaking* I will examine evidence of how a particular speech event within a seafood processing workplace demonstrated a greater level of meaning to the everyday relations between employees. This methodology analyses a language interaction through the *setting* (time and place, as well as physical circumstances); the *participants* (speaker and audience); the *ends* (purpose or goals); the *act sequence* (form and order of the event); the *keys* (cues that establish the "tone, manner, or spirit" of the speech act); the *instrumentalities* (forms and styles of speech); the *norms* (social rules governing the event and the participants' actions and reactions); and the *genre* (the kind of speech act of the event; the kind of story) of a situation (Uran pers. comm. Sept 13 2011; Hymes 1962: 55-60). The purpose of this model is to reveal that the language spoken within such a work community is influenced primarily by the mode of work and its environment.

Simultaneously, this language influences the behaviour and actions of its employees by shaping their identities and relationships within the labour context, creating larger underlying ideologies (Hymes 1962; Sapir-Whorf 1956). Throughout this investigation, my argument will be based on the fundamental notion that the seafood-processing employees comprised a self-constructed speech community (Khosroshani 1989). This speech community developed because the employees were separate from the greater population and subsequently created their own dialogue of language to manage their lifestyle, while defending their language and exploiting it only with accepted members of the language community (Khosroshani 1989). By accepting these premises, it is then possible to study how the speech community employed a specific language register, became competent in this register, and developed a unique form of code switching (Fuller 2005; Lybeck 2002; Khosroshani 1989).

## **Ethnography of Speaking**

It takes a certain determined individual to be able to persevere in a dark, wet, and grimy setting inhaling packaging chemicals while being gored by the dying motions of spiky prawns. In this situation, each employee is placed in a position denoting their skills such as transporting prawns into the establishment by hijab, preserving the prawns in a chemical dip, grading the prawns (sorting them by size and weight by means of machine), carrying baskets of prawns to the packagers, packaging and weighing the prawns into sized boxes, organizing the boxes onto racks, and finally freezing and transporting the packaged boxes. Every person is part of a system that works together to produce the end result. The majority of employees perform the duty of packing prawns of specific sizing (e.g., medium, large, extra-large, and jumbo-sized prawns) into boxes. Packaging entails standing in one spot and repeating the same motion constantly for up to 16 hours while striving for placement perfection. Needless to say, this work is monotonous, resulting in the employees' need to create diversions to relieve the tedium of labour. Such entertainment includes creating strong and



intense relationships with coworkers. Most of the time, such social relationships are the only ones to be nurtured over the three-month season due to the nature of the work as night shift employment in a rural environment. I was involved in many experiences relating to the underlying ideologies that I will be explaining shortly. However, my arguments will focus on the characteristics of one particular event to more effectively demonstrate how these principles may manifest.

A specific example of an act sequence is useful in demonstrating the type of language often utilized by people in this type of environment (Hymes 1962). On this particular occasion, my partner had driven me to work and we had stopped on the side of the road. During that time several of my co-workers passed me while they were driving to the plant for that evening's shift. When I arrived to work, on the floor, two of my senior female co-workers made very direct sexual innuendo statements concerning our pause on the road, insinuating that I had performed sexual favours for my partner. I playfully returned this teasing. Our banter continued throughout the shift and was even referred back to on several occasions subsequent to that night in the form of "double voiced" words that I will later discuss (Hill 1982: 729).

Discerning who the participants of the interaction were is important to uncover who would be generally accepted into this specific register. In the prawn processing setting, sex ratio (when I was employed) was equally divided in the workspace, perhaps with a slight inclination towards higher numbers of males over females, with age ranging from 15-70 years old. Most individuals came from a low- to middle-class economic stance. The majority were either post-secondary school students, young individuals working for a living, or long-term employees residing locally. The location of the processing establishment is important because it anticipates the setting and separateness from the general population of the area. The processing plant is located in a wooded area by the ocean, isolated from the community at large. By itself, the establishment has a very industrial-like feel. The local residents of the entire rural

community are tight-knit and often comprise of families that have subsided there for many generations. Although I had met many of my coworkers before this experience, I had never interacted closely with them until working in this setting. In this particular speech event, the participants were two females with high seniority, two friends of the same age as I (who had been employed for the same duration as myself), and of course, myself. Interactions of this nature across sexes would generally only occur between close friends as the company had strict policies concerning sexual harassment.

In this particular engagement, and many others like it, I believe that the end goal of this particular speech event was to determine what my reaction would be to such teasing (Hymes 1962). I was able to receive this mockery without taking offense, and, in turn, reciprocate it jokingly. By doing so I demonstrated my capacity to function and integrate into a setting that was not always supportive (as sometimes cliques would form) or enjoyable. This language was utilized to explore social connections intimately and establish close associations in otherwise uninspiring surroundings. In addition, it was a method employed by women to test and define how individuals fit into the work place system. It was important in such a setting that my co-workers could implicitly perceive that I was a reliable and dedicated worker, who would do my part of the job so that they would not have to pick up any slack after me. In this way, workers support each other through completing their tasks in a timely and efficient manner. Also, by testing me emotionally, my coworkers were able to determine whether I was durable enough to persevere during the hardest, longest shifts. Lastly, it appeared that in some scenarios women did this simply for their own personal enjoyment. In other situations, first-hand accounts told of circumstances where the language use had ventured into the derogatory and offensive, resulting in the emotional upset and alienation of members of the workplace. Not only was this potentially for pure malicious entertainment value, but also for these employees to situate themselves as higher-ranking in seniority.

The keys used in this language register were often objective words implemented to characterize actions and objects; “double voiced” words, in which the dialogue employed could be re-formed and shaped in subsequent interactions; and metaphors in which associations and comparisons expressed vivid imagery and symbolism (Hill 1982). The objective words in this specific interaction were words employed against me to indirectly describe an action that my co-workers imposed on me metaphorically. These words were then applied in later dates as “double voiced” words to recall earlier amusement. Body language as a key was not utilized significantly in this register as employees had to maintain visual and tactile focus on their duties.

In addition, the obscenities and sexual comments aimed towards me during this event and similar interactions were also repeated in later encounters as “double voiced” words; privileged jokes and icebreakers in either situations of conflict or boredom (Hill 1982). These allusions were referred back to in order to evade tension or produce humour. In this way, and as in previously discussed methods of solidarity and seniority production, the separate language register of obscenity was employed as a tool by this speech community to connect individuals within the work space context and provide a unique variety of language instrumentalities (Khosroshani 1989; Hymes 1962). One of these instrumentalities was code switching, in the form of emphasized obscenity. Code switching in the obscene form was utilized as a method for the participants to defy the status quo that the community considered it apart from, create strong relationships, and demark seniority (Fuller 2005).

The true integration into the workspace speech community required a unique form of implicit communitive competence and socio-linguistic competence (Uran pers. comm. Oct 7 2011; Lybeck 2002). Communitive competence is understood to be linguistic knowledge and structure that is not consciously known, but implicitly understood; socio-linguistic competence is the ability to interpret social meaning from linguistic choice, and employing this language within the appropriate social situation (Lybeck 2002; SIL

International 1998; Hymes 1972: 54). Although the obscene register was actively encouraged, it was essential that the participants had a competent awareness of the rules and appropriateness of their language use within specific contexts and what their seniority allowed them to employ. Several inherent competencies were required by the participants of this speech community in order for individuals to be accepted. Firstly, it was understood that to take something “too far” - such as to make physical transgressions against a coworker or to repeat statements that were voiced as inappropriate- was wrong. Secondly, to make direct comments about an individual’s personal life choice - such as sexual orientation or substance abuse - was wrong. Lastly, to use “taboo” words such as racist slurs was also viewed as wrong. If an individual were to transgress such unspoken rules, they could be threatened with the possibility of being reported to higher management, which ultimately jeopardizes an individual’s employment with the company (Lybeck 2002; Uran pers. comm. Oct 7 2011). By understanding and identifying these unspoken rules, the participant could then employ strategic competence - that is verbal and non-verbal techniques to support them in overcoming problems appearing in communication - in order to achieve their linguistic ambitions, gain or improve their relationships with coworkers, and strengthen seniority standing (Lybeck 2002; Uran pers. comm. Oct 7 2011).

In this community, participants rejected the social norms of language use (Hymes 1962). Participants of diverse income backgrounds, long-term employment, or young individuals newly entering the workforce would generally ridicule language of “privilege” and “purity” due to their division from and conceptions of such systems within the work setting. Purism and idealism are not generally compatible in a visually unattractive environment of cold concrete, splattered dead seafood, and noxious chemicals. Linguistic imperialism is therefore discarded and actively rebelled against through the use of obscene language (Uran pers. comm. Sept 30 2011). Cultural rules of language conduct, such as grammar, are viewed as flexible and optional. If an individual were to utilize “proper” or idealized language in a particular conversation or

in everyday vocabulary they would not necessarily be met with cynicism, but might find that their coworkers would engage with them less, resulting in their isolation from the speech community. In the next section I address the hypothetical genre of this interaction and why this register may have evolved.

## Discussion and Theories

Through the lens of Dell Hymes' *Ethnography of Speaking* (1962), I have argued that the evolution of obscenity as a language adaptation in the seafood-processing community is a reaction to the setting and type of work that defines the space. Individuals can establish themselves within the hierarchy of the speech community based on their knowledge and proficiency of this distinctive register (Hill 1982). Through the daily negotiation of their workplace identities, created by the purposeful exclusion or inclusion of others, individuals in this space have created a distraction for themselves in a normally dull environment (Hill 1982).

This system of seniority manipulation has set up a contradictory setting that situates solidarity against personal prestige (Hill 1982). When workers with higher seniority ostracize those with less seniority from the workspace by utilizing this register against them, the cohesiveness of the team diminishes. In this way, by attempting to authenticate themselves through isolating and estranging others, participants sacrifice the solidarity of their speech communities and social relationships (Hill 1982; Uran pers. comm. Sept 30 2011). Hence, members of the speech community must balance such systems to function to their own individual needs and desires, which allows for a certain saliency in the language register use (Uran pers. comm. Sep 16 2011). Likewise, to succeed in this specific speech community and register requires that an individual have a set of competencies to deal with situational context. Therefore, individuals seeking to enter the register require that they be somewhat predisposed to discarding status-quo beliefs concerning an ideal, pure language, and society (Uran pers. comm. Oct 7 2011).

On a much greater scale, this obscene register may also be the result of an indirect indexicality: a negative subconscious association towards the presence of women in the workplace (Hill 2005). This is attributable to the recent history and ongoing attitudes of sexism and discrimination in the public space (Hill 2005; Wierzbicka 2002; Khosroshani 1989). This history of obscene and sexual language employed across sexes in the past has only recently been replaced by current employment policies that have only superficially disposed of prejudicial language. Such historical presumptions likely still linger within the workplace, and may translate into the creation of female gendered hierarchies. While women might use obscene language with the palpable belief that they apply it to “toughen” one another up, strengthen friendships, or humour themselves, this derogatory language may undermine their intentions by being established in an indirect indexicality which perpetuates intolerant, sexist conceptions (Hill 2005; Uran pers. comm. Sept 23 2011). For example, within this unique workplace register, the most appropriate obscenities were those of a sexist nature, versus racist obscenities. This history and continued sexist language use in the workplace may reveal a meta-language about how society has valued and judged the female gender in the workspace (Wierzbicka 2002; Uran pers. comm. Sept 28 2011). These factors may also translate into why there has been a creation for competitive gendered hierarchies within the speech community as females still seek to validate and substantiate their presence through competing with each other.

I approach my experience and thesis with the bias of an individual who had fully integrated into what I perceived to be a speech community (Khosroshani 1989). Individuals who chose not to assimilate into this register may have had a completely positive, independent experience while not being engaged with the language dominant of the space. The conception that the workplace comprises of a speech community is an assumption from an “insider” whose opinions may be a reaction to validate such a supposed register. On the other hand, my co-workers may have also been in the process of actively resisting such a register, and whether this is still an interaction within the greater speech community is debatable.

From my observation, those who often resisted this register were younger, only seasonally employed workers, who did not have as much personal time invested into the workplace. Perhaps, for those employees engaged long-term and year-round, these relationships and distractions were more important to the development of their personal workplace identities as much of their time and energy was devoted to the area.

## **Conclusion**

The creation of personal identities is greatly influenced by the language that we speak (Sapir-Whorf 1956). In this workplace setting, employees enter into a unique process of acculturation (Lybeck 2002). Through a combination of both subliminal and deliberate actions a distinct register has developed within the seafood-processing establishment, which employees then apply as a tool to cope with their setting and achieve their individual motives. Concealed factors such as the historical indirect indexicality of sexism and the construction of seniority-based relationships are conceivable contributing influences for the obscene register, while humor and entertainment are most definitely participating components of its development. Overall, these mannerisms have led to a predominant language ideology within the space, built from unique instrumentalities and a saliency shaped by individual experiences that reject social norms of language prestige and create a linguistic commonality for employee interaction.

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# BOLIVIA GREETES PERU: A JOURNEY THROUGH LAKE TITICACA

## A PHOTOGRAPHIC ESSAY

*ILEANA DIAZ*

### **BACKGROUND**

In the mid-1970s, Dr. Elayne Zorn began anthropological research in Peru and Bolivia documenting the transformation of textiles and communitarian tourism. Specifically, she conducted long-term ethnographic research on Taquile Island, Peru for over thirty years before her death in 2010. She was fluent in many languages, especially Quechua and Aymara and worked very closely with communities. She was a professor of anthropology who mentored many students, including myself. As her student, I was inspired to undertake my own investigations of the Andes and Taquile Island. After her death, I travelled to Lake Titicaca and met many of the people who were the focus of her studies. These photos convey a phenomenographic experience and exploration.



1. Head of the Puma (sacred rock), Bolivia.



2. Mama Jatha: the Potato (seed of Andean society), Lake Titicaca, Bolivia.



3. Sheep on Taquile, Peru.



4. Futbol on the lakeshore, Peru.





5. Taquilean weaving, Peru.





6. Taquilean youth, Peru.



7. Taquilean child, Peru.



8. Taquilean dance on market square, Peru.



# CRITICAL LAUGHTER: THE STANDUP COMEDIAN'S CRITIQUE OF CULTURE AT HOME

*KELSEY TIMLER*

## **ABSTRACT**

One of the main mandates of cultural anthropology is the study of assumptions within a given culture. This analysis is echoed by contemporary standup comedians, who perform ethnographic cultural critiques within their own cultures. Although both anthropologists and comedians practice participant observation, I will argue that the comedian's use of hyperbole and humour creates a safe space in which sensitive socio-political topics can be explored, and that the comedian presents a dynamic oral narrative that allows for interactions with current events and the audience. Drawing from contemporary ethnographic and comedic works I will analyze both representational forms, suggesting ways in which anthropologists can look to comedians for new ways of dealing with issues of representation, subjectivity, and accessibility.

... We want to evoke a combined sense of familiarity and strangeness in US-university educated readers by selecting subjects that share something of a frame of reference and experience with them, but then differ in often radical and startling ways from them. - Marcus and Fischer (1993:3).

I think it's the duty of the comedian to find out where the line is drawn and cross it deliberately. - George Carlin (1974).

It has become clear throughout the history of anthropology that objectivity is impossible, and that within the crisis of representation rests an essential need for reflexivity on the part of the ethnographer. Focusing on anthropology-at-home as social commentary and a critique of the researcher's own surroundings, I will explore the idea of the stand-up comedian-as-ethnographer and how the deployment of hyperbole, reflexivity, and the de- and re-mystification of normative aspects of culture make comedians excellent native critics. Humour facilitates the comedian's dealings with thematic elements in ways that are unavailable to anthropologists; taboo topics and sensitive socio-political themes can be explored within the safe spaces created by the comedic context. The standup comedian's portrayal of culture is delivered verbally, creating an interesting alternative to the standard textual, and recently implemented filmic forms of representing the Other. As contemporary anthropology continues to struggle with the static quality of textual ethnographic data, the comedian presents a dynamic oral narrative that allows the audience to interact with current events. Drawing from ethnographic and comedic works I will analyze both forms of representation. I will argue that the comedian can be seen as both a native anthropologist and an ethnographic subject, and will suggest ways in which contemporary anthropologists can engage with comedians. Not only are comedians rich anthropological subjects, due to their active engagement with their own cultural norms, but also innovative agents of ethnography, offering new insight into ways of dealing with the issues of representation that the discipline continually faces.

De-familiarization can lead to the self-critical realization that the world in which we feel comfortable is just as constructed and non-natural as the exotic realms inhabited by the Other (Marcus and Fischer 1986:138). The standup comedian uses humour forged from the seemingly banal within their own cultures to highlight the Otherness found within their cultures, as well as alternative ways of experiencing that same world (Marcus and Fischer 1986:135). Participant observation has become foundational within anthropological discourse, and in regards to anthropology-at-home, the standup comedian relates common sense knowledge and ways

of acting in such a way that conscious reflection can occur (Koziski 1984). Anthropology-at-home, or native anthropology, is the act of engaging ethnographically with one's own culture. And despite the difficulties associated with defining the boundaries of one's culture at home, the anthropologist works to make the normative strange (Spiro 1992). As a social commentator the standup comedian evokes altered understandings of the seemingly common sense, thus creating a space in which they verbally reflect on certain aspects of culture while their engaged listeners simultaneously begin to contemplate the previously invisible and taken-for-granted elements of their lives (Koziski 1984:57-60). As Victor Turner (1997:63) so eloquently put it, the anthropologist "cut[s] out a piece of society for the inspection of [their] audience [and] set[s] up a frame within which image and symbols of what has been sectioned off can be scrutinized, assessed, and perhaps remodeled." This process furthers societal reflection on the part of the audience in regards to that specific section of culture, its implications, and its worth. This also resonates with the performance of the comedian, seen in the exceptional example given by Ellen DeGeneres (2003) as she takes something as normative as modern yogurt packaging, and places it within a framework of Western values and temporal understandings:

We're lazy. We're on the go. We've got Goghurt. Yoghurt for people on the go. Was there a big mobility problem with yoghurt before? How time consuming was it, really? "Hello? Oh hi Tom. Oh- I've been dying to see that movie! Mmm... no... I just opened up some yoghurt... I am in for the night... Not even later, it's the kind with the fruit on the bottom. Oh well... have fun." [Mimes hanging up phone, shaking head]... That's a shame.

-Excerpt from *Here and Now* (2003).

Reading this excerpt, the seemingly passive yogurt tube in the fridge enters into the audience's critical attention, becoming an



active signifier of cultural values, made effective through DeGeneres' humourous positioning of the object.

Both the cultural anthropologist and the standup comedian study living cultures to distinguish significance within cultural understandings, doing so to reveal hierarchies of power and critically engage with normative ideologies within their worlds (Marcus and Fischer 1986:144). Koziski (1984:63) posits that the anthropologist, "by training" is a "sympathetic outsider," and suggests that, in contrast, the standup comedian is, "by temperament, a cynical insider". This positions the anthropologist and the standup comedian as very different, even opposite. Yet, while the anthropologist is trained to remain reflexive and aware of their biases, the intense subjectivity of the comedian can lead to altered perceptions of reality and changed behaviours amongst the audience. Furthermore, since the comedian performs what is generally assumed to be their own opinion, intense use of humourous cynicism deflects some of the critical response that their vulgarity and subject matter may garner. In a sense, cynicism allows the comedian to speak bluntly to other members of their own culture, requiring no ethical review or academic qualification. It is also important to note that although the anthropologist is *trained* to be sympathetic and objective, subjective emotions are impossible to divorce from one's own research, and the overt subjectivity of the comedian can be seen in a refreshing light. Academia as an ivory tower can be used within anthropology, and other disciplines, to glaze over a researcher's biased voice. However, the level of accessibility between the anthropologist and the comedian, and their respective audiences, must be considered when understanding comedians as being overly subjective.

Anthropologists do use humour, as demonstrated in Clifford Geertz's (1973) recounting of a Balinese cockfight, which ended with him hiding, with his wife, from law enforcement in a courtyard under the guise of drinking tea. The humour in the situation is clear, especially once they are removed from potential jeopardy, and it gives anecdotal evidence to the use of humour in anthropology as an infrequent explanatory tool, as opposed to humour as the



quintessential method of analysis within comedy (Koziski 1984:62). I argue that the standup comedian's use of cynical humour offers an avenue for reflection that is more accessible than many offered through ethnographic studies. As Rusty Warren (1977), a comedian, explains: "if we can open them up and make laughs with them, or see them in picture form, people are bound to loosen up," and while Warren was specifically discussing her overtly sexual humour, I posit that humour is therapeutic as well as an effective agent for change. An interview with contemporary comedian Louis C. K. (2008) on Conan O'Brien's late-night talk show offers a window into the change that humour can inspire within the audience:

Flying is the worst one... because people come back from flights and they tell you their story, their horror story. They act like their flight was like a cattle car in the 40s in Germany, that's how bad they make it sound! They're like: "It was the *worst* day of my life!... First of all - we didn't board! For *twenty* minutes. And *then* we got on the plane and they *made us sit there!* On the runway! For *forty minutes!* We had to sit there!" Oh really, what happened next, did you *fly* through the *air*... incredibly?! Like a bird?! Did you partake in the *miracle* of human flight? You non-contributing zero?... that you got to fly - YOU'RE FLYING!!! IT'S AMAZING! Everybody on every plane should just constantly be going: "OH MY GOD!" [Leans back in his seat, eyes wide open, in awe and terrified], "WOW!"... Here's the thing, people say there's delays on flights, delays! Really? New York to California in five hours. That used to take *thirty years*... to do that. And a bunch of you would die, on the way there, and have a baby... you'd be with a whole different group of people by the time you got there! Now you watch a movie and you take a dump and you're home.

I can personally testify, as an individual who flies frequently, that the humour surrounding the technology and Western notions of patience has impacted the way in which I interpret my personal experiences within airports and planes. My previous behaviours were brought to mind while listening to C. K. speak, causing unintentional self-reflection about the way in which I had previously interacted with the world. Cultural relativism is completely abandoned by most standup comedians, yet I propose that humour offers a non-threatening tool that can be used to alter perceptions and release social tensions. The objectivity sought after by most anthropologists can lead to inapplicability, with real-world problems and struggles analyzed merely for the purposes of theoretical discussion. As the cover liner for the DVD set *The Golden Age of Comedy* (2010) explains: “in [comedy] clubs these days you get group therapy, prayer meetings and sociological community. You get thinking . . . you know your mind is doing something, and, you know you’re enjoying it, but it isn’t until later than you realize that you’ve been thinking.” The standup comedian’s relationship with their own subjective, and typically brusque opinions allows for easier accessibility to the issues discussed, allowing a wide audience to formulate their own reactions to the comedian’s perspectives.

It is clear that the stand-up comedian does not offer scientific nor literal representation, that embellishment and truth are integrated and distorted. But these manipulations of truth are used to reflect understandings back in such a way that confronts their audience with themselves, and in many cases touches on topics that would seem too sensitive to discuss, but which situate the comedian, and their audience, along the boundaries of normative morality within their culture (Koziski 1984:65). Dick Gregory (1964), an African American comedian, positions morality within a humorous framework in relating how he had never believed in Santa Claus because he knew “no white dude would come into [his] neighbourhood after dark.” Anthropologists aim to give accurate accounts in which every contextual perspective is explored, and the reader reaches judgment as they move between the text and their own personal assumptions and biases. By contrast, the standup

comedian positions his opinion and personality as central, through which the cultural norms he explores and the humour of the situation reveal themselves. As George Carlin (1975) shows in his highly subjective view of football:

Football is weird anyway, man. Football is... what is football? Our national pastime game now. And what is it really, except: eleven guys line up and beat the shit out of the other guys and take their land. It's a land acquisition game. Except we take it ten yards at a time. That's what we did to the Indians - work them a little at a time. First Pennsylvania, the Midwest is next to go...

Humour not only positions guilt and morality into a discussion of something that is commonly seen as morally neutral (football), it is also used to bring up historical events in such a way that, although not wholly accurate, sheds light on contemporary ethical trends and normative views of a shared past.

This discussion of historical events leads us into an unpacking of oral tradition within this context. Oral traditions encompass all accountings of the past, transmitted by individuals through the use of verbal language (Vansina 1961:19-20). Not all standup comedy deals with the past, yet the transmission of the narrative anecdote, from the comedian to the audience, and from the audience outward, through any number of nexuses of social connections, creates a tradition. The controlled transmission of the act, which is repeated, altered, and specialized by the comedian throughout his or her career also adds to its orality. Vansina (1961) categorizes two types of oral traditions, the referent (testimony) which is transmitted verbatim, and those which are more fluid, and are altered by the informant how and whenever he or she sees fit. In both cases the testimony is in some way altered by the subjectivity of the informant (Vasina 1961:72). A significant link between the classical oral tradition in the anthropological discourse and the verbal transmissions of the stand-up comedian is the stock phrase,

also referred to as a stereotype, which carries latent meanings within that specific culture (Vansina 1961:72). An example of a stereotype expressed through a stock phrase in American culture, as explained by ethnographer Sherry Ortner (2003), is the unconscious assumption that *success* as a term implicitly references material wealth within her peer group. In comedy, these stock phrases create similar links with commonly held beliefs, so that, like ethnography, one must have a firm understanding of the language and culture of the informant, anthropological or comical, to fully understand the reference, and in the case of the comedian, the joke. Informants, the transmitters of the referent in oral tradition, have been enculturated since birth and are expected to draw connections between past and present within culturally acceptable frameworks (Vansina 1961). To illustrate the importance of knowing the cultural language, far surpassing a simple understanding of the linguistic codes of a people, a skit by Indian-Canadian comedian Russell Peters (2006) integrates cultural norms, so that an outsider might not grasp the ironic twist he delivers, while also highlighting the power dynamics implicit within the intersection of cultures:

My Dad's been in this country for forty years now, *forty* years! And you know what's scary; I think my Dad's turning into a redneck now. I swear to god he's starting to say stuff that scares me, you know? I walked into my parent's house a couple weeks ago, my Dad was sitting there on the phone, he had the newspaper open in front of him... he had an ad circled. Somebody was selling a couch, right? So my Dad's on the phone, he calls the ad, and on the other end of the phone some Eastern European lady answers, and she couldn't speak any English. And all I hear is: [in a thick Indian accent]:

"Hello, I'm calling about your couch."

[Speaking with an Eastern European accent]: "Uh-hello."

“Hello. I- uh, I want to know about your couch.”

“Hello?”

“Okay. I’ve said hello twice. I would like to purchase your couch.”

“Ahno English.”

“I’m sorry?”

“Ahno English.”

“Then WHY THE HELL DID YOU ANSWER THE PHONE? YOU DON’T COME TO MY COUNTRY IF YOU CAN’T SPEAK THE LANGUAGE!”  
[Mimes slamming down phone].

My Dad looks at me and goes [shaking his head in frustration and with a heavy accent]: “Immigrants!”

I go, Dad! You’re an immigrant!

[In Indian accent]: “Hey, you watch what you say to me!”

-Excerpt taken from Outsources (2006).

Another essential aspect of the standup comedian is the use of body language. The comedian typically uses the entire stage, creating dynamic positions with their body, facial expressions, and in some cases, props. The vocal tone of the comedian is also significant in their delivery. An excellent example of this is a skit done by Maria Bamford (2008) in which she relates the trials and tribulations of being a female comedian. In the skit, she describes how difficult it can be to get an audience to like her. This entire section is related in her trademark low and raspy voice. She then explains that she has a back-up skit, in case the crowd is not responding: the quintessentially typical female comedian skit. At this point her voice switches to a

high, bubbly, and obnoxiously giggling tone; “Ladies! Okay! Guys [giggling endlessly], don’t listen!...” from which point she continues to systematically go through the tropes of the female comedian: dating stories, menstrual mood swings, chocolate cravings, and sexual misadventures. The verbal transmission of this joke creates a palimpsest of meaning, allowing the audience to become integrated into the familiar web of cultural meaning, twisted about for them, by the comedian-as-catalyst, to analyze from new angles. Bamford’s skit allows us to see the ways in which orality can alter the thematic content of a message, as well as offering insight into the ways in which comedians deal with issues surrounding gender and representation. Spindler and Spindler (1983:68) elucidate how, due to the majority of anthropologists being male, they focused on male-dominated portions of any given society, including their own. This led to an assumption within the discourse that since American men had held greater cultural status and were thus easily noticeable, that men could, and should, stand in for all American people, including women (Spindler and Spindler 1983:68). The flux of female anthropologists in the mid-twentieth century is paralleled within the standup comedian community, although, as Bamford references, the role of the female comedian is by and large limited to feminized thematic tropes, with the singular alternative being that of the lesbian comedian, as evidenced by the earlier quotation from Ellen DeGeneres’s work. Discourse within comedy is gendered by a patriarchal framework and is far behind anthropology in terms of equality of voice and gendered content; still, there are comedians, both male and female, making important statements surrounding these assumed gender roles. Jennifer Kober (2009), as a large woman, discusses the bias of the ideal female form in the West, stating that: “I don’t like the word fat, I think it’s harsh. I prefer the phrase: ‘hard to kidnap’. You are not throwing my fat ass into a moving vehicle anytime soon.” Tim Allen (1990) highlights the foundational issue of male hegemony ever so gently, announcing that: “Men are pigs. Too bad we own everything!” I argue that the use of humour allows for more explicit critiques of patriarchy and defuses tensions that can easily arise in academic discussions on parallel themes. Perhaps

men confronted with anti-patriarchal comments contextualized within a comedy club would react better to those same sentiments elucidated within an academic context.

Edward Hall (1973:30) felt that a “culture hides much more than it reveals,” and that what is hidden is hidden “most effectively from its own participants.” While a textual ethnography does offer insights, the layered meaning and significance in the vocal range, kinesics, proxemics, and facial expressions of performance allows for a multitude of entryways into reflexivity for the viewer. This ‘silent language’ of objects, ways of acting and speaking, can be used as a means to understand the unconscious yet vital components of human life and action (Hall 1990:3). Stand-up comedians use this silent language to explore and analyze the seemingly inconsequential normative qualities of their culture.

The orality of delivery also helps the referent to escape, what Clifford Geertz (1973) calls inscription. The ethnographic interpretation, the fictitious creation is written down, and is therefore robbed of its dynamism, thus leading cultural analysis into the dangerous territory of becoming out of touch with the “hard surfaces of life - with the political, economic, stratificatory realities within which men are everywhere contained” (Geertz 1973:27). However, the comedian creates transformative spaces and refocuses cultural frameworks against the backdrop of the home, the most easily relatable arena of human life (Koziski 1984:66-67). The comedian uses verbal timing and the multiple levels of context available in orality to create spaces of self-reflexivity (Hall 1990:2-20). It is through “the flow of behaviour - or, more precisely, social action - that cultural forms find articulation” (Geertz 1973:18). I argue that cultural critics, such as comedians, who take dynamic cultural elements and represent them within a theater of fluid and uninhibited interaction, are engaging with this cultural flow in a more dynamic way; they inscribe less and reassess more.

The standup comedian fills the role of the storyteller in our contemporary culture, of the conveyor of cultural consciousness

(Koziski 1984:73). Like the ethnography, the comedian's anecdotes "are not privileged, just particular" (Geertz 1973:23). Similar to the anthropologist, the comedian performs many roles within our globally connected world. Through their comedy they draw from various sources, some familiar, some strange, but all align together to create conversations and question assumptions, all the while directing their skits towards other members with shared understandings, using humour which is completely contextually placed (Peirano 1998:123). Yet, the dialogues of the comedian remain more accessible to the everyday individual within their collectivity.

The crisis of representation which Marcus and Fischer (1986) explored, and which continues to be relevant within the discipline today, calls for anthropology to engage with audiences outside the walls of academia through a cultural critique that pays attention to both the differences inherent across and within peoples, as well as the homogeneous realities of globalization. I have argued that the comedian, who speaks the truth through comedy, holding up a mirror for the audience to see themselves as they are, offers an interesting alternative to the systematic ways in which ethnographic inquiry is being done (Warren 1977). Although the utter subjectivity of the comedian makes their craft far from academic, anthropologists can learn to create new levels of accessibility and begin to engage with wider populations through a similar use of personal opinion. The potential to increase dialogues within the discourse could lead to new ideas, methods, and increased applicability to real-world problems and questions. Although the theoretical aspect of anthropology is both fascinating and essential, given the world's current socio-political climate, academia must make strides toward applied problem solving. The use of humour offers a means to deal with situations in more blunt and accessible terms. Anthropology, the discipline of quotation marks, can learn from the comedian's lack of tact and use of humour to open doors to more straightforward inquiries. Stand-up comedians not only offer humorous release from the everyday, but also do so in such a way that confronts the very notion of *everyday* and creates spaces of change. Furthermore, the comedian can offer anthropologists interesting subjects of analysis,



since the comedian both exists within, and critically engages with, their own cultures. Anthropologists can find comedians to be fascinating subjects of inquiry, as pioneers of ethnography who influence cultural understandings and ask the important questions, such as: why it is that “when we talk to God we’re said to be praying, but when God talks to us we’re schizophrenic” (Lily Tomlin 1976).

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# FATNESS: NORTH AMERICAN WOMEN'S MORAL PERIL

*FOROUZ SALARI*

## **ABSTRACT**

Over the past 50 years, Judeo-Christian ideology, the North American biomedical system, capitalism, and feminist movements have all played a role in naturalizing and legitimizing the slim body ideal for North American women. In North American society, women's social worth has largely come to depend on their management of the slim body ideal, while their body size has become a representation of a sense of personal responsibility, values, and discipline. Following Judith Butler (1997), I argue that through their acceptance of, and attempts to embody these ideals, women perform their gender and play a part in recreating and validating these socio-cultural norms.

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## Introduction

I have struggled with my weight all my life. Since the onset of puberty at the age of ten, I have been taught to despise my womanly curves and have been reprimanded for my presumed lack of willpower and self-control. Hence, I spent the majority of my adolescence restricting myself to a diet of fat free products, raw fruits and vegetables, and dry corn flake cereal. I also walked two hours per day and worked out daily with exercise videos at home. However, at a height of 155 centimetres (5'1"), the lowest weight I have ever achieved was 58 kilograms (128 lbs.), which, according to the Body Mass Index (BMI) (Figure 1), still placed me just below the overweight category. Although my body was quite fit and toned, I still felt huge and ugly, which led me to constantly hide my body under layers of oversized clothing.

	NORMAL WEIGHT							OVERWEIGHT							OBESE						
	19	20	21	22	2	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39
BMI																					
Weight (kg)																					
140 cm	37	39	41	43	45	47	49	51	53	55	57	59	61	63	65	67	69	71	73	75	77
145 cm	40	42	44	46	48	50	53	55	57	59	61	63	65	67	69	71	74	76	78	80	82
150 cm	43	45	47	50	52	54	56	59	61	63	65	68	70	72	74	77	79	81	83	86	88
155 cm	46	48	50	53	55	58	60	62	65	67	70	72	74	77	79	82	84	86	89	91	94
160 cm	49	51	54	56	59	61	64	67	69	72	74	77	79	82	84	87	90	92	95	97	100
165 cm	52	54	57	60	63	65	68	71	74	76	79	82	84	87	90	93	95	98	101	103	106
170 cm	55	58	61	64	66	69	72	75	78	81	84	87	90	92	95	98	101	104	107	110	113
175 cm	58	61	64	67	70	73	77	80	83	86	89	92	95	98	101	104	107	110	113	116	119
180 cm	62	65	68	71	75	78	81	84	87	91	94	97	100	104	107	110	113	117	120	123	126
185 cm	65	68	72	75	79	82	86	89	92	96	99	103	106	110	113	116	120	123	127	130	133
190 cm	69	72	76	79	83	87	90	94	97	102	105	108	112	116	119	123	126	130	134	137	141
195 cm	72	76	80	84	87	91	95	99	103	106	110	114	118	122	126	129	133	137	141	144	148
200 cm	76	80	84	88	92	96	100	104	108	112	116	120	124	128	132	136	140	144	148	152	156
205 cm	80	84	88	92	97	101	105	109	113	118	122	126	130	134	139	143	147	151	155	159	164

**Figure 1.** Body Mass Index (metric). BMI = [weight (kg) ÷ [height (m) x height (m)]]. People with BMI scores below 19 are considered “underweight” and people with scores higher than 39 are considered “morbidly obese” (<http://www.bmi-calculator.net>).

When my busy and stressful university life prevented me from sticking to a strict diet and exercise regimen, I began to put on weight. Consequently, I faced increased chastisement from relatives, family friends, and doctors. My female relatives even encouraged me to purchase laxatives and other dietary supplements to help me lose weight. The products would work for a few months, but I would eventually regain the weight, if not more. I finally realized that nothing I did was good enough. My body simply could not fit into the ideal biomedical weight categories and would never fully satisfy my family. Therefore, I gave up dieting and exercise. After marriage, I began juggling housework, part-time employment, volunteering, and full-time university classes, leaving me no time for “self-care.” As a result, I began to put on more weight quite rapidly. Today, I cannot bear to visit a doctor for any medical inquiry because I am always lectured about weight-loss and told that the root of all of my problems is my weight. I am told that I am slowly killing myself by my own volition. I am refused the opportunity to explain my reasons for the visit and my right to request a full round of diagnostic testing. Hence, my family and the North American biomedical system have never accepted my body type as healthy and have consistently lowered my self-esteem and confidence by instilling in me a fear of disease and ugliness.

My story, however, is not unique. It speaks to the experiences of many women in North America. As a society, we have stumbled upon an era where a woman’s voluptuous curves are no longer seen as beautiful, feminine, and sexy, but revolting: a sign of her immoral indulgences in food. We have entered a time where an overly slim and almost boyish figure is seen as the ideal of feminine beauty and allure. We have gone from idolizing and admiring the voluptuous figure of Marilyn Monroe to the anorexic figure of Kate Moss. What influenced this change in North American society? Overall, women’s bodies have not changed or evolved significantly.



In this paper, I will show that, over the past 50 years, Judeo-Christian ideology, the North American biomedical system, capitalism, and feminist movements have all played a role in naturalizing and legitimizing the slim body ideal for women. These powerful systems have socialized women to adhere to this ideal in order to reveal their “true femininity”, which today is represented by a slim, toned, and petite body. I argue that, in North America, women’s social worth has come to depend on their management of this slim body ideal, with their body size now symbolizing their values and sense of personal responsibility and discipline. While North American society is culturally, religiously, racially, sexually, and socio-economically diverse, the slim body ideal has become a dominant discourse with widespread social influences. In following Judith Butler (1997), I further argue that it is through their acceptance of and attempt to embody these ideals that North American women perform their gender and help recreate and validate this socio-cultural norm. Nevertheless, some North American women choose to resist this body and gender ideal by embracing fatty or muscular body types, making them susceptible to significant social consequences.

## **Theory of Gender Performativity**

Judith Lorber (1993:568, 578) argues that “believing is seeing,” meaning that what we think about something affects how we perceive it. Hence, if we believe that there are only two sexes (male and female) and two genders (men and women), we come to perceive precisely this in society (Lorber 1993:578). Moreover, Judith Butler (1997:536) argues:

Construction not only takes place in time, but is itself a temporal process which operates through the reiteration of norms; sex is both produced and destabilized in the course of this reiteration. As a sedimented effect of a reiterative or ritual practice, sex acquires its naturalized effect, and yet, it is also

by virtue of this reiteration that gaps and fissures are opened up.

Butler's (1997:532) phrase "reiteration of norms" can be understood as signifying the acceptance and performance or re-enactment of the norms set forth by a society and/or culture, in this case regarding the characteristics and roles of different genders and sexualities. It is through the process of continual acceptance and performance of these norms that one's gender and sexuality is constructed and reconstructed throughout time (Butler 1997:532). Her point is that all people construct their own genders and sexualities by choosing to repeatedly accept, adopt, and act in accordance with the norms that their society and/or culture sets forth for their specific gender and sexuality, thus reiterating them. However, rarely do people wholly accept and live in accordance with all of the norms in their society and/or culture, resulting in the creation of "gaps and fissures" (Butler 1997:536) in the actual embodiment of and identification with gender and sexual norms. Most people, therefore, fall somewhere between the norms for men and women or heterosexuals and homosexuals.

The brilliance of Butler's theory of gender performativity is that it has moved us beyond conceptualizing man and woman or heterosexual and homosexual as static binary opposites towards recognizing that gendered and sexual identities exist along a vast continuum, from the archetypal "man" to the archetypal "woman" or from the stereotypical "heterosexual" to the stereotypical "homosexual". Moreover, it highlights the repetitive and arduous "process of becoming" (de Lauretis 2002) involved in constructing one's gendered or sexual identity, and maintaining or reproducing it over time. In fact, as Teresa de Lauretis (2002:54) argues, identity and identification are not synonymous. Identity "is a matter of social regulation, the allocation or the assimilation of each individual to a social group, a class, a gender, a race, a nation," while identification is about being, knowing and desiring, a question of whom or what someone is (de Lauretis 2002:54). This makes identification an ongoing and dialogical process: a matter of adapting, reacting to,

adopting, or resisting the available discourses on different forms of identity, in this case gendered or sexual identity.

Providing an alternative point of view, Henrietta Moore (1999:157) shows that while contemporary theories have made gender and sexuality seem fluid and ambiguous, allowing for the possibility of resistance of the normative construction of these categories, we should remain critical of the theoretical effectiveness of explaining gender and sexuality based on ambiguity and resistance alone (Moore 1999:156). Moreover, she reminds us that Butler's theory of gender performativity was not meant to and should not be interpreted as overemphasizing individual agency or the voluntariness of gender and sexual performativity and identification (Moore 1999:158). In fact, she states that while the theory of performativity seems to allow for the possibility "to destabilize the regulatory discourses on sex and gender through the repetition and the mimicking of gender categorization... [it under-theorizes] the use and management of the body as a mechanism for the construction and management of identity" (Moore 1999:160).

Moore (1988:3) alludes to the fact that the theory of performativity does not exist outside of or reject the dominant discourses in a culture or society. In order to be accepted into society, people must perform their identities – whether gendered, sexual, racial, etc. – within the acceptable boundaries outlined by their culture or society's dominant discourses; such social performances of identity often involve the management of one's body (Moore 1999). In order to maintain the status quo, societies tend to label and categorize socially resistive forms of bodily modification (e.g., through body art, certain cosmetic surgeries, bodybuilding, or even anorexia and obesity) negatively. Hence, while mainstream gender and sexual constructions can be resisted, such forms of resistance are often met with significant social ramifications.

In North America, women who embrace the slim body ideal reiterate and legitimize their society's gender norms, maintain the status quo, and thereby attain the social status of a morally

responsible and socially disciplined citizen. On the other hand, those who resist or cannot adequately embody this socio-cultural ideal (e.g., due to extreme slimness, fatness, or muscularity) are socially stigmatized in North American society.

## **Brief History of North American Body Ideals**

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the women who were idealized as the most beautiful and sexy were tall, large-busted, and full-figured (Seid 1994:5). Small waists and large arms, calves, buttocks, and hips were highly valued (Seid 1994:5). “Plumpness was deemed a sign of emotional well-being... good temperament... a clean conscience... temperate and disciplined habits, and... good health” (Seid 1994:5). However, at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, members of the middle and upper classes began to idealize a “slim” figure because of its ability to move more easily and quickly, allowing for a more modern and fast-paced lifestyle (Seid 1994:6; Stearns 1997:43-47; Thompson 1994). A change in fashion towards tighter and more revealing clothing restricted the use of thick structural undergarments, such as girdles or corsets, and the *petit-bourgeoisie* began to feel that it was no longer necessary to represent one’s wealth through a corpulent body (Seid 1994:6; Stearns 1997:43-47; Thompson 1994).

After World War II, insurance companies created demographic charts relating premature mortality to fatness, urging the health industry to persuade North Americans to lose weight (Seid 1994:6; Stearns 1997). Certainly, North Americans had begun to put on more weight than in the past, enlarging by an average of two pounds per decade from 1920 to 1990 (Stearns 1997:133-135). This weight gain coincided with more sedentary lifestyles: a decrease in agricultural and manufacturing jobs; an increase in office-based service sector jobs; an increase in the mechanization of all types of work; the advent of automated transportation; and, the invention and advertisement of more fatty snacks.

The 1960s saw the fame of supermodel Twiggy, a 5' 7", 98-pound British teenager who had achieved the ultimate level of slimness (Seid 1994:6-7). Almost immediately, women across North America and Western Europe began to imitate everything about her, from her hairstyle, makeup, and clothing to her slender figure (Brumberg 1997:119-124). Many women obsessively and restrictively dieted, feeling more and more dissatisfied with their bodies (Brumberg 1997:119-124). The 1970s and 1980s then saw the rise of the fitness industry, pushing the ideal from slim to lean and toned bodies (Brumberg 1997:123; Dworkin and Wachs 2009:152-155). The health industry finally caught up with these changing body ideals and declared that slimness was equivalent to health (Seid 1994:7). Therefore, by being linked to the consumption of food, slimness and, by extension, health became the responsibility of the individual (Seid 1994:7). The health industry also began using the Body Mass Index (BMI) – created by Belgian polymath Adolphe Quetelet in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century – to determine people's "healthy" weight categories based on their height (Figure 1) while disregarding bone-structure, muscle-mass, body-type, genetic differences, and much more (Seid 1994:7).

The health industry ignored some very important scientific facts in creating "healthy" weight standards, emphasizing the fact that biomedicine is highly influenced by changes in culture as much as, if not more than, science. For example, most of the fat tissue in our bodies cannot be lost permanently; individual genetic differences restrict the speed and amount of weight-loss; lack of nutrition from restrictive dieting leads to irritability, fatigue, depression, and illness; prolonged dieting leads to the malfunctioning of the body's natural metabolic rate, which, consequently, leads to weight gain; and fat tissue is necessary for the long-term storage of energy, insulation of the organs and, in women, for the start and regulation of ovulation and menstruation, the sustainment of pregnancy, and lactation (Anderson et al.

1992:199; Burgard and Lyons 1994:213; Seid 1994:7-8). As follows, the recent North American trend towards a slim body ideal has very little to do with health. Many more complex issues are at play in the construction of this socio-cultural ideal, as will be discussed below.

## **Naturalization of the Slim Body Ideal**

### **JUDEO-CHRISTIAN IDEOLOGY**

The Judeo-Christian story of Genesis states that God created Adam in His own image and directly breathed life into him, making Adam an image of divinity on Earth. Eve, however, was indirectly created by God from one of Adam's ribs (Wolf 1991:93). As a result, her attainment of perfection and divinity could only occur through Adam, a man and the root of her creation (Wolf 1991:93). Wooley (1994:29) argues that this conceptualization legitimated the patriarchal power of the Judeo-Christian religious institution by reversing the natural order of the world, making men the creators or "mothers" of women.

In this way, the story of Genesis may be teaching women that they are imperfect, inferior to, and dependent on men for their existence (Wolf 1991:94). In fact, Wolf (1991:93-94) argues that this story instills in women a sense of deficiency, malleability, lack of power and personal value. In order to attain divine perfection, women are encouraged to undergo weight-loss procedures (e.g., extreme dieting, excessive exercise, and liposuction) to modify their body's femininity into the ideal of masculinity (Wolf 1991:93-94). Therefore, Judeo-Christian ideology naturalizes the slim body ideal by linking it to the generally slim and toned body of men, which it deems as representative of human perfection. In this case, the women who attempt to embody the ideal of slimness can be viewed as performing the Judeo-Christian moral and religious ideal of masculine divinity.

Moreover, the story of Genesis extends its views on women's immorality and inferiority through the notion of Eve's Original Sin. Being the one who is tempted by the serpent to defy the command of God by eating the forbidden fruit, Eve and all women thereafter are seen as weak, immoral, evil, the source of misery and death, and, ultimately, inferior to men (Wooley 1994:29). Interestingly enough, the very act of eating a forbidden "fruit" implies that women's fatness is the result of their own sinful indulgence in food – also known as the sin of gluttony (Wolf 1991:96). In fact, the health, beauty, and fitness industries have adopted the notion of fatness as sinfulness in order to offer women a never-ending array of weight-loss procedures to help them transcend their naturally imperfect bodies and morality (Wolf 1991:96). These industries identify women's lack of self-control (like Eve's) as the cause of their imperfections of fatness and ugliness (Wolf 1991:96). It is through this link that body size becomes symbolic of women's social and moral value.

The Original Sin also led to the banishment of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden, after which procreation became Eve's punishment, only achievable through sexual intercourse, which still carries strong taboos across many cultures and religions (Wooley 1994:29). Nevertheless, following the sexual revolution brought forth by the North American hippy and feminist movements of the 1960s and 1970s, abortion and contraception were legalized and sex, particularly premarital sex, lost its stigma in North American society (Wolf 1991:97). The female guilt and shame regarding sexual pleasure, which had been inherited from the sins of Eve, was then rerouted towards the pleasure of and oral appetite for food (Wolf 1991:97). Thus, just as sexually unchaste women were seen as "fallen" in the past, women were now seen as "falling off" their diets; just as they "cheated" on their husbands in the past, they now "cheat" on their diets (Wolf 1991:98). Women who eat "forbidden" foods (e.g., carbohydrate-rich or fatty foods) are now considered bad, disobedient, or immoral, similar to Eve after her consumption of the forbidden fruit (Wolf 1991:98).

Hence, in North American society, Judeo-Christian teachings of the story of Genesis have established the management of the slim body ideal as women's moral responsibility, thereby associating notions of spiritual damnation and immorality to female fatness. In order to prove their moral and social value, women must modify their bodies to de-emphasize their feminine sexual features (e.g., large breasts, hips, and buttocks), which signify women's lack of discipline and sinful indulgence in food. Judeo-Christian ideology, therefore, teaches women that they are "good" only when they can embody or perform slimness. By extension, slimness becomes synonymous with the female gender ideal.

## MEDICINE

Fatness has been medicalized as a disease in many different ways. Biomedicine has, over the past few decades, conducted numerous studies linking obesity to a myriad of other life threatening medical conditions, such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease. However, epidemiologists have found that the risks of obesity have been overstated by the biomedical system (Burgard and Lyons 1994:214). Being overweight, or being categorized as falling above the biomedical system's classification of average and "healthy" weight based on the BMI (Figure 1), is not necessarily equivalent to poor health (Burgard and Lyons 1994). Many large people are quite fit and healthy, especially when compared to the ultra-slim members of society who fit the status quo (Burgard and Lyons 1994). The biomedical system's medicalization of large and fat bodies as diseased, however, is significant because it has naturalized and legitimized the North American societal ideal for slim bodies.

In the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, Charles Bernard argued that diabetes, a disease traditionally linked to fatness, must be treated through the reduction of both fatty and glucose-producing foods, such as starches and sugars (Huff 2001:40). This biomedical development has been incorporated into many contemporary weight-loss regimens (e.g., the Atkins diet) that insist on the dietary restriction



of both fats and carbohydrates for successful weight-loss. Later, in 1863, William Banting published a diet regimen aimed at helping people lose weight rather than improve their overall health (Hugg 2001:39-40). This regimen was widely accepted and circulated in England and across Europe and North America; because it was based on Banting's personal weight-loss success using the prescribed methods, he was deemed highly credible (Huff 2001:39-41). Banting's inventive approach using personal experiences has inspired many contemporary developers of weight-loss methods, including supplements, recipes, and exercise regimens.

More importantly, the 18<sup>th</sup> century British widely believed that fat was an external agent that entered the body through food and remained there, in the same way that parasites and bacteria infected the body (Huff 2001:45). This ideology has been crucial to the medicalization of fatness. Fat, therefore, is seen as an external agent capable of infecting people's bodies, leading to the development of the "disease" of obesity. Hence, just as infections can be purged or cured using medication or surgery, it is assumed that fatness can also be purged or cured using weight-loss supplements (e.g., laxatives) and surgical procedures (e.g., liposuction, tummy-tucks, and gastric bypass surgery).

In addition, recent scientific research has led to "discoveries" regarding the biological "causes" of obesity. For instance, the 1994 discovery of the "obesity gene" in mice led many to believe that obesity would soon be eradicated using genetically engineered medicines (Kent 2001:132-133). Many still fail to realize, though, that the gene was yet to be located in the human genome and may not even exist in humans (Kent 2001:133).

More specifically, recent correlational research (Chumlea et al. 1992) has linked female fatness to the early onset of puberty. A study with approximately 450 North American university-aged women, in 1970 and 1987, found that those who started menarche (menstruation) after the age of 14 were taller and leaner with low or "healthy" BMIs, supposedly because their bodies had more time

and energy to dedicate to their growth in height (Chumlea et al. 1992). In comparison, women who started menarche before the age of 12 were shorter, heavier, and more voluptuous with relatively high or “unhealthy” BMIs (Chumlea et al. 1992). This research indirectly identifies women who reach menarche at a younger age as biologically inferior to women who reach menarche and womanhood at an older age, simply because they are larger and shorter, which, based on the BMI (Figure 1), categorizes them as more likely to be overweight and unhealthy. By extension, this study may also be implicitly suggesting that women with more prominent female secondary sexual characteristics are biologically inferior to men, whose figures are mimicked by the taller, leaner, later menstruating women, thereby reifying the Judeo-Christian ideologies discussed above.

Throughout history, developments in the biomedical system have led to the classification of fatness as a disease. As a result, several treatments or cures have been proposed, the use of which are deemed the choice and responsibility of each individual. Moreover, some of the developments in biomedicine have linked fatness to the voluptuous anatomy of women. Therefore, women who use weight-loss treatments to attain the socio-cultural bodily ideal of slimness actually reify the norms and perform the gender identity prescribed for them by North American society, thus enhancing their social and moral value.

## **Social Change Legitimizing the Slim Body Ideal**

### **CAPITALISM**

Capitalism has had a long history in North American society. However, after World War II, its importance and influence increased even further, especially with the invention and advertisement of new commodities for every aspect of life, including health and beauty. Within this system, the slim body ideal can be understood

as “capitalist ideology embodied [because] it reminds us that we must know when to say when” (Koo and Reischer 2004:301).

Capitalism and the market economy function on the basis of regular cycles of control and release (e.g., work to play or weekday to weekend) (Bordo 1993:199-201). In this system, goods must be produced through the control of the working population and later consumed through the indulgence of consumers (Bordo 1993:199-201). By working and earning a wage, people are able to purchase food, which consequently requires more work to convert raw materials into meals. People are then able to indulge in the food attained through their hard work. Nevertheless, people must exercise self-control in their consumption of food in order to produce the idealized slim body, which can be viewed as a sort of commodity. Indulgence in the slim body, however, is not physiological but social: the acceptance and praise of others for the hard work put into attaining a slim body and achieving the socio-cultural norm.

With the rise of the fitness industry in the 1970s and 1980s, North Americans were given new ways of controlling their bodies (Dworkin and Wachs 2009:152). The advent of this new industry had little to do with health and more to do with appearance (Dworkin and Wachs 2009:155). In fact, the fitness industry is linked to increased commodification in North American society: those who engage in fitness are constantly surrounded by the latest trends in fitness products and regimens because the fitness industry, in general, targets individuals whose identity and/or desires shift with changing trends (Dworkin and Wachs 2009:155). People consume the regimens and products of the fitness industry as a means of controlling their bodies against fatness. This consumption, however, is not seen as an indulgence, but as a necessity. An inversion, therefore, has occurred in people's priorities: whereas in the past, especially for the majority of our species' existence, food was seen as the ultimate necessity for survival, it has now become an indulgence in North American society. Instead, expensive fitness and weight-loss products have replaced food to become necessities. This change has certainly favoured capitalism, especially since food is a cheap

commodity in North America whose consumption does not fuel capitalism as much as other more expensive commodities, such as fitness and weight-loss products.

Nevertheless, there is an extremely fine line of balance between control and indulgence, which most people cannot achieve easily (Bordo 1993:199-201). In recent decades, there has been an exponential rise in anorexia, caused by excessive control, and obesity, due to excessive indulgence (Bordo 1993:199-201). Bulimia, on the other hand, is a special case because it falls in between both anorexia and obesity. Bulimics binge by indulging in food and later re-control themselves by expelling what they have consumed through forced vomiting or the use of laxatives (Bordo 1993:199-201). Unfortunately, the North American health and fitness industries indirectly support bulimics' use of laxatives by recommending them as healthy weight management supplements that cleanse the body of toxins, in this case food in general (Bordo 1993:199-201). While North American society views anorexics as having over-achieved the slim body ideal and the obese as lacking the willpower to adhere to it, bulimics maintain a liminal position in which they are stigmatized for failing to control themselves while bingeing but generally praised for attempting to attain the ideal through purging.

Therefore, capitalist ideology has created a dilemma for North American women, as they must simultaneously control themselves and indulge. This ideology naturalizes the slim body ideal as it socializes women to control their eating and discipline their bodies through exercise, while also indulging in trendy fitness products and regimens. North American women who achieve this fine balance also attain the slim body ideal and the high social and moral status attributed to it. The difficulty of maintaining this fine balance, however, has led to eating disorders such as anorexia, bulimia, and obesity, which are met with extreme social stigmatization, especially in the case of the latter.

## FEMINIST MOVEMENTS

The first-wave feminist movement of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, also known as women's suffrage, led to the legalization of women's rights to vote and own land. This movement may have also sparked changes in women's fashion, as women's clothing became tighter and more revealing throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is possible that women chose to represent their changing socio-political status by making their bodies more noticeable in the public sphere with these new styles of clothing. However, what may have seemed revolutionary during this era later became the source of increased societal control over women's bodies. By wearing tighter and more revealing clothing, women could no longer benefit from the body contouring effects of structural undergarments (Brumberg 1997:123). Instead, in order to fit into the changing body ideals of the fashion industry, especially following Twiggy's stardom in the 1960s, women were forced to restrict their diets and, beginning in the 1970s, conform to the regimens of the fitness industry (Brumberg 1997; Dworkin and Wachs 2009; Seid 1994; Stearns 1997).

The second-wave feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s coincided with the rise of the pornographic industry, which intensely objectified women's bodies as sexual objects (Wooley 1994:42). In response, many North American professional women felt an increasing need to decrease the "alluring" or sexual aspects of their bodies (e.g., by wearing boxy and non-form-fitting suits with big shoulder pads or engaging in intensive dieting) as a way of resisting such objectification, thereby attaining a more masculine figure (Lester 1995; Wooley 1994:42). Ironically, this feminist act of resistance reified, reproduced, legitimized, and performed in accordance with North American society's feminine bodily ideal of slimness and the Judeo-Christian ideal of masculine perfection.

Moreover, the sexual and feminist revolution of this era led to an increase in premarital sex and pregnancy, divorce, and single motherhood (Anderson et al. 1992; Wolf 1991). As a result, women were heavily burdened with the responsibility of managing their

families' financial and nurturing needs independently (Anderson et al. 1992:220). In order to control their sexual reproduction and fertility, many women engaged in intensive weight-loss regimens to decrease their body fat and, thereby, the likelihood of ovulation, mensuration, and the sustainability of a pregnancy (Anderson et al. 1992:220). This strategic form of body management allowed women to wait for more advantageous social and environmental situations (e.g., stable employment, financial security, a stable relationship, or a generally improved and secure standard of living) to ensure their own and their children's biological and socioeconomic survival (Anderson et al. 1992:220). As more women entered into the male-dominant sectors of the labour market, many began to mimic the leanness of the ideal male figure in order to justify and ensure their socioeconomic and political advancement in the workplace (Anderson et al. 1992:220). Some took this conceptualization even further by building more muscular figures, which have traditionally been associated with masculinity (Koo and Reischer 2004:313; Linder 2007:465). Muscular women send the message that the associated qualities of strength and discipline, traditionally attributed to men, are equally demonstrative of women's abilities and values (Koo and Reischer 2004:314).

In controlling the size of their bodies, whether through intensive weight-loss or the building of a muscular figure, North American women both reify and resist the socio-cultural bodily ideal of slimness, respectively. What is interesting, however, is that many women exercise agency in their performance of the slimness ideal, using it in ways that benefit their survival and advancement in North American society.

## **Big Bodies as Resistance**

North American women are presented with two choices: embody and perform in accordance with the bodily ideal of slimness or resist it. Those who embody slimness successfully perform their gender, receive positive social attention, and are praised for their

morality; thus, their weight-loss efforts are positively reinforced in North American society. Unfortunately, resistance comes at a high price: social and moral reprimand and chastisement. Resistance leads to the development of a large body, either through fatness or muscularity. Studies have shown that North American women with African or Hispanic ethnic ties are much more resistive of the dominant slim body ideal, more self-accepting of their bodies, and possess more flexible ideas about feminine beauty than Caucasian North American women (Becker et al. 2003; Gremillion 2005:16, 17, 20; Nichter et al. 1995). In addition, African and Hispanic North American women's approach to body modification tends to involve the accentuation of their most unique and appealing bodily features, rather than a heavy focus on weight-loss procedures (Nichter et al. 1995). Instead of directly supporting fatness or muscularity as alternative body aesthetics, these women support overall body care and nurturance (Becker et al. 2003:70). Therefore, the bodily practices of African and Hispanic North American women reveal that, while the slim body ideal is a dominant aesthetic in North American society, it is not an all-encompassing or universal ideology (Becker et al. 2003:70).

Nevertheless, in general, both fat and muscular women are disrespected and seen as unfeminine, androgynous, and sexually unappealing in North American society. Whereas muscular women are chastised, based on heteronormative standards, for attempting to embody and perform the gender of masculinity, fat women are reprimanded for their overindulgences and lack of self-control and discipline. In both cases, their poor treatment by society is based on a patriarchal fear: the increasing social, political, financial, and intellectual power of women in society begins to question and abolish traditional gender roles and power relations (Hartley 2001:64-65). The patriarchal system's only defence against total loss of power is the control of women's physical power (Hartley 2001:65). This is why big bodies, both fat and muscular, pose such a dangerous threat: they defy patriarchal societies' denial of nurturance, space, power, and visibility to women (Hartley 2001:65).

## Conclusion

In this paper, I have shown how, over the past 50 years, North American society has constructed the slim, petite, and lean figure as the ideal of feminine beauty. Women have been socialized to adhere to this ideal through the following: Judeo-Christian ideology based on the story of Genesis; the developments of the biomedical system, including the advent of the BMI, weight-loss supplements, exercise regimens, and surgical procedures; the capitalist ideology of balance between control and indulgence, complicated by the increasing commoditization in North American society; and, the first- and second-wave feminist movements, which granted women entrance into the public sphere and led to changes in women's socio-political status, fashion, gender roles, and engagement in the labour force.

While North American society is highly diverse – culturally, religiously, racially, socio-economically, and sexually – the feminine ideal of slimness remains a dominant discourse with widespread social influences. It is extensively propagated via mass media portrayals, including television series such as “The Biggest Loser” and “America/Canada’s Next Top Model,” cosmetic and clothing advertisements on television, the internet, billboards, and magazines, or medical data and recommendations offered through online blogs, magazine articles, television talk-shows, and news programs.

By adhering to the feminine ideal of slimness, North American women perform their socio-culturally constructed gender identity and reify and legitimize this socio-cultural ideal (Butler 1997), thereby receiving positive reinforcement for their weight-loss or weight-management efforts from society. On the other hand, some North American women, especially those with Hispanic or African ethnic ties, resist the slim body ideal by developing large muscles or embracing their naturally large bodies. Unfortunately, these women are socially reprimanded either for stepping outside of the bounds of the feminine gender identity or failing to control and discipline their bodies to avoid excessive indulgence in food.



Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that the very existence of the ideal of slimness depends on the existence of large bodies, both fat and muscular. Without the existence of a spectrum of bodily shapes and sizes in society, the existence of an ideal would be meaningless. Yet, if North American society is comprised of a spectrum of different bodily shapes and sizes, why, then, would we need to construct a bodily ideal? Do we simply enjoy torturing ourselves and others? Are we only driven in life if we have an unattainable goal dangling above our heads? Or are we so delusional that we simply cannot accept reality? The fact remains that ideals function just as any other laws would in society; they serve as methods of control by the powers at large, ensuring the continual existence of hierarchies and inequalities within society.

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# FOR YOUR OWN GOOD: PATERNALISM AND PATRIARCHY IN URBAN NAMIBIA

*JOHN ALEXANDER PYSKLYWEC*

## **ABSTRACT**

Using the case of the informal settlement of Havana 6, Namibia, I argue that apartheid in Namibia created a highly paternalistic and patriarchal state that racially divided the urban landscape. This state structure continues to operate through the marginalization of racialized lower classes. This is achieved through the state rhetoric policies coupled with a public discourse that constructs certain groups of people as dirty and incapable of comprehending what is 'best for them'. I demonstrate how apartheid policies have entrenched systematic discrimination against poor, non-white citizens and how the language and actions of municipal authorities is used to place thousands of people in a state of contested precarious existence.

## **Introduction**

Apartheid left an indelible mark upon the social landscape of Namibia. More than a decade has passed since the official policy of segregation based on race ended, yet it continues to play an unofficial role in race and class relations. These relations are most notably expressed spatially in urban Namibia, in places such as the capital city of Windhoek. The paternalistic apartheid policies racialized the urban form. Non-whites were required to live in sequestered quadrants where access to the broader city was tightly regulated through environment and national legislation. Since the official end of apartheid and the independence of Namibia from South Africa,

urban centres across the country are witnessing an unprecedented rate of growth as more and more people migrate to the city from rural areas in search of work and better opportunities (Friedman 2000:12). Many migrants are coming from situations of extreme systemic poverty as a result of (former) apartheid policies, and have little to no money to start their new lives in the city. This, coupled with the lack of appropriate infrastructure to facilitate migrants, has given rise to multiple informal settlements at the fringes of the urban landscape (Freidman 2000:13-14).

In this paper I explore urbanization in post-apartheid Namibia. I argue that apartheid fostered a highly paternalistic and patriarchal state that racially divided the urban landscape. Furthermore, I posit that this patriarchal structure continues to operate by marginalizing racialized poorer classes. I argue that this is achieved through the state and public discourse that constructs poor people as dirty and incapable of comprehending what is 'best for them'. I demonstrate this through the case study of an informal settlement on the outskirts of Windhoek called Havana 6 that the local government has slated for removal for the reasons of illegal occupation and poor sanitation. I will begin by tracing the historical rootedness of patriarchy in Namibia by examining some of the social dimensions of apartheid, and how this shaped the development of Windhoek. Next, I will discuss how the end of apartheid and the shift away from race-based national policy has not heralded the inclusion of the non-white population as was originally hoped. Rather, racial divisions now operate within a structure of class divisions and paternalistic classist-based discourse. I will then focus more specifically on Havana 6. I demonstrate how the racialized policies of apartheid have entrenched a systematic discrimination against poor, non-white citizens in which paternalistic language and actions of municipal authorities continue to place thousands of people in a state of contested precarious existence.

Before I continue, I would like to take a moment to situate myself epistemologically and discuss some of the choices I have made for this paper. I approach the subject matter as a self-identified white,

middle-class, queer, male settler in what is now known as Canada. I have not personally been to Namibia, nor have I spoken with any residents of Windhoek or Havana 6. The evidence that I use to support my argument has been gathered from various scholarly articles and my personal analyses of Namibian newspaper articles.

In an attempt to give voice to the people of Havana 6 and other actors in Namibia, I have drawn quotes from the newspaper articles used for the research presented here. All of these statements have been quoted directly from these articles. The names that I use here are those that appeared in the newspaper. I have chosen to do this in light of the fact that the statements and identities of the people who made them have already been entered into the public record. It must be noted that utilizing quotes from newspapers to represent the voices of Havana 6 residents and municipal authorities can be seen as problematic because the quotes could have been selected by the news reporter for any number of reasons, some of which may be politically motivated. Also, it could be the case that these statements were never even made. I admit that this is a shortcoming of my approach. Yet, I must trust in the ethical conduct of the newspaper reporters that I draw from. Furthermore, I believe that it is the only way that I could bring the thoughts, feelings, and emotions of the affected peoples into this conversation. By making use of these quotes I hope to provide a glimpse into the lives of people I have never met. Any misrepresentation of people or places is my responsibility, albeit unintended.

I would also like to outline and unpack a few central terms and concepts used in this paper. I will begin with the term patriarchy. The *Dictionary of Human Geography* states that patriarchy is a “system of social structures and practices through which men dominate, oppress and exploit women” (Pratt 2009:522). I expand on this definition in that I apply it to describe the relationship between a masculinized state, and a feminized subordinated/marginalized “Other.”

The *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED 2011) defines paternalism as “[t]he policy or practice of *restricting the freedoms* and responsibilities of *subordinates* or dependants in what is considered or claimed to be their best interests” (emphasis added). I use the term to describe the relationship between whites and blacks, rich and poor within Namibia.

Also, for the purposes of the discussion in this paper I will be using the terms white(s), non-white(s), and/or black(s) to describe the various ethnic groups, as well as rich and poor to describe social classes within Namibia. This is not intended to over-simplify the richly diverse cultural make-up of the country, nor is it to say that there is no middle class, or mobility between classes in Namibia. However, within the context of apartheid and post-apartheid Namibia, I feel that such dualistic language is appropriate as it reflects what I perceive as visible divisions in society.

Finally, I use the term *informal settlement* to describe “an unplanned and unregulated urban settlement erected on land not officially proclaimed as a residential area” (OED 2011). I stress that this is neither a neutral, nor uncontested term. The term ‘informal’ can have the effect of delegitimizing the plight of millions of people around the world who struggle to survive and make ends meet in urban contexts. These processes of de-legitimization naturalize or erase the racialized and/or classist structures of power that are perpetuated through the state’s claims of legal authority to determine what is formal and informal. The concept informal can also insinuate that life in these settlements is unorganized and chaotic. While this may be the case in some informal settlements, this cannot be taken as a universal truth. I assert that my use of the word informal here does not mean illegitimate, chaotic, or unorganized. Rather, I would like to focus the term on the actions (or lack of) of the state by highlighting that these settlements emerge from the failure of the state to plan and prepare for the needs of their citizens, as well as formally recognize and act upon issues of poverty. I will now turn my attention to the exploration of the rise, fall, and impacts of apartheid policies in Namibia.



## **The Rise, Fall, and Impacts of Apartheid in Namibia**

The South African occupation of present-day Namibia began in 1915 during the First World War (WWI) with the invasion of South African troops into what was then known as German Southwest Africa (United Nations 2011). At the end of WWI the continued South African occupation was legitimized by the Permanent Mandates Commission of the League of Nations which conferred the administration of the territory to the Union of South Africa (United Nations 2011). The rise of the National Party and the implementation of the apartheid system in South Africa in 1948 were subsequently reflected in Namibian territory (Friedman 2000:3).

Apartheid formalized the colonial-era race-based hierarchical structure of the Namibian cultural landscape as the country's population was officially divided along racial lines between whites and blacks. The incorporation of apartheid laws ensured that "[a]ll political and economic power was assembled in the hands of the white minority" (Friedman 2000:3). Although whites 'benefited' from apartheid policies, they were rooted in Afrikaner nationalist sentiment in which "[d]eeply encoded patterns of paternalism and prejudice [were] an essential part of the Afrikaner nationalist tradition ... [and that notions] of superiority, exclusivity and hierarchy [had] long existed as more or less conscious 'habits of mind'" (Dubox 1992:210). Therefore, within this paradigm, the moral justification for racial separation was based on the nationalistic belief of Afrikaner (and other white) racial superiority and the idea that whites needed to 'care' and 'assist' in the development of the 'inferior' blacks. This created a dualist and patriarchal society in which the white elites lived in Western-style industrialized urban centres and farming operations, while the black population were relocated and/or restricted to rural 'black areas' or 'homelands' (Friedman 2000:3).

Afrikaner Nationalist belief was that 'black tribes' had historically lived as bounded entities in a rural setting, hence the creation of these homelands (Friedman 2000:3). By allotting people

to these areas it would allow for a 'natural' development scheme. This rationale denied the fluid nature of cultural practices and subsistence strategies, forcing people to change and adapt to a more rigid and restrictive colonial system that effectively erased the capacity to conduct any semblance of their pre-apartheid life. Many different groups of people were lumped together into geographic spaces that did not contain sufficient resources to support their populations. Ultimately, this created conditions of extreme hardship in the homelands while providing a steady supply of tightly controlled cheap labour for the industrialized white elites on farms or in urban areas (Friedman 2000:3).

In addition to the paternalistic control of settlement and subsistence patterns of the black populations in rural settings, the apartheid government also asserted a high degree of control within urban centres. This meant that in order to reside within the 'white cities', blacks were required to live in designated areas. In the nation's capital, Windhoek (home to roughly 10% of the total Namibian population), black residents were initially confined to a small settlement at the periphery of the city centre, at the time called the Main Location (now referred to as the Old Location) (Friedman 2000:4,7; Penndleton 1996:26). However, beginning in the 1960s, residents of the Main Location were forcefully removed and relocated to the present-day settlement of Katutura, situated farther afield in the Northwest corner of the city (Friedman 2000:6; Pendleton 1996:29).

Municipal authorities believed that the expansion of white residential areas, the squalid condition of the Main Location, and the desire to maintain a physical separation of white and black populations as sufficient reasoning to close down the settlement (Pendleton 1996: 29). The construction of Katutura was a successful attempt to further segregate and control the black population through their confinement to a relatively isolated suburban-like location that was surrounded by industrial areas and highways with limited entrance/exit points and access to transportation (Friedman 2000:5-6). Furthermore, Katutura residents were required to carry

identification cards that proved they were registered, and had the 'right' to live in the city.

The 1970s ushered in an era of relaxed settlement regulation for black residents; however, the cycle of poverty that had been created through apartheid policies restricted the movement of marginalized populations into the more affluent areas of the city. Additionally, despite the freedom to move throughout the urban landscape, black children were still required to attend school in the 'formerly' black neighbourhoods, which further disincentivized any voluntary relocation (Friedman 2000:7). With the exception of some neighbourhoods that immediately lay next to Katutura, the racial division of Windhoek stayed (and continues to stay) intact (Friedman 2000:7).

With the independence of Namibia from South Africa in 1990 came the end of apartheid, which resulted in the supposed freedom of spatial movement for all citizens within the country. Black citizens were no longer confined to homelands. Subsequently, there has been a sharp increase in migration to urban centres throughout the country. Migrants who had been economically marginalized by former state policies throughout the apartheid-era, experienced a number of barriers with living in the city. For example, migrants who arrive with little to no means of support are often unable to afford formal housing rent in the city (Mitlin and Muller 2004:170-174). Thus, in the capital, many informal settlements sprung up in and around Katutura, following much the same urban development model originally instigated during apartheid (Friedman 2000:13). However, the spatial organization of the city has now shifted from being exclusively along racial lines, to more explicitly one of both race and class.

Formerly, the economic and social marginalization of non-whites was a by-product of apartheid policies. As Friedman (2000:12) notes: "[i]n the Namibian context, racial segregation is inextricably interwoven with socio-economic segregation. Windhoek's black population was, and still is, largely congruent with the city's low-

income group.” She continues to note that, in light of the recent past, an avoidance of racialized language has given rise to the deployment of class-based terminology to describe marginalized populations (Friedman 2000:13). Although this has the effect of erasing the racialized nature of poverty in the public eye, it does not change it. Therefore, I assert that a continuing settlement pattern within the city of Windhoek based along racial, and now class, lines has been firmly entrenched after years of segregation policies in Namibia. I will now demonstrate how these race- and class-based divisions of the urban landscape are punctuated by the continuance of paternalistic and patriarchal attitudes or policies enacted by municipal authorities.

## **Post-Apartheid Paternalism and Patriarchy**

To the north of Katutura, near a dump site, is an informal settlement of approximately 2000 people called Havana 6 (Nonkes 2008; Sibeene 2008). People began to construct unauthorised housing in this area in early 2008 (Issac 2009a). According to city officials there is no running water, sewage system, electricity, or roads to the site (Isaac 2009a, 2009b, 2009c; Nonkes, 2008; Shejavali 2008a, 2008b, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c), and residents assert that the entire population is serviced by only two toilets (Sibeene 2008). People began to occupy this area, which is owned by the City of Windhoek, in response to the lack of residential land, and the high cost of housing (Isaac 2009a, 2009c; Nonkes 2008; Shejavali 2008a). The lack of services and land to build on within the Havana 6 settlement is not unique to Windhoek or Namibia as a whole. Although statistical accuracy is impossible in most cases, local news sources state that approximately 20-25% of Windhoek’s population of 300,000 presently live in informal settlements (Nonkes 2008; Sibeene 2008), and local government institutions are ill-equipped to handle the massive influx of migrants to the city.

These facts and figures paint a bleak picture of Havana 6, and in many cases, life in such circumstances are due to complex processes

occurring in Namibia. That is to say, life in an informal settlement is not a product of one person's behaviour, but rather the behaviour of the society within which the individual finds themselves making particular decisions. The decision to move into such tenuous and uncertain conditions is not an easy one to make, and there are multiple factors that must be considered, such as rent costs and personal space. Petrus Shaanika, a Havana 6 resident, describes the effects of some of these factors:

... [D]ue to the escalating costs of paying rent and the fact that it became uncomfortable and intolerable to reside with another big family, my family of eight people and I immediately moved to Havana 6 when we learned that other people have moved there and started to construct their shacks. (Isaacs 2009b)

What is not made clear in this statement is how people like Petrus are found at the nexus of a racialized class structure that is created, reinforced, and further advanced by public policy and uneven economic development. This, however, is not lost on other residents of Havana 6. Ruben Kamutuezu, for example, states how: "Our people don't have anything to eat, and many are just crying the whole day because our brothers are being arrested. The Government only seems to be good for rich people, and we are not rich" (Shejavalu 2009d). He carries on to say that "[f]rom my birth until now, I haven't felt free. I only see the rich people enjoying Namibia's freedom, but the poor are meaningless. No one can see us" (Shejavalu 2009d). This is a sentiment echoed by Rudolph Kahuure, who argues: "They have no concern for suffering people. They should respect us the way we respect the municipality" (Shejavalu 2008b).

In late 2008 the Windhoek government demonstrated its lack of respect for Havana 6 residents when it enacted certain policies that are born of inequality and continue to reinforce the exclusion of people living in Havana 6. Residents began to be evicted by municipal authorities who claimed that the eviction was part of a larger city-wide 'crack-down' on informal settlements (Isaac 2009a,

2009b, 2009c; Nonkes 2008; Shejavali 2008a, 2008b, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c; Sibeene 2008). The City of Windhoek, in a letter that had been addressed to the “illegal land invaders” (Shejavali 2008a, 2009b) of Havana 6, advised residents that “[t]his site has serious potential health risks and therefore it is not suitable for human habitation. The site is close to the refuse dumping site and it is not serviced in terms of water and sanitation” (Shejavali 2008a). In another statement to *The Namibian*, the Chief Executive Officer of the City of Windhoek, Niilo Taapopi, reiterated the city’s position as to why it needed to clear the settlement, yet he also revealed his concern about the image and reputation of his city and its government:

We understand that there are great numbers of people in need of places to stay, but the area where they have settled has not been demarcated as an area for settlement. There are no water, electricity, or sanitation services there, and if we let them to continue to settle, this same municipality will be accused of not providing adequate services. (Shejavali, 2008b)

What can be extrapolated from this statement is that, within the context of post-apartheid Namibia, the displacement of residents and the erasure of their settlement will allow the state to continue to not provide essential services to those most in need. Meanwhile, the state continues to legitimize their authority to police these same bodies under the guise of paternalist care and knowing what is in the best interests of their citizens. The question is: whose interests are really being advanced?

This notion of displacement and erasure can be further challenged when it is juxtaposed with the willingness of residents to pay for these services (Shejavali 2008a, 2008b). One Havana 6 resident commented that “[a]s a community, we will organize to pay for water, sanitation, and even electricity” (Shejavali 2008a). Comments such as this contest paternalistic and patriarchal constructions of the state and challenge its legitimacy. Not surprisingly, then, despite

the publicly stated intention of Havana 6 residents wishing to improve the conditions of their settlement, the city began to conduct 'evictions' by way of demolition. The municipal authorities were able to move forward with the removal of homes and other structures without the need for a court order through the invocation of the *Squatters Declaration of 1985* (Isaac 2009a, 2009b; Nonkes 2009).

This apartheid-era law states that any landowner can destroy any structures that have been erected on their property without consent, as well as evict any persons without notification and/or the need for a court order (Isaac 2009b, Nonkes 2008). The lack of prior notice effectively removed any opportunity for the impacted individuals to fight their eviction before it took place. Additionally, any person being evicted under the *Squatters Declaration* was then legally prevented from challenging their eviction once the proclamation was issued (Isaac 2009b, 2009c; Nonkes 2009). The city employed the use of the police force to tear down the homes of residents or spray paint targeted homes with the words "ILLEGAL. REMOVE" (Nonkes 2008, Shejvali 2008a, 2008b, 2009a).

Regardless of the legal manoeuvring to gag, erase, and remove the residents of Havana 6, this process did not go uncontested. In the words of an unnamed community member: "We are staying here because we need a place. We are not against the law, we just need a place to live" (Shejvali 2008a). Yet the actions of Havana 6 residents went far beyond words. Some people joined together to form a 'concern group' and organized a petition for the city to stop the evictions (Shejvali 2009c, 2009d; Sibeene 2008). The city attempted to undermine their efforts by rejecting the petition on the grounds that it did not constitute a 'real' petition. They cited how it lacked certain legal components, such as a person to whom it was addressed and/or the signature of a formal group leader (Shejvali 2009c). However, this did not halt the community's actions. They enlisted the aid of the Legal Assistance Centre (LAC), a non-governmental organization that strives to "[p]rotect the human rights of all Namibians" (LAC 2012) and took the city to court (Isaac 2009b; Nonkes 2009).

With the assistance of LAC, the community argued that the squatter proclamation was unconstitutional since no court order is needed to carry out the evictions; and that the evicted person(s) are barred from pursuing their case in court (Isaac 2009b, 2009c; Nonkes 2009). Originally, this argument was upheld by the law, and the actions of city officials were deemed illegal and in violation of the Namibian constitution (Isaac 2009c; Nonkes 2009). Despite this, evictions continued with the creation of a “buffer zone” around the dump site, requiring all structures within the zone to be removed (Shejavali 2009b). The impact of the evictions on the people of Havana 6 was deep and indelible. Norman Tjombe, Director of the Legal Assistance Centre, captures some of the pain and anguish faced by displaced members of the community:

Imagine children who are evicted from their homes and have to sleep under a bridge. Their right to education is likely affected; their dignity is affected. ... For families, their right to privacy and to security of person is violated. Their right to the peaceful enjoyment of possessions is violated as many of the forced evictions occurred without warning, forcing people to abandon their homes, lands, and worldly possessions (Nonkes 2008).

Less than a year later the initial decision of the court was overruled by another judge. The appeal judge stated that the people of Havana 6 had “approached the court ‘with dirty hands,’” and that their illegal occupation of the land meant that they were not entitled to the court’s aid. Justice Johan Swanepoel stated that: “[the court’s aid] is denied in order to maintain respect for law; in order to promote confidence in the administration of justice; in order to preserve the judicial process from contamination” (Menges 2010).

The Havana 6 case is striking as it exemplifies an apartheid-era law used to displace people from their homes. This case reveals the discourse(s) constructed by the state, local news media, and community members regarding Havana 6 residents’ sanitation,



criminality, and the ability to provide for themselves or improve their living conditions. The state's paternalistic discourse surrounding the Havana 6 site, perceived the land to be 'unfit for human habitation' and unable to provide the necessary services to improve the quality of the environment for the 'illegal land invaders' with 'unclean hands'. The state thus constructs the image that the land and the people upon it are dirty, unworthy, and criminal.

By categorizing people into subordinated positions of uncleanness and lawlessness, the state and news media delegitimize, marginalize, and feminize the residents of Havana 6, thus reinforcing the state system of naturalized patriarchy. By constructing residents in this manner, they are made to appear incapable of taking care of themselves and are therefore in 'need' of cleaning and reform. This discourse covertly sanitizes the violence that is being perpetrated against the Havana 6 community in that they are considered to be dirty and uneducated. This, in turn, then renders natural the entire structure of class inequality that is deeply rooted in race and racialized policies, remnants of the apartheid-era that perpetuate a paternalistic and patriarchal state actor.

Under the guise of concern for the residents of Havana 6, the government has positioned itself as a benevolent, well meaning, and law-abiding entity that is acting in the interest of the citizens of Namibia. However, if this were truly the case, the government would be housing these people they are evicting. Not simply pushing them away.

In reality, the people of Havana 6 are ready to help themselves improve their own living conditions. For at least the past two years, the people who inhabit Havana 6 are making a life for themselves in a place and time rigidly controlled by the state. They are constructing and defending their own homes, asserting the legal rights that they feel they ought to possess, and in the process have rewritten the laws of Namibia. Ruben Kamutuezu, a resident of Havana 6 and member of the Havana 6 Concern Group, highlights the industrious and tenacious will of the people very clearly when he states: "If we have

land, we can sustain ourselves and create jobs for ourselves through various projects” (Shejavali 2009d).

## **Conclusion**

In this paper I have argued that apartheid cultivated a highly paternalistic and patriarchal state in Namibia that racially divided cities, and that the same patriarchal structure continues to operate by marginalizing racialized poorer classes within society. I have used the case of the informal settlement of Havana 6 to demonstrate how this is accomplished through discursive practices that construct poor people as unclean and unable to properly care for themselves. State-directed evictions are thus seemingly justified by health and sanitation concerns. These justifications for eviction echo those used during the apartheid-era to evict black settlers in Windhoek, and exemplify the current paternalistic and patriarchal nature of Namibian government and society. Yet, these processes do not go uncontested. As the residents of Havana 6 demonstrate through their legal challenge that questioned the constitutionality of the laws that repress them, the poorer classes of Namibia are fighting for their rights and independence. They are challenging the dominant minority to recognize and respect them and their presence in Namibian urban landscapes.

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