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## INTRODUCTION

The 2016-17 PlatForum editorial team welcomes you to the 15<sup>th</sup> edition of our publication. PlatForum is the longest running, student-organized Anthropology publication in Canada, and we strive to provide an accessible and open platform such that all Canadian anthropology graduate students may contribute. We notably depart from a tradition of featuring the works of students from a cross-section of Canadian universities, and showcase instead the diversity and richness of graduate student research interests from within the University of Victoria. The theme this edition is ‘contemporary anthropology,’ and we asked authors look at ‘pushing the boundaries’ of anthropology in order to encourage and promote new types of investigation, practice, and knowledge formation.

Recalling the function of academic institutions as critical sites of knowledge production, we revisit the academic context which has undoubtedly shaped and influenced this current publication. We cast our gaze between the thematic research foci of the University of Victoria’s Department of Anthropology, and the research interests of the authors featured in this 2016-17 edition. The articles herein reflect some of the ways in which emerging scholars are integrating framings, concepts and methods that span and crosscut departmental and disciplinary thematic clusters.

Authors unpack dominant or state, legal, academic and mainstream discourses, highlighting voices which have otherwise been silenced in the production of knowledge. These articles challenge power inequalities by privileging the perspectives of Indian Residential School Survivors, Indigenous internal migrants and Southeast Asian sex workers, illustrating how these diverse groups continue to shape, combat, and act on the circumstances of their world in the face of significant adversity.

Authors have worked to move beyond epistemologies which risk over-simplification. Neale seeks to overcome the problematic rural-urban dichotomy in order to debunk assumptions around Indigenous people’s ‘cultural assimilation’ in urban centers. Earnshaw rejects a unilinear model of evolution, instead favouring a notion of co-evolution to explain complex adaptations to terrestrial and marine resources. Both Anor and Wenzel explore the hidden or subverted dimensions of violence, which they argue from different

perspectives, is inherently more complex when we pay attention to how individuals frame their experiences of violence.

Anthropologists today are shifting their analytical objects from persons and ‘cultures’ to materials and objects, both visible and invisible. This expansion of disciplinary focus is reflected in the Visual Anthropology and Materiality departmental theme. Hagestedt’s case study on YouTube videos uploaded from mobile devices of a Pearl Jam concert is an exploration of the relationships between technology, objects and individuals through Actor Network Theory (ANT) which emerge through the experience of creating, circulating, consuming and narrating online videos. Specker develops a case study from two local choirs (Victoria, BC) using a sensory-based anthropological approach. From the perspectives of choir members and directors, she critically considers singing/song/voice as a form of physical sound production, which when shared in practice, can “build bridges with sound,” or in other words - generate feelings of community bonding.

Anthropology’s value is bringing into view the assumptions and framings which shape how we understand and engage with the world. By refocusing from the general to the particular, the dominant to the subversive, from the visible to the invisible, we can appreciate and possibly challenge exceptions to the presumed rules, status quo, normative frameworks and worldviews.

Sincerely,

Ursula Abramczyk and the PlatForum Editorial Team

## CONTRIBUTORS

### 1. SHARONNE K. SPECKER

Sharonne is a Masters student in Anthropology at the University of Victoria, and is currently studying communities of practice and musical processes among young Swiss folk musicians. She is interested in the intersection of anthropology and the arts, and her research on collective musical participation addresses social bonding in the context of cooperative singing activities. Her work is further informed by both an academic and applied background in classical voice and pedagogy.

### 2. ABRA WENZEL

Abra Wenzel is currently a doctoral candidate at Carleton University. She previously received a Master's degree from the University of Victoria. Her research interests are issues regarding Indigenous rights following the Indian residential school era and the now complete Truth and Reconciliation Commission. She is now studying issues of ownership and repatriation of Indigenous art within Canada and at this time, Abra Wenzel is working in the Northwest Territories in order to return Indigenous material heritage to its various source communities.

### 3. BETSY HAGESTEDT

Elizabeth (Betsy) Hagestedt is a PhD Candidate in Visual Anthropology and Materiality at the University of Victoria. Her PhD research focuses on the representational use of the Internet by La Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador (CONAIE), examining both their own website and their extensive use of social media. Her MA research, completed at Durham University in the UK, compared the online text used to represent CONAIE and two other large organizations in the region. Her research interests include technology, representation, popular culture, and indigenous peoples and rights.

### 4. KRISTIANNE C. ANOR

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## 6. JACOB EARNSHAW

Jacob Earnshaw recently completed his MA degree in Archaeology at the University of Victoria. He was researching the Historical Ecology of cultural forests on the west coast of Vancouver Island. Specifically, he focused on dating bark stripping events in Nuu-chah-culth territories and creating regional chronologies. He was working under the supervision of Peter Stahl and Quentin Mackie. Jacob has worked in archaeological consulting around the province and participated in a number of digs and surveys with SFU, U of T, and UVic. The history of the NW coast and its ecosystems are a great interest to his.

# SEX WORK MAKES YOU “MAD”: A CROSS-CULTURAL ANALYSIS OF THE COMMODIFICATION AND EMBODIMENT OF THE BODY-SELVES OF SEX WORKERS

KRISTIANNE ANOR

## ABSTRACT

The bodies of sex workers have long been “black-boxed” by anthropological scholarship. Moreover, the lived experiences of sex workers have been silenced and highly under-theorized in academia; instead, framing the experiences and bodies of sex workers as “deviant”, “at risk”, or “in need of regulation”. However, as cultural anthropology endeavours to study the theoretically rich concept of embodiment in terms of the “violences of everyday life”, this paper will argue that the bodies of sex workers are deserving of rigorous theoretical inquiry as their everyday experiences epitomize the paradigm of precarity and are, in fact, bodies that exemplify this notion of “becoming”. Drawing data from three different ethnographies in three different countries, this essay serves as a starting point for further anthropological inquiry into the bodies and lived experiences of sex workers in terms of merging the loaded theoretical concepts of embodiment, precarity, and becoming.

## INTRODUCTION

Margaret Lock (2013) has argued that during the second half of the twentieth century, the material body was largely “black boxed” by cultural anthropologists, as the contents of which were ruled as “irrelevant” in social science research endeavours. Similarly, current anthropological research on sex work has “black boxed” the bodies of sex workers from theoretical discussion. Recent scholarship on the act of selling sex has somewhat abandoned the limiting term ‘prostitution’ as it simply denotes the sale of sex (Brennan 2004; Edelman 2011; Garcia 2010; Kelly 2008; McDowell 2009; Zheng 2009) whereas “sex work” encompasses “a continuum of activities from selling sex itself, through work in massage parlours and escort agencies, to all sorts of services based on the commodification and sexualization of men’s and



women's bodies" (McDowell 2009:102). While this essay recognizes this definition of sex work, it will argue that McDowell's definition is still problematic as not all sex workers necessarily view their bodies as 'objects' or 'commodities'.

Scholarship on sex work and sex workers have focused on the events and the forms of violence women have experienced in their lives that either led them to voluntarily or forcefully enter the sex trade (Gysels *et al.* 2002; Hughes 2000; Raymond 2013). Such literature has focused on the risks, associated with sex work most notably in its connection to HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections (Huang *et al.* 2004; Spittal *et al.* 2003). In these studies, the bodies of sex workers are seemingly 'black-boxed'—that is, they are largely untroubled by thoughtful critique (Lock 2013)—or, they are mentioned either in passing or in terms of targets of risk and/or violence. While a lot of present research on sex work is completed in order to establish preventative strategies for contracting HIV/AIDS under the current biomedical paradigm of prevention (Choudhry 2010; Maher *et al.* 2011; Scambler and Paoli 2008), more work needs to be done around the lived experiences of sex workers in various cultural contexts in order to identify the "violences of their everyday life" (Scheper-Hughes 1993) that inevitably impact the physical and mental health and well-being of individuals involved in sexual labour. Moreover, another major concern of current research on sex workers pertains to the contested relationship between sex work and the state, which subsequently labels the discursive bodies of sex workers as "deviant", "unworthy", and in need of constant surveillance and regulation (Hughes 2000; Tambiah 2005; Lorway 2009; McDowell 2009; Garcia 2010; Edelman 2011; Hoang 2011).

As a result of the multiplicity of negative discourses surrounding sex work, including discourses of harm, danger, risk, and larger discourses of governmentality and neoliberalism, sex workers are consequently lumped together and collectively viewed as 'bad and unhealthy citizens'. Arguably, these discourses force sex workers into deeper structural and political inequalities and as a result, their lived experiences and everyday violences often get overlooked as policy makers and governmental officials 'know better' and have a 'better' idea on how to 'manage' them. This could have contributed to the reasons for which anthropologists and other social scientists have neglected the bodies of sex workers in their theoretical analyses and

have effectively worked to the ‘black-box’ and silence sex workers’ experiences in sexual labour. The politicization and medicalization of sex work in popular and current discourses on sexual labour could also have contributed to the under-theorization of the bodies of sex workers in anthropological and other social scientific research.

As cultural anthropology endeavours to study the theoretically rich concept of embodiment in terms of the ‘violences of everyday life’, this paper will argue that the bodies of sex workers are deserving of theoretical inquiry as their everyday experiences epitomize the paradigm of precarity and are, in fact bodies that exemplify this notion of ‘becoming’. By principally focusing on female sex workers from Mexico, the Dominican Republic, and China, this essay will argue the above by addressing the following questions: (1) *How are the bodies of sex workers – including emotions and sexuality – commodified?* and (2) *How is sexual labour embodied?* In addressing the commodification of sex workers’ bodies and the embodiment of sexual labour, this paper’s ultimate goal is to serve as a starting point for future anthropological research on the becoming and precarious bodies of sex workers in various cross-cultural contexts.

## COMMODIFYING BODY-SELVES

The commodification of the body and body parts is a troubling theme within anthropology (Sharp 2000). This subject is particularly troubled when discussed in the framework of embodiment, as embodiment theories regularly question and problematize the Cartesian mind-body dualism, maintaining that body, self, and personhood emerge as inextricably linked (Sharp 2000). However, anthropological theories that have reworked their epistemological frameworks and ontologies of the body from thinking of the body as ‘thing-like’ to ‘process-like’ reconciles commodification with embodiment theories. The most notable reconceptualization of the body for the purposes of this paper is the work by Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Margaret Lock (1987). In their paper, they argue that one’s body is actually comprised of three bodies—the individual body, the social body, and the body politic—where emotions serve as a nexus for the three distinct bodies. The three bodies that comprise one’s body are neither static, nor do they act independent of one another; instead, the individual body, the social body, and the body politic interact

together in society as a highly emotive subject (Scheper-Hughes and Lock 1987). Conceptualizing the body as three distinct, yet one interrelated subject allows anthropologists to contribute to other disciplines' discussions on commodification as it frequently focuses on rights of control or ownership of one's own body (Sharp 2000). However, as Turner (1994) rightly asserts, danger lies in the tendency both to depoliticize the body and to deny its sociality (Sharp 2000). The body-self is then, not only inherently socialized—as it is recognized as an active entity completely integrated within and a crucial part of society—but it is also deeply historicized and contextualized (Nguyen and Peschard 2003). Moreover, the body-self or the 'mindful body' is a highly affective body that experiences and senses the world through emotions, which thus, make the mind and body inseparable in everyday experiences (Scheper-Hughes and Lock 1987).

The inseparability of the mind and body and conceptualizing material bodies as 'body-subjects' or 'mindful bodies' problematizes the commodification of bodies and body parts. Because objectification is often part of the process of commodification, human body-subjects can be stripped of their humanity, evaluated only in terms of their instrumentality, reduced to their appearance, stripped of autonomy, and more often than not, silenced. In fact, Sharp's historical analysis of commodified bodies demonstrates that the body frequently emerged as a site of production (and reproduction in terms of the female body), where living persons may be valued solely for their labour power (2000:293-295). These bodies, in turn, require regulation. Sex work is one site where production, reproduction, enslavement, and colonization frequently merge (Brownmiller 1975:391-92, Rubin 1975, cited in Sharp 2000:293-294). However, viewing the bodies of sex workers as 'body-selves' problematizes the objectification and commodification of their bodies for sexual consumption and rejects the reduction of their humanity. Further, investigating the lived experiences of sex workers challenges their objectification by un-silencing their experiences and forcing society to recognize them as individuals and not instruments of deviance or pleasure.

## CONCEPTUALIZING SEX WORK: WHAT IS BEING COMMODIFIED?

As previously defined, sex work necessarily involves the commodification of one's body for the purposes of consumption. While viewing sex work as a continuum allows for a broad depth of various sexual activities (i.e. intercourse, oral sex, phone sex, pornography, etc.), this view simultaneously leaves the processes of objectification and commodification ambiguous. Moreover, it raises the question of to whom does this definition best serve? Do all sex workers agree with this view of their labour? Do sex workers see their bodies as objects to be sold? If sexuality and emotions are in fact commodified, how does this process unfold? This section will analyze these questions in the contexts of sex workers in Mexico, the Dominican Republic, and China.

### *Uniform Sex*

Patty Kelly, Visiting Assistant Professor in the Department of Anthropology at Haverford College, examined the personal histories and experiences of women who work in Zona Galactica, a state-run brothel in Tuxtla Gutiérrez, the capital city of Chiapas, Mexico. In her 2008 ethnography, *Lydia's Open Door: Inside Mexico's Most Modern Brothel*, she argues for a recognition of sex work as work and contrary to the perspectives of women in Chiapas, she argues that sex work is neither "the easy life", nor "an easy way to make money" (Kelly 2008:151). Her interviews with the female sex workers in Zona Galactia illustrate the same view. The Mexican female sex workers in Kelly's research strongly assert themselves as workers and do not think in terms of "selling their bodies"; rather, they collectively assert that what is for sale is a service and *not* their bodies. Selling the service of sex is a difficult job. In response to male clients who claim sex work is easy, Gabriela, an informant of Kelly's argued:

You think this work is easy? You think this is easy? This is *not* easy! The work is hard, going with man after man. Some think it's easy. Others think that we are women without hearts; that we don't feel [Kelly 2008:152].

Gabriela's argument is consistent with the idea that sex is a service and a job, which, like any other job, necessarily entails stress. Moreover, Gabriela's statement demonstrates that performing sexual

labour involves complex dynamics of negotiation, refusal, and submission (Kelly 2008). Workers must learn to exact the highest price possible for their services and develop the skills to “read” clients for their potential danger and adjust their own behaviours accordingly (2008).

The thousands of men who enter the Zona Galactica are in search of a woman who will provide them with the services they are looking for at a price they are willing to pay. In contrast, the women working in the zone wait in their rooms or doorways for a client who will pay their asking price for the services they are willing to provide. Kelly maintains, “The process of negotiating a sale is riddled with multiple, overlapping, and sometimes surprising power relations: class, gender, age, appearance, experience, and ethnicity of both worker and client may come into play during negotiations” (2008:152). The sex workers working in Zona Galactica offer various sexual services for various prices and Kelly’s statement demonstrates that sex workers have a high degree of agency in regards to both the services they provide, as well as the client they wish to service. This illustrates that the female Mexican sex workers are in fact, in control of their own bodies. In their view, their bodies are not viewed as commodities for consumption—much the opposite. Kelly’s informants are very much in control of their own bodies and the services they provide. Their bodies are not commodified; rather, it is their sexuality that is ultimately commodified. Moreover, their bodies are never objectified because what is being sold is a service and the women make it very clear to all of their potential clients that there are boundaries within the services they choose to provide, and those physical-sexual services are always detached from any sort of emotional labour (Kelly 2008). As another one of Kelly’s informants, Bárbara maintains, “Sex with a client is totally different from sex with a partner, as there is an emotional bond and commitment between you and your partner” (2008:184). Kelly maintains that sex workers delineate this boundary between romantic sex and sex as work in numerous ways: “clients will receive sexual services, while other acts, such as kissing or even the fondling of breasts, will be reserved only for partners” (2008:184). By reserving some sexual acts for romance and other sexual acts as work, women are able to redefine sex as work and are careful neither to objectify, nor commodify their emotions.

Other strategies that create a distinct work identity or “work-self” include the following: workers put on a “uniform” at work, which consists of not only makeup, dress and a changed name, but sometimes of attitude as well (2008). According to Kelly, “They also often leave on some article of clothing, such as a bra, during sex with clients rather than disrobing entirely; in this way they are literally and figuratively not entirely exposing themselves to clients” (2008:184-185). The strategies women used to separate their work life from their sex life or “normal” life outside of the zone demonstrates the fluidity of their body-selves. The need to create a work identity that is separate from their home identity—whether their home identity resembles that of a mother, child, wife, sister, or any combination of that – underscores “how people create or maintain a sense of self and belonging and how this ‘becoming’ is permeated with questions of hegemony and power” (Van Wolputte 2004:261).

While these women enact a certain persona at work through objectifying and commodifying their sexuality, they participate in sexual labour in order to fulfill their role outside of the zone. For instance, Gabriela lived a life of poverty and domestic abuse and saw sex work as a path to freedom (Kelly 2008). Gabriela maintained, “So, I knew about this, that this work existed. It exists everyplace. If I was going to go, I would put myself to work, even if it was in this, in being a prostitute” (2008:124). Gabriela also maintained that she could have become a servant, but the earnings from such work would not have enabled her to pay the rent, send her children to school, and feed them properly (2008). Gabriela’s path to the zone is not unique; Kelly notes that the majority of the zone women are the heads of their households; thus, they choose physical-sexual labour because it is the highest paying job for women with few skills and little education (2008). Nonetheless, for the Mexican sex workers working within the zone, their lived experiences and everyday violences are felt not through the commodification of their bodies, rather through the daily stresses of their work that involves selling sexual services and through the structural inequalities inherent in Neoliberal Mexico.

### *Sex for Money, Marriage, and Migration*

Denise Brennan, Associate Professor and Chair of the Anthropology Department at Georgetown University, examines the

motivations of workers, clients, and others connected to the sex tourism business in Sosúa, Dominican Republic. In her 2004 ethnography, *What's Love Got to do with it?: Transnational Desires and Sex Tourism in the Dominican Republic*, she conceptualizes Sosúa as a “sexscape”, which is to refer to “both a new kind of global sexual landscape and the sites within it” (Brennan 2004:15). She borrows the suffix *-scape*, from Arjun Appadurai to “allow us to point to the fluid, irregular shapes of these landscapes” (1990:6, cited in Brennan 2004:15). Thus, Brennan reserves Sosúa as “a site within a global economy of commercialized sexual transactions” (2004:16). Through this conceptualization, Brennan is really viewing Sosúa as a “hot-spot” for sex tourism, where women – and to a much lesser extent, men – provide sex tourists with a variety of sexual services in exchange for money, marriage, and migration. Brennan’s conceptualization of Sosúa as a sexscape and a subjective paradise for sex tourists is important as it elucidates how the everyday life experiences are “hypercommodified” (Brennan 2004:50) for those living in Sosúa, which she argues includes the hypercommodification of gendered, racialized, and sexualized bodies (Brennan 2004). According to Brennan, “In the bars and discos in Sosúa, both sex workers and sex tourists know what is for sale—sexual acts, culminating in men’s ‘sexual release’. It is these sexual acts to which women attach a price and for which men pay” (2004:27). She goes on to say,

The commodity here is not just the ‘aesthetic illusion’...on which strip shows are based, but rather one in which women deliver an actual ‘good’ by physically touching—what Wendy Chapkis calls ‘commodified touching’ (1997:6)—and in most cases, sexually arousing and sexually satisfying their male customers. [Brennan 2004:27]

Brennan’s ethnography further complicates the dominant view of sex workers “selling their bodies” in exchange for monetary goods. Moreover, it addresses the question of to whom this definition of sex work best serves. By contextualizing Sosúa as a sexscape, Brennan sets out to understand two things: (1) She seeks to understand why North American and European men come to the sexscape and what exactly they are seeking to find; and (2) to understand why women get involved in sex work and how they navigate their way through the “violences of their everyday lives” by using their body-

selves to “perform love”. Brennan argues that sex tourists coming to Sosúa “desire, demand, and pay for real—not imagined—sex” (2004:27), while at the same time, Sosúan sex workers are simultaneously delivering the expected and agreed upon “sexual goods” and trying to get the men to fall in love with them. Brennan questions why men travel from North America and Europe to Sosúa for sex consumption and contends that part of Sosúa’s appeal to sex tourists lies in the overall experience Sosúa provides as the backdrop for their sexual transactions. She also suggests, “Just as important as cheap prices for sex in Sosúa is the experience that *everything* is cheaper than home; thus foreigners, able to afford nearly anything they desire, can enjoy ‘feeling rich’” (2004:29). Moreover, contextualizing Sosúa as a sexscape implies a dependence on racial differences between sex tourists and sex workers (2004).

Sosúa, therefore, not only serves as an exotic backdrop for sex tourists to “feel rich”, but it also supplies the racial differences that sex tourists have openly sought and fantasized. According to Brennan, in Sosúa it is common for European men to have “fantasies not only of ‘hot and fiery’ sex but also of relationships that reflect more ‘traditional’ understandings of gender roles than they might have in their relationships with European women” (2004:33). Thus, male sex tourists coming to Sosúa are visiting to fulfill a luxurious, sexual fantasy that is partly fueled by their commodification of sexuality and race, which then gets translated to the “erotic” bodies of sex workers. In the eyes of sex tourists, the bodies of sex workers are first racialized, eroticized, and sexualized and are then objectified as “tools” or “instruments” to which they commodify in order to “live out” their sexual fantasies in the Sosúan sexscape.

Conversely, sex workers view their own bodies under a much different light. Much like the sex workers from the Zona Galactica, Sosúan sex workers also viewed sex as work. However, unlike the Mexican workers, Sosúan workers offered their clients “the girlfriend experience”, in an effort to gain “wife status” and migrate off of the island (Brennan 2004). Brennan argues that within the context of Sosúa, many women who engage in sex work do it as an advancement strategy where marriage and migration off the island are the key goals of this strategy (Brennan 2004). According to Brennan, “These women see Sosúa’s sex trade and marriage to foreign tourists as a fast track to economic success—a way not to solve short-term problems but



to change their lives (and their families' lives) through migration overseas, in the long term" (2004:24). Viewing sex work as an advancement strategy for long-term financial gain and stability in order to successfully provide a "better life" for themselves and their families is arguably akin to young students pursuing post-secondary education so that they too, may live a life of long-term financial gain and stability.

The same argument could also be made for immigrants from foreign countries coming to Canada in pursuit of the neoliberal façade of the "American Dream". Both students and foreign immigrants pay money in order to pursue an education or immigrate to Canada in hopes for a "better life". In the case of Sosúan sex workers, however, their advancement strategy dictates they commodify their "hypersexuality" and emotions before, during, and after the act of sex, as they often must continue to "perform love" throughout the duration of their client's stay in order to increase their chances of money, marriage, and migration. In an interview with a Sosúan sex worker, Elena, who was "successful" in marrying a German man, talks about if she was in love with her German husband: "You know how it is. It's not love. My children and I will have more opportunities in Germany" (Brennan 2004:95-96). Elena's statement speaks for many of the Sosúan sex workers in Brennan's ethnography. Clearly, for Sosúan sex workers, choosing to "fall in love" with one man over another is a rational process with serious material consequences, which is contrary to the notion of "falling in love" as a kind of elation that comes from losing control of one's senses.

For Sosúan sex workers, pretending to be in love by "performing love" requires alertness, savvy, and determination (2004). Elena's savvy sex work experience is a subject of both admiration and jealousy for her co-workers. Her co-workers continually asked her advice on how to sustain their pretend relationship with their client once he has left the island. Elena's advice was simple and centered on the performance of love: "You have to write that you *love* him and that you miss him. Write that you cannot wait to see him again. Tell him you think about him every day" (2004:111-112). From this, it is clear that Sosúan sex workers' job/advancement strategy far extends beyond the economic transaction of sexual intercourse. Indeed, "performing love" requires determination, savvy, and an understanding of the wants and desires

of their foreign male clients. Much like the Mexican sex workers in Kelly's ethnography, Sosúan sex workers adopt a "girlfriend-in-love" identity with their clients and revert back to their "regular" selves once their client leaves. From Brennan's ethnography, it is clear that sex work neither begins, nor ends in the bedroom; moreover, it seems to involve a multifaceted commodification of sexuality and emotions, rather than a simple commodification of the body.

*Temporal Body-self Assemblages for sale*

Tientien Zheng, Professor of Anthropology at SUNY Cortland, highlights the urban karaoke bar as the locus at which the factors of rural-urban migration, the entertainment industry and state power intersect to provide the context for sex work in Dalian, China. In her 2009 ethnography, *Red Lights: The Lives of Sex Workers in Post-Socialist China*, she provides a rich account of the lives of karaoke hostesses in Dalian in Northern China—a career whose name disguises sex work and minimizes the surprising influence these women often have as power brokers. Zheng argues that hostesses "defied the claim of both the state and client on their reproductive and sexual organs by taking an economic view on their bodies" (2009:12). As a kind of synecdoche, a woman's reproductive organs were representative of her body as a whole in Dalian, China. Women's bodies served a singular purpose: to reproduce in order to fulfill their duties to their families and the state. Hostesses, on the other hand, "assumed an absolute entrepreneurial ownership of their bodies and marketed them for their own independent, autonomous, and instrumental uses" (2009:12). Interestingly, Zheng argues,

They viewed their bodies as an assemblage of fragmented parts, attached a price tag to different body parts, and demanded financial rewards from the clients according the parts that they touched. They also refused the clients' free use of their bodies on the pretext of romance and love, and demanded its quantified monetary gains. In doing so they subverted the gender and social hierarchy and reclaimed the commodification of their bodies as an empowering practice.

Therefore, according to Zheng, Dalian hostesses commodified fragmented parts of their bodies and assigned various

price tags for each part. Moreover, she maintains that hostesses viewed their bodies as an “assemblage of fragmented parts.” Collier and Ong define assemblage as, “domains in which the forms and values of individual and collective existence are problematized or at stake, in the sense that they are subject to technological, political, and ethical reflection and intervention” (2005:4). If hostesses viewed their bodies as assemblages in this sense, then it follows that their bodies are intrinsically problematized because their fragmented commodities contradict the hegemonic role of reproduction women in Northern China are meant to fulfill. While hostesses’ bodies are still somewhat reduced to their reproductive organs (Zheng 2009), these body parts neither share the same meaning, nor purpose as women who are not sex workers. Instead, the purpose of hostesses’ fragmented bodies is, according to Zheng, multifaceted. Dalian sex workers are autonomous entrepreneurs of their own bodies in that they control what they do with their bodies and what they use their bodies for in terms of reproduction. Because of this, hostesses’ fragmented bodies are multifaceted in meaning, purpose, and instrumental use; in a sense, their bodies are sites of precarity.

The precarious nature of the assemblages of sex workers bodies in Dalian, China demonstrates the complexity of body commodification. This complexity is heightened when emotions, sexuality, and identity are also fragmentally commodified. Zheng maintains that hostesses adopt multiple identities and alternate between different characters depending on the client that they are serving. On a busy night, a hostess might accompany as many as seven different clients, each client requiring different character performances or “alternate” identities (2009). According to Zheng, a key feature of the hostesses’ work lives was the distinction between their “onstage” identities—where they are serving clients—and “offstage” identities—which indicates the absence of clients. These onstage and offstage identities are characterized by radically different behaviour patterns, which included changes in character, dress, and attitude (2009). For instance, when clients arrive at the karaoke bar, it is not uncommon for men to select their hostesses based on the womens’ fragmented commodified body parts in an otherwise crude fashion that reduces the hostess’ body-self to eyes, breasts, buttocks, and vagina. Despite the crudeness of their clients, Zheng maintains

that hostesses continue to perform their onstage, alternate identities to gain their customer's favour. Moreover,

To lure clients, hostesses presented a hypersexual and lustful image by winking, wearing revealing clothes, and assuming seductive postures. They purred, laughed, screamed, or moaned when clients preyed on their bodies, and they sang songs to seduce clients and convey their 'devotion'. [Zheng 2009:215]

Onstage, hostesses adopt a hypersexual identity that appears to be fully "devoted" to their clients, obeying their demands; whereas, offstage they return to their "true" identities, as independent, autonomous women who reject the patriarchal society in which they live (Zheng 2009). One of Zheng's informants, Hua, expressed her attitudes towards commodifying her onstage identity:

What good does love do? What's the use of it? Can you eat it or drink it? If a man does not give me money and only says he loves me, I don't want this kind of love. What's the use of such a man? If I want sex, I am not looking for you. So many men are waiting in line. I am still young and have my capital. How can I give it to you without any remuneration? I will not be able to say this when I grow old, but at least at this moment I can choose and select. If you don't give me money, only talk love and try to take advantage of me, I will never let you get me. I will tempt you—I will kiss you and hug you to the extent that you cannot stand it, but I will not allow you to touch me; even if you succeed in touching me, you cannot get me. Until you pay out of your pocket. [Zheng 2009:222]

Thus, Hua rationalizes her presence onstage by juxtaposing that identity against her offstage identity, arguing that she is still young and has her capital and that now is her time to be economically successful. She also talks about how she feigns a closeness to her clients, which implies that she is not only commodifying the physical act of intimacy (i.e. sexual contact), but also the emotional aspects of intimacy, including devotion, care, and love (Zheng 2009). From Hua's statement, she demonstrates that her identity is fragmented, fluxed, and temporal. Both her onstage and offstage identities inform each other and are somewhat governed by time. In saying that she is

young and will not be able to continue sex work when she is older, her onstage and offstage identities effectively have expiry dates and they are bound to temporal constraints. Thus, Hua's body-self will remain in constant flux and her identity will continually be fragmented according to its temporality and contextualization. Finally, her body-capital and fragmentally commodified body parts are directly connected to her fragmented identities and thus, body-selves, in that her emotions and sexuality are also commodified.

### *Section summary*

The above accounts of cross-cultural sex work have demonstrated one pervasive theme; that is, sex work *is* work and what is being commodified is a woman's hypersexual, fragmented "work" identity/body-self. Wendy Chapkis (1997) argues that the construction of "multiple identities" is a general characteristic of all sex workers. This behaviour is rooted in the nature of sex work itself—indeed, Chapkis sees it as a form of "emotional labour". Chapkis maintains that sex workers change between identities to "manage" their emotions in the process of sexual labor, Identity switching allows sex workers to both summon and contain emotions at will (Chapkis 1997). Essentially, Chapkis argues that sex workers' multiple identities function as a defense mechanism to protect themselves from the "psychological ramifications of their work" (Zheng 2009:212). However, sex workers' "chameleon-like capacity" (Chapkis 1997; Zheng 2009) or "schizophrenic identities" (Van Wolputte 2004) are also demonstrative of contemporary Western, industrial society's "incoherent self" (Van Wolputte 2004). Moreover, this contemporary body-self is fragmentary, often incoherent and inconsistent, precisely because it arises from contradictory and paradoxical experiences, social tensions, and conflicts that have one thing in common—they are real and experienced (2004:263). The bodies of the sex workers in the ethnographies by Kelly, Brennan, and Zheng suggest that sex workers' commodified fragmented body-selves have a temporal aspect and can take place along many axes, such as past and present, or public and private (2004). The next section will explore how sex workers from Mexico, the Dominican Republic, and China embody their sexual labour through their body-selves.

### EMBODIMENT

Thomas Csordas understands embodiment as “an indeterminate methodological field defined by perceptual experience and the mode of presence and engagement in the world” (1993:135). Csordas’ approach to embodiment considers how the activities of the mind—thinking, perception, and interpreting—have a bodily basis; that is, how these activities reside in the body. Moreover, Csordas (1990, 1993) situates his theory of embodiment on the level of lived experience and not on that of discourse; embodiment is about “understanding” or “making sense” in a prereflexive or presymbolic way (Van Wolputte 2004). Van Wolputte maintains, “It [embodiment] precedes objectivation and representation and is intrinsically part of our being-in-the-world. As such, it collapses the difference between subjective and objective, cognition and emotion, or mind and body” (2004:258).

Embodiment is thus meant to describe body-selves’ active participation, engagement, and experience in the social world. Under Csordas’ lens, body-selves are dynamic, fluid, and malleable due to their embodied experience that is simultaneously a part of and situated within the social world. Essentially, his view of embodiment dictates body-selves as active participants in the making and remaking of the social world. Because of the dynamic quality Csordas’ embodiment theory understands body-selves to have, body-selves are thus, in a constant state of flux and fragmentation. This remains true for sex workers who come to embody their sexual labour through various means and under various social, cultural, temporal, and political contexts.

### *Looking the Part, Losing your ‘Self’*

Sex-workers embody their sexual labour by adopting various identities and performing a number of hypersexualized characters while they are at work or “onstage” and then adopt a different identity when they are “offstage”. For instance, many of the sex workers in all three of the ethnographies performed multiple characters and fulfilled a number of diverse sexual roles that were catered towards their clients’ racialized and sexualized fantasies (Brennan 2004; Kelly 2008; Zheng 2009). In order to perform these identities and in order for sex workers to embody their sexual labour, they must first change

or “enhance” their bodily appearance through technology (Hogle 2005).

In Zona Galactica, physical appearance is of great concern to sex workers and fashion in particular offers insights into how workers identify themselves and relate to their work (Kelly 2008). Zone workers often come from the *campo* (countryside) and typically lack the attire of urban women and must learn from others how to dress (Kelly 2008). Kelly maintains that the changes some women make from street clothing to work clothing is extreme: “Gabriela arrives wearing pants and a loose T-shirt and changes into a blue negligee with black lace and high heels” (2008:163). Further, heavy make-up is also a typical bodily alteration in the zone (Kelly 2008). These types of bodily alterations and changes into “uniform” or “costume” for their work personas demonstrate how sex workers in Chiapas, Mexico come to embody their sexual labour. They are actively participating in a social process of sexual labour that encourage their body-selves to adopt to and dynamically change from their “offstage” identities to their “onstage” identities. Bonita, another informant of Kelly’s, notes the difference between her work and home personae:

They have said to me, ‘You don’t look like you work in this place’. Because they see me like a normal person. And when I leave here, I don’t make myself up like I do here. I change everything. I dress more casually, sporty, and only put on a little makeup. On the other hand, here I put on blush, eyeliner, red lipstick, everything. I’m not the same. Even my behaviour is different. Here, I try to walk so that my butt stands out. When I’m in the *centro*, I tie back my hair. And here I leave it loose. [2008:164]

Bonita’s words illustrate how she comes to embody her sexual labour by adopting a work identity different from her “offstage” identity that involves changes in her aesthetic appearance and behaviour and reflects Mexican standards of beauty and sexuality.

In Sosúa, sex workers also alter their physical appearance and change their behaviours when working “onstage”. According to Brennan, “Fashion is one way to discern quickly who works with clients” (2004:143). Sex workers often apply heavy black eyeliner and style their hair into a side ponytail in order to “look the part” (2004). Moreover, in order to maintain this look, sex workers (those that can

afford it) get their hair consistently styled at salons, buy jean-shorts, wear tight Lycra shirts (that resemble sport bras), stay away from loose body-concealing clothing, wear lots of jewelry, but never pantyhose with shorts, and finally, wear flip-flops by day and high heels at night (2004). As one of Brennan's informants, Nora, notes, "I take my time getting dressed, I try to make my makeup look really good, not too much...It's important to dress decently because men treat you the way you carry yourself" (2004:151). Nora's words point towards the meticulous care it takes in order to present oneself as "decent" in order to attract male-clients. As Nora takes her time getting ready, she is not only "getting ready for work", but she is also embodying her sexual labour by prepping and primping for her "onstage" character identity that she will subsequently perform. For sex workers, the time and care it takes to "get ready" is actually their active engagement in their embodied sexual labour, as they are in the process of adopting an alternative, fragmented identity.

In Dalian karaoke bars, hostesses also "enhance" their appearance and sexuality by adopting similar preparation routines to those sex workers in Chiapas and Sosúa. Zheng maintains:

To appear more attractive to male clients and to efface their rural backgrounds, hostesses pursued techniques of body-refashioning and ornamentation. This entailed consuming various forms of body-altering products and surgical services, which included both permanent alterations (plastic surgery) and non- to semipermanent bodily modifications (whitening creams, fake double-eyelids, permanent hair waves). [2009:186]

Thus, just like the sex workers encountered in Kelly and Brennan's ethnographies, hostesses from Dalian karaoke bars also undergo technological aesthetic alterations to their appearances in order to heighten their sexuality, as they are embodying their sexual labour and becoming their "onstage" identities. Moreover, Zheng maintains that hostesses "remake their bodies" in order to transition from "looking like someone from a rural area" to looking like an "urbanite", as hostesses' body practices constitute a highly distinctive style that identify and mark them as sex workers. The bodily enhancements and technological changes made to hostesses' bodies



are demonstrative of how they come to embody their identity as a sex worker and as a woman living in an urban city.

### *Section summary*

Sex workers from the Zona Galactica, Sosúa, and Dalian karaoke bars all come to embody their sexual labour by altering their bodily appearance, changing their behaviours, and shifting between multiple identities that constitute their “onstage” and “offstage” selves. According to Van Wolputte:

...this possibility of moving from one body(-self) to another may cause a more-or-less incoherent sense of self to develop: This very flexibility and fluidity, this indeterminacy or metaphoric character of embodiment, enables the self to engage in a wide variety of contexts and relationships [2004:259].

Therefore, these body-selves are simultaneously seen as an embodied process of self-making and of becoming, which altogether, underscores the precarity of sex-workers body-selves.

### CONCLUSION

In questioning how the body-selves of sex workers are commodified and how they embody their sexual labour, the ethnographies by Kelly (2008), Brennan (2004), and Zheng (2009) illustrate the existence of multiple selves. Van Wolputte notes, “in the West multiple selves traditionally have been associated with pathologies such as schizophrenia or multiple personality disorder” (2004:262). The multiple, complex, and multifaceted selves fashioned by sex workers in three very different cultural contexts documents a unique instance where sex workers are more-or-less obligated to promote a multiple self in reconstructing their body-selves in a way that enhances and commodifies their sexuality and emotions. This “schizophrenic” fragmentation of sex workers’ precarious assemblages of body-selves is reflective of the very nature of their work-environments. As they adopt specific identities according to their clients’ individual sexual fantasies and desires, their body-selves are continually becoming and spend a significant amount of time in a

space of liminality, where their multiple fragmented identities are scattered and at times, overlapping. Their work is highly risky, dangerous, and although they are very much in control of their bodies (Brennan 2004; Kelly 2008; Zheng 2009), they are not in control of their clients' precarious actions. At any point in their lived experiences at work, they could be subject to serious harms and risks like rape, physical abuse, and contracting STIs and/or HIV/AIDS. This precarious line of work is projected on the body-selves of sex workers who are constantly in a state of flux and becoming because their body-selves are embodied by larger society.

The lived experiences of sex workers body-selves are particularly deserving as “the anthropology of the body focuses no longer on the abstract or ideal(ized) body, but on those moments during which the body and bodiliness are questioned and on the experience or threat of finiteness, limitation, transience, and vulnerability” (Van Wolputte 2004:263). The everyday, lived experiences of sex workers epitomize the paradigm of precarity as their fragmented body-selves are in a constant state of becoming, as seen in the multiplicity of their “onstage” and “offstage” identities in the ethnographies by Brennan (2004), Kelly (2008) and Zheng (2009). Having to deal with their multiple identities’ “violences of everyday life”—that is, multiple violences everyday, onstage and offstage—underscores the difficulty and complexity of engaging in sexual labour. Thus, sex work *is* work; in fact, sex work makes you “mad.”

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# MARITIME ORIGINS, NICHE CONSTRUCTION, AND THE EMERGENCE OF COMPLEXITY AMONG THE NORTHWEST COAST SOCIETIES AND THE NORTE CHICO COMPLEXES

JACOB EARNSHAW

## ABSTRACT

The complex hunter-gatherer societies of the Pacific Northwest and the early satellite states of the Norte Chico (3<sup>rd</sup> to 1<sup>st</sup> millennia BCE) are used as case studies in an analysis of the proposed maritime origins of early complex societies and emergence of agriculture. Niche construction theory will be used within these case studies to assess the co-evolution of maritime resource use and the intensification of cultivation practices. *To what extent do marine resources impact the economic prospects and growth of human groups? Could marine abundance associated with localized terrestrial niches drive the co-evolution of complex society and cultivation?* The Northwest Coast (NWC)—much like the early development of the Peruvian coast—were influenced by maritime subsistence levels which due to the increasing populations, may have resulted in the intensified production of plant foods. The state level Peruvian complexes will be compared against the NWC complex hunter gatherers; shedding light on the similarities and difference of how their development took place in their respective environments. This paper seeks to understand how differing cultures create niches within coastal environments and the underlying connection between cultural complexity and maritime societies.

## INTRODUCTION

The rise of complex social organization and the emergence of agriculturally based civilizations have been assumed to develop through hierarchical stages that eventually peak with agriculturally based, state level civilizations. The complex societies of Norte Chico on the arid coast of Peru (3<sup>rd</sup> to 1<sup>st</sup> millennia BCE) and those of the Northwest Coast of North America (2<sup>nd</sup> millennia BCE to historic period) are two examples of complex social organizations that emerged without the deep foundations of agriculture. Rather, it was

ecosystems on land and bounty from the sea that played important roles in their development. This paper takes a historical ecological approach in examining how the abundance of marine resources and local terrestrial niches impact the co-evolution of complex society and cultivation.

### *Concepts regarding the emergence of social complexity*

Complex societies are thought to emerge as the result of growing populations of people clustering in large sedentary communities. There are two outcomes of a growing population that influence the complexity of society (Diamond 1999). The first outcome suggests that smaller communities utilize familial relations in mediating disagreements; therefore, have less violent resolutions to conflicts. Additionally, larger communities which contain multiple familial relations are more likely to experience violent conflicts between outlying groups; thus, there is a need for a system of laws and enforcement of rules. Social hierarchy can often emerge when particular individuals or groups are placed in positions of power and consign preferential treatment or subjugation on others. The second outcome suggests that the greater the population the more opportunities for diverse occupations and specialization of services. With the resultant social hierarchy, centralized government, diversification of economies, there can emerge associated tenants of “civilization.”

The emergence of agriculture, specifically the use of cereal crops (Diamond 1999:141), has been credited as the primary cause of nomadic hunter-gatherer societies transitioning towards more populous sedentary settlements. The societies that did not cultivate domestic crops themselves are thought to have acquired the knowledge of farming from neighbours (1999:178-191). According to Jared Diamond (1999:284) the intensification of wild crops over long periods of time encouraged more complex societal organization as populations in sedentary communities increased. Where this transition towards social complexity occurred, and what cultures benefitted from it, has largely been seen as simply congruent with what species on earth were “domesticatable” in certain areas. Grasses or cereals lend themselves to domestication over large areas, as do many existing beasts of burden; hence their appeal to early human manipulation and

use (1999:165). Environmental conditions and human ingenuity are thought to contribute to the intensified use and domestication of plant and animal species. This gives rise to growing sedentary communities and agricultural surpluses around which complex civilization propagates.

Two culture histories on the west coast of the Americas are considered as case studies in which dependence on agriculture was not necessarily a catalyst for emergent complexity. The dynamics of these cultures' rise to complexity appear to be less dependent on a couple individual species and rather in the interaction with multiple ecosystems. The rise of both the "affluent hunter-gatherers" of the Pacific Northwest Coast and the early coastal forebears of the Andean civilizations are illustrations of populations driven not only through the cultivation of plant species but also through access to the bounty of rich fisheries and abundant coastlines. Their emergence illustrates the co-evolution of cultural interactions within each unique local marine and terrestrial niche and suggests great duality of processes in the formation of regional complexity and cultural development.

## MARITIME ASSOCIATED CASE STUDIES



*Figure 1: Norte Chico complexes (Bing Maps, referenced Moseley, 1975)*

The Peruvian coastline is home to potentially the oldest known civilization in the Americas (Pringle 2001). Norte Chico emerged on the Peruvian coast below the desert foothills of the Andes



Mountains. A number of populated urban centers arose without the use of ceramics and arguably little early dependence on agriculture (Moseley 1975). Despite these hallmarks of old world societies, populous and dispersed urban complexes developed exhibiting hierarchical government, manufacture of crafts and textiles, elaborate burials, and monumental architecture (1975). Dating as early as 3500 BCE (Mann 2005) the network of coastal and inland urban complexes are thought to be one of the few regions of the world where complex civilization emerged independently of other complex societies (Pringle 2001; Solis et al. 2001). Large sites along the coast and in the interior appear to have both developed in unison (starting in 3000 BCE), until the growth and development of inland sites exceeded those on the coast (2500 BCE to 2000 BCE) (Haas et al. 2004); a time which roughly corresponds with the rise of the region's largest site, Caral (Solis et al. 2001).

In 1975, Michael Moseley, an archaeologist working at the Norte Chico sites in Peru, developed the "Maritime Foundations of Andean Civilization" (MFAC) theory in response to an overwhelming archaeological assemblage of fish and shell appearing at large population centres. He found the largest coastal centers produced little in the way of agricultural resources and were adjacent to the most productive fisheries on the Peruvian coast (Moseley 1975). He attributed the Norte Chico society's remarkable growth in population and size to a subsistence system based almost exclusively off of marine resources. Agricultural systems were not excluded entirely from subsistence systems (1975:116). They were developed along the coast and near inland sites mainly for the purposes of growing cotton for fabrics and fish netting; plant food products were seen as an afterthought (1975:116). The natural coastal environment and marine economy was thought to have driven and sustained population growth and as such, contributed to the emergence of social complexity for the Norte Chico.

Moseley (1975) argued that the eventual transition towards inland irrigation systems and the greater dependence on agricultural products was made possible by coastal peoples "pre-adaptation" to the cultivation of plants from an early period of valley floodwater farming. He suggests the opening of inland deserts to intensive cultivation would have required some early foundations in farming. The cultivation of naturally flooded valleys would have introduced the

conditions for plant domestication and farming to supply dietary supplements and resources to an otherwise large and wholly maritime population. Additionally, a strong workforce and established social institutions (created and maintained through marine resources) would have had to exist to mobilize and construct irrigation and canal earthworks in the arid interior (1975:117).

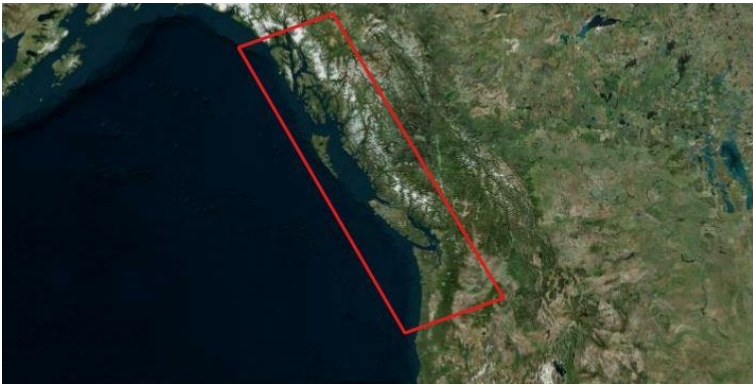
Later archaeological dating (Raymond 1981), however, suggested that inland sites were fairly contemporaneous with the earliest coastal centres and were considerably larger than previously thought (Pringle 2001; Raymond 1981). This has cast doubt on the centrality of maritime subsistence at Norte Chico. It suggests that the region was composed of numerous satellite villages connected to large inland and coastal sites which were dependent on both marine and agricultural resources (Pringle 2001).

Raymond (1981) argues that while the presence of maize is fairly under-represented in the archaeological record so too are other root and potato crops that could have been dietary staples and grown in a multitude of different environments. Such plants may not have preserved well over time compared to fish and sea mammal bones or even plant seeds. “Achira” or *Canna edulis* is an understudied root crop known to have been eaten at Norte Chico (1981:814). It could have provided a large portion of the population’s dietary needs, and yet has been largely lost due to poor preservation (1981:814). The biases in preservation and the presence of domesticated crops at most sites suggests that Mosley’s Maritime Hypothesis (1975) was too heavy handed in its dismissal of the impact of farming on Norte Chico’s early rise (Raymond 1981). The interpretation of the archaeological record has not yet determined which of the major sites emerged earliest and whether or not marine resources were depended upon primarily.

With greater scrutiny of the MFAC hypothesis it remains clear that even the large inland sites have evidence of at least some dependence on a seafood diet in addition to terrestrial crops. Despite the distance from the sea, fish bones and mollusk shells remain abundant in archaeological deposits and animal bones are found to be almost exclusively those of marine mammals (Pringle 2001:623; Solis et al. 2001). Even the preserved feces found in middens universally contain anchovy bones (Pringle 2001:623). As such maritime

resources likely played a large role in the early development of population growth, cultivation, and sedentism.

Norte Chico development into complexity in terms of sustenance may not be solely dependent on either the abundance from the sea or intensification of the land, but rather interplay between the two. Moseley's (1975) argument that irrigation and intensified agriculture would not have emerged without a transition period in which cultivation was established is not without merit. Especially, since cultivation requires major terra-forming activities to prepare the desert for farming. How might maritime abundance have led to the intensification of cultivation and the production of anthropogenic landscapes? Turning now to the second case study up the west coast of the Americas in the Pacific Northwest, may present similar conditions of abundant coastlines, large populations, social complexities and intensification of landscapes.



*Figure 2: Northwest Coast societies*

The parched desert was potentially the biggest factor inhibiting the early development of agriculture for indigenous cultures of Norte Chico. The opposite extreme, a dense abundant coastal rainforest in the Northwest Coast, might have curtailed development of intensified agriculture in a similar way. In both case studies the maritime environment made land-use limitations relatively less of a factor in the growth of populations and development of complexity. Parallels between these two case studies are demonstrated by the use of marine resources which likely provided an impetus for the development of complex social structure and growth. The

development of Northwest Coast social complexity could be seen as a sort of template as to how maritime people develop cultivation practices within landscape limitations and how agriculture is not always tied exclusively to the beginning or end of a complex society's development.

The Northwest Coast is often seen as a relatively unique example of a group of hunter gatherers exhibiting complex social hierarchy, sedentary lifestyle, and many other hallmarks of more complex agricultural groups. Traditionally the affluent coastal chiefdoms were seen as the expected consequence of a rich coastal environment (Ames and Maschner 1999). Today this view is critiqued due to the landscape dynamics of complex coastal environments and our better understanding of the development of cultivation practices.

A closer examination of the fertile coastline finds great variability in resource on a more localized scale. Salmon runs, considered the backbone of coastal economies, were known to periodically fail causing famine for large populations (Deur 1999:132). Some rivers had extremely poor runs, while neighbouring tribes would gather more salmon than could be consumed by their people. Some groups inhabited resource abundant areas while others inhabited largely marginal environments. Deur (1999:132) notes that aside from rivers the coastal environment was a patchy network of small ecosystems with isolated 'hot-spots' of use. Sea mammal gathering rocks, clearings in which deer and elk gathered, productive shellfish beaches and mussel headlands, berry patches, larger estuaries, and scattered prairie all varied seasonally and spatially across the landscape. Therefore, the resource abundance that was available to human groups on the coast was largely the result of a constant interplay of the local and the regional and the terrestrial and marine environments. Rich local groups grew and prospered while poorer groups were often forced to join confederacies and participate in feasting networks to gain better access to resources (Ames and Maschner 1999). The territoriality and culture that emerged along with population growth thus established much of the hierarchical systems that led to complexity on the coast.

Relatively large coastal populations began to settle near estuaries in larger villages between 4000 and 2000 BCE as sea levels stabilized following glaciations. Salmon and other fish became more prevalent in newly established ecosystems (Deur 1999). This influx in

food and the development of storage techniques allowed for more year-round sedentism. Human populations grew between 2000 and 1000 BCE with the increased establishment of settlements near secondary resource sites such as sea mammal hunting sites, halibut fishing grounds, and berry/root/clam harvesting sites (1999:135). Populations continued to rise between 1000 BCE and 500 AD in which cultural development is seen with the increase in trade, potlatching, and legitimization of elites (1999:135). An increase in the population of Northwest coast communities parallels the growth of resource exploitation; salmon weirs and traps, dip nets, clam gardens, transplanting of clam and salmon smolts to new locations, and plant cultivation. Deur (1999) suggests that initial population growth was due largely in part to the abundance of marine resources which pushed demographic levels to the carrying capacity of the marine environment. Further growth in population can be largely attributed to the transition towards intensified use of terrestrial resources (Ames and Maschner 1999; Deur 1999).

This last spike in population growth and increased social/technological complexity was tied to—whether it had initiated or resulted from—the increased intensification of particular resources (Deur 1999). In the Northwest Coast, this has been attributed to various forms of micro-environments (Ames and Maschner 1999) in which niche expansion by human manipulation benefits other species. Deur describes this as the creation of *physio-mimetic* structures in the landscape; humans mimicked or enhanced the natural conditions by which certain plants grew (2002:13). As structures, they were not apart from the surrounding landscape, but instead, were simply expanded and enhanced ecosystems that already existed within the area. An example can be found in the Natural Oak prairies that lie in the rain shadow of the coastal mountains from southern Vancouver Island to northern California. These grasslands and open hardwood forests were created and extended through fire management and allowed for the cultivation of various root, bulb, and nut crops. In addition to controlled fire, clearings were made on south facing slopes in the densely settled spruce-hemlock rainforests of Oregon to produce root vegetables and berries (Deur 1999:141).

In coastal estuaries of British Columbia (BC) gravel beds were terraced, bordered, weeded, and fertilized, with ocean debris for root crops such as Pacific Silverweed and Springbank clover (Deur

2002:11; Lepofsky and Lertzman 2008:135). From Alaska through to Washington State, intertidal clam gardens were constructed to maximize shellfish harvesting. Large stone walls would hold back beach sediment creating relatively flat beach surfaces at particular levels of the intertidal that would maximize the habitat of particular species of shellfish (Groesbeck 2013:1,11). Whapato (Indian potato) was planted and harvested extensively in wetlands within beds of gravel to better access the roots under water (Deur 2002:16). This manipulation of landscape and plants created *agro-ecosystems* which maximized many food and resources over time.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

### *Niche construction*

Maritime resources helped raise northwest coast populations to near carrying capacity. The plethora of anthropogenic management of natural environments in the Northwest is suggested by Deur (2002) to have been instigated by this strain on existing, wild resources by large and growing populations. Large sedentary villages that used all available resources of the sea were forced to look inland and along their shores to increase production of resources that were previously harvested only as dietary supplements. This scenario reflects the development of early Norte Chico complexes in which diminishing maritime resources forced populations to greater dependence on secondary resources from the land. If greater reliance on secondary resources was a factor in both the Norte Chico and NW cultures what were the environmental conditions on the land that may have created divergent paths for both cultures?

The development of human cultural complexity over time is not just driven by the influx of energy from the sea or early development of agricultural surpluses but a co-evolution of multiple forces enacting on humans in different ecological contexts. Historical ecology and Niche Construction Theory both posit that humans, like all organisms, “do not adapt to their environments [as much as they] construct them out of the bits and pieces of the external world” (Lewontin 1983:203). Humans are “enormously potent niche constructors” (1983:203) due to great flexibility in exploiting various environments. They are known to replicate natural disturbance

regimes that create and alter ecosystems around the world (Balée 2006). In coastal regions, what is gained energetically in one part of the human niche (namely the sea) can have direct effects on the success of that human population. Thus, having effect on its actions, choices and disturbance regimes within another part of the niche (the land). The road to complexity is a co-evolution of processes between humans and landscapes. The utilization of marine resources was a necessary foundation to both civilizations shaping the evolution of interactions with the terrestrial environment (Deur 1999; Moseley 1975). This relationship of land and sea reveals how important ecological context is as an evolutionary force impacting cultural development.

Considering the ranking of hunter-gatherer to agriculturalist it is important to focus on human populations as landscape architects rather than inevitable agriculturalists. Regional ecological contexts and historical processes have helped re-evaluate the ladder of progression in subsistence systems. The dividing lines have been blurred between foraging populations and complex agriculturalists. Northwest Coast cultures augmented their hunting and gathering practices with the creation of agro-ecosystems and cultivation. Likewise, foragers, low-intensity cultivators, intensive agriculturalists, hunters, and pastoralists have all persisted together around the world for ages (Deur and Turner 2005:15). Rather than a hierarchy of subsistence patterns, context, history, and cultural-ecological processes are the shapers of how populations of people go about interacting and impacting the land. Anderson and Wohlgemuth note that management of “plants for food must not be viewed in isolation, but rather in broader context of prehistoric subsistence systems and how these systems fit within and impact diverse and dynamic ecosystems” (2012:190).

In the cases of both Norte Chico and the Northwest coast societies, broader subsistence systems and environments are what shape the development of complexity. Both cases refute the assumption that human ingenuity and discovery of agriculture could have been the sole driver of cultural progression. Instead, the regional ecological contexts (maritime coastlines) contributed to population growth and may have resulted in the need for alternative resource options. The differences in the cultivation systems between both case studies suggest that field agriculture is not the inevitable final chapter

in the story of plant cultivation. Niche construction offers some perspectives as to how human populations shape local ecosystems over time and how similar early development of coastal societies could eventually diverge and establish unique systems of complexity.

When considering humans as landscape creators or “the ultimate niche constructors” (Smith 2007b:188 quoted in Laland and O’Brien 2010) one can begin to understand why our two coastal cultures might end up developing different subsistence trajectories such as “complex hunter gatherers” and “state agriculturalists.” Moseley (1975) and Deur (1999) have similar arguments regarding the initial moves towards complexity. They argue that an early transition towards a marine diet along extraordinarily abundant coastline fosters sedentism within increasingly complex societal organization. The increase in population and growth in settlement brings about strain on resources and thus the slow intensified use and cultivation of species.

Niche construction and ecological context may explain the divergence of cultural choices for both civilizations. The physio-mimetic structures described by Deur (1999) for the Northwest Coast are simply a kind of advanced niche development by which humans were able to replicate natural structures in the land to maximize productivity of a given species or system. What is seen as clam gardens, estuarine gardens, fish weirs and fire managed prairies in the Northwest are all simply man-made micro-environments within the human niche. As for the Norte Chico, the archaeological record suggests there was increased use of species which may have grown in the naturally flooded valley bottoms that stretched out to the coast (Pringle 2001:621-622). The physio-mimetic structure can be seen in the eventual expansion of these areas into the desert with the artificial flooding induced by man-made irrigation networks. Peru’s arid straight coastline may have lent itself to only one subsistence intensification system; agriculture. Whereas the Northwest Coast’s tremendously diversified coastline with abundant but unevenly clustered resources would have encouraged the development of multiple intensification practices.

There may have been no limits on the expansion of irrigation networks in Peru that were utilized to sustain agriculture into the desert when the transition to farming did occur. The archaeological record however shows the continued embrace of marine resources as an important part of the population’s diet (Mosely 1975; Pringle



2001). The Northwest Coast environment may have limited a similar sort of expansion into the intensified cultivation of any one terrestrial environment. The fire managed Oak prairies of northern California to Washington State were isolated to the drier regions of the northwest and are already thought to have supported the largest indigenous populations north of Mexico with just low-intensity cultivation (Anderson and Wohlgemuth 2012). Deur (1999) suggests that while maritime resources facilitated the emergence of cultivation on the coast through increased sedentism, social complexity, and population growth, it might have inhibited its establishment as a primary means of subsistence. The diversity of coastal resources may just have been enough to maintain high and sustainable population levels.

### *Emergent Norte Chico*

Archaeological evidence seems to suggest the early existence of large complexes in both the coastal and inland regions of Norte Chico (Pringle 2001:623). Remains of a large marine resource base are found at all sites, as are the traces of a large number of agricultural products. Due to limited archaeological preservation, it is difficult to establish the primary source of substance. Rather, it seems more likely that there were innovations within multiple substance sources. A feedback loop of dependence on marine resources may have triggered population growth and sedentism, led to increased cultivation and technology, more fishing and irrigation, and finally the development of state level complexity. History of the Northwest Coast suggests that cultivation processes likely did not emerge from a single evolutionary pressure, but rather multiple causal forces at play, over time, within an expanding human niche. The energy provided by maritime resources, the cultivator laboratory that was coastal river valleys, the inland desert, and the ingenuity of human groups as niche creators, all likely co-evolved over time to create such vast urban complexes. The abundance of coastal environments, as reflected in the pre-history Northwest Coast societies, suggests that the road to complexity cannot be attributed to either the sea or the land.

### *Emergent Northwest coast*

Both Northwest Coast and Norte Chico societies began to emerge in the archaeological record roughly about 5000 years ago. With roughly similar development time periods to each other and access to an abundance of marine resources one might consider why Northwest societies did not achieve the level of urbanism, monument structures, and state level complexity as the empires that emerged from the Peruvian desert. The answer may well lie in the extreme diversity and abundance of the coast. As was suggested above no one focus on domestication of plant resources lent itself to exploitation on the scale that would be needed to support a state. Climate, rainforest, varied coastline, and patchy landscape may not have provided the conditions for state level agriculture of the type seen in desert or grassland states. But the multiplicity of ways of shaping the land and gathering resources on the coast did create a complex system that befitted from the landscape. The societies on the coast were large, distinct and were comprised of eleven different language families and thirty-nine different languages (Ames and Maschner 1999:17) from North to South. Its heterogeneity is at least partly a reflection of large organized populations existing in very different isolated environments on a local scale. The latter stages of the Northwest Coast's cultural development are seen as a reflection of its natural environment; more along the lines of rainforest/savannah societies in pre-contact Amazonian than the Peruvian desert (Rival 1998).

## CONCLUSION

Removing the concept of hierarchical state development, one begins to understand how effectively maritime dependent cultures fit and impact their regional environments. It is not that innovations and discoveries pull nomadic societies from natural systems into man-made worlds, but rather, humans evolving within landscapes as environment creators. We could better understand cultural development by examining the effects of human action and physiomimetic construction on ecosystems.

As the case studies suggest, there are multiple roads towards complex cultural systems. Ecological abundances and constraints present unique scenarios to humans making choices in the landscape. The conditions of an ecosystem actively determine the course of cultural development. The relationship between humans and

environment however is not deterministic in the sense of neo-environmental determinism. Human ingenuity and ecological flexibility allows for niche construction and landscape development within certain ecosystems. Human interactions with local environments are more dialectical than they are determinist. Initially the environment can control the range of choices available to a population until the culture reshapes aspects of the environment in responding to available choices and its own needs (Balée 2006). The reshaped environment then presents a new set of possibilities for cultural change and creation. Over time a cycle of mutual determinism emerges (Cronon 1983:13); a form of reciprocity between nature and human culture. The micro environments created by humans are rooted within and develop out of an existing system and thus are natural to that system.

The cases of the Northwest and Norte Chico suggest processes and dynamic histories of interaction of humans existing in the margin between marine and terrestrial biomes. It can be understood that cultivation and fishing were important to the Norte Chico. However, it is not proven what stage the technological, cultivation and fishing systems were at during the onset of urban development. Did the emergence of one trigger the change to complexity or did the interactions of both build to a critical turning point? The population development within both regions is not yet fully understood due to limited archaeological work within the region. Evidence of the development of most plant foods, often lost due to poor preservation, would give better insight into ecological carrying capacity and transitions into cultivation systems.

Finally, what is the process of interactions between resources from the sea and those on land at the very start of sedentism on a coastline? The details are missing from these stories and thus insight into whole processes of development. Does the emergence of complex civilization and cultivation systems in some regions necessitate ecological conditions that are supportive of a large population; not necessarily the gradual advance of intensified cultivation among small groups? There is much missing from the archaeological record that might answer such questions.

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# POPULAR CONCERT RECORDING AND ACTOR NETWORK THEORY: AN EXAMINATION OF PEARL JAM AND PARTICIPATORY CULTURE ON YOUTUBE

BETSY HAGESTEDT

## ABSTRACT

Portland, OR–November 29, 2013: The house lights go down, the spotlights come up, the crowd cheers frantically as the band enters, and as the stage is flooded with blue lights a sea of smartphone screens captures it all for posterity—or for YouTube. This concert, played by Pearl Jam in support of their recently released album, *Lightning Bolt*, is a perfect demonstration of the proliferation of recording in concert venues with increasing technological access. Concert videos such as these—grainy, shaky videos, which often have the heads of audience members in rows further forward blocking portions of the frame—are circulated and shared through a wide range of online forums (example at [http://youtu.be/7Sh8\\_D99rv](http://youtu.be/7Sh8_D99rv)).

## INTRODUCTION

In this paper I will discuss the use of technology for recording within popular concerts, using the Pearl Jam concert described above as an example. My interest is in the videos themselves, as material artifacts taken from a specific event, as well as in the interactions people have with these videos following the event. To expand on research related to recording of concert experiences I have focused on two specific questions:

*How does the technology used in video creation and consumption affect the object that is created and the interactions that individuals have with the object?*

*In consumption of concert recordings, how are unique experiences discussed in a participatory framework where all viewers have not necessarily experienced the original event?*

In answering these questions, I examine videos posted on the website YouTube, comparing the styles of the videos and the ways in which the technologies used in recording are altering the artifacts that are produced. While changing technologies are altering concert experiences, it is important to note that concerts are no more mediated now than they have been in the past. Technology may have changed the manner of our mediation, but it has not changed the intensity of that mediation. Even the act of sharing is no more mediated now than it was in the past, though I will argue that it has expanded to include wider networks.

I will begin by briefly considering the concert format and the literature surrounding the motivations for concert attendance in the current age of digital music. Included in this discussion will be literature on and examples of the practice of recording at concerts both before the existence of digital sharing and since its origins. Second, I will describe my theoretical approach to the topic, including an in-depth consideration of Actor Network Theory, of Participatory Culture, and of Amateurism, specifically within the area of videos posted online. Next, I will provide the details of my research methodology, followed by an analysis of the videos collected during the research. This analysis will discuss the videos through a production, circulation and consumption model, including the technical, production, and stylistic differences between official or professional videos of concerts, some of the specific examples of audience created amateur videos from the Pearl Jam concert in Portland, and an example that bridges the gap between the two. Finally, I will end with a full consideration of the conclusions that I have reached.

## THE CONCERT AS UNIQUE EXPERIENCE

Every concert has a specific artist, singing a specific set list, sung in a specific way (including any mistakes or differences between the written or recorded versions and the actual performance), and with a specific tone of interaction between the artists and the audience. Each of these aspects will vary from one event to the next, causing a group or artist's performance to never be exactly the same twice, and to be experienced in a unique and multi-sensory way during each



concert (Waisvisz 1999). Two of the definitions of the word unique, “being the only one” and “being without a like or equal” are useful for the consideration of concerts, as it is the sense of a concert being “unlike anything else” and “very special or unusual” (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/unique>) that I am trying to evoke. The importance of this concept is echoed by Philip Auslander’s work, which—though it specifically examines rock concerts as a form of “authentication” for the rock genre (1998)—requires the presence of the individual to demonstrate and validate their support of the band. Without attendance at the concert you have not participated in the unrepeatable experience, as is expected of a true fan. There is a level of replicability that is assumed to exist within concert experiences. Even as fans comment on their appreciation of a unique concert experience, however, they often also comment on deviations from the recorded versions of songs. One comment, for example, stated “I absolutely hate how they do even flow live though. Been ruining it for years by playing it so fast” (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7aJsPNaZK4M>). The assumed ability to replicate a concert results in the creation of numerous cover and tribute bands to famous acts. While these bands can vary greatly, they are often loyal to classic hits in a way that the band themselves may not be if they are continuing to produce music (Whitaker). Some production companies also attempt to capitalize on replicating famous concert experiences, such as The Pink Floyd Experience, which advertises to give fans “the show they never thought they’d see” (<http://thepinkfloydexperience.net/>). Whether cover bands play the music well or not, they are not able to duplicate the exact experience of a concert by the original band. Concert recordings as artifacts, therefore, may be a demonstration of the experience and a way to prove that you were present.

While research is beginning to emerge surrounding the use of digital recording and sharing of concerts, particularly as carried out by Anne Danielsen and Arnt Massø through the ongoing Clouds and Concerts research project at the University of Oslo (<http://www.hf.uio.no/imv/english/research/projects/cloudsandconcerts/>), analysis is still limited in scope and has not yet examined the use of visual recordings from live concert experiences. It is important to realize that while it could be argued that there are economic reasons for recording concerts, including the creation of bootleg copies to sell

or trade (Marshall 2003), this does not seem to be the main driving factor for this type of recording as they largely end up on YouTube, which provides no, or very little, financial benefit to the individuals involved. Neither do these recordings seem to be aimed in any way at damaging the recording industry. Contrary to popular assumption, there has been no decrease in concert popularity with the increasing accessibility and affordability of music in digital formats (Rondán-Cataluña and Martín-Ruiz 2010). There is even some debate over whether the illegal distribution of digital music can be shown to harm legitimate industry sales, as even as it decreases direct sales of music files or CDs, it increases the demand for concerts tickets (Dewenter et al. 2012). Companies deal with the issue of potential sales loss in different ways. For example, Apple has begun to design infrared detection systems for their iPhones that could be used to block the use of recording technology of their devices within concert venues (Mack 2011). Not every company sees the digital recording trend as causing damage to their sales, however, and many have begun to find ways of capitalizing on the popularity of digital recording. Indeed, corporate sponsors of concerts have begun to use the social media and sharing trends as a strategic tool within their marketing plans, such as the Coke Live music festival (Carah 2010). This trend has also sparked a lively debate, with some critics arguing that companies are exploiting the free labor of fans in lieu of hiring marketing professions (Jenkins 2007).

There is equal division in the opinions of bands and individuals. Many bands dislike the idea of mobile technology within the concert venue, as they feel it detracts from the experience, distracting other audience members and preventing the recorder from focusing on the performance. The group She & Him, for example, posted signs on the doors outside of their concerts specifically asking audience members not to record during their performance, but to instead “enjoy the show they have put together in 3D” (Shu 2013). This is also a way for bands to prevent unflattering images and poor-quality footage from damaging their images (Jurgensen 2010). Other bands are renowned for their willingness to share their music in open-source formats, such as Radiohead, who gained major sales from online hype of their self-published albums. Others, such as Justin Bieber, originally got their start through online hype and have remained more open to online publicity due to this experience

(Jurgensen 2010; Thomas 2013). Some individuals agree with the ban, and Rolling Stone has even included the practices of constant filming, taking images beyond reason, and over checking of social media sites as three of the ten most annoying concert behaviors (Greene 2013).

There is a clear precedent for this type of recording that can provide some insight into the uses of these video artifacts seen in the use of recording within the *deadhead* culture surrounding The Grateful Dead. Indeed, Pearl Jam has been compared to the Grateful Dead in their development of a mass following (Hiatt 2006). “Taping” was an activity sanctioned and even somewhat encouraged by The Grateful Dead, and one that contributed to a culture of shared experience that was socially generated (Pearson 1987, 429). Tapes were viewed not as a direct recreation of the concert, but as part of a larger body of social knowledge that required the experience of the concert to fully understand. Tapes were also circulated among a large network of deadheads, which functioned as a barter economy (Pearson 1987, 250). While the deadhead tapes were audio recordings due to the technology of the day, their quality varied in much the same way that concert videos vary on YouTube, including more of a sense of the crowd or a cleaner, more professional quality. Thus, while a t-shirt provides an artifact from a tour (often associated with the release of an album and therefore a specific set of songs being played at the event), a recording is an artifact of the individual performance in all of its specificity from the perspective of the individual audience member. The use of recording reflects the status of concerts as unique, value-laden experiences—the choice of songs, the encore, and the performance of that music can never be identical.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### *Actor Network Theory*

Actor Network Theory (ANT) is a useful framework for considering the interrelations between individuals, environments and objects. Developed by Bruno Latour (2007 [2005]; 2013), ANT has become popular in studies considering new technology and its effects and interrelations. By treating not only humans, but also inanimate objects, as having agency it is possible to see the ways in which each acts on and influences the other. Examples of this approach can be

seen in its use within Latour's own work, focusing largely on science and technology (1999; 2014 [1996]). ANT is particularly valuable within technology studies due to the way in which it can be applied to evolving interactions, rather than assuming a static set of connections between actors (2007 [2005], 67). This allows researchers, rather than trying to pinpoint an abstract notion of culture, to examine relationships as they are built.

Within the concert context actants influencing video production include not only the people—the individual recording, other audience members, the artist or band performing, etc.—but also objects such as the recording technology itself. When the videos are then posted or shared online, there are also more actants involved than merely the individuals providing the video. The structure of the website plays a role both in the circulation and in the consumption of these videos, and the infrastructure of the internet as a whole influences the level of access for audiences in different geographical regions. While attempting to provide as complete an understanding of the actants as possible, it is not feasible to allow for the consideration of all actants. Networks are limitless and ever expanding with innumerable connections to be made on both the broadest and minutest levels.

### *Participatory Culture*

The participatory culture framework stems from the idea of participatory media, which was originally developed as a response to the perceived failure of mainstream media to foster public debate, and resulted in the development of numerous community and alternative media projects (Flew 2008, 108-109). The media theorist Henry Jenkins adapted the idea to evolving media technology, calling it *participatory culture* or *convergence culture*, and using it to address the change in audience roles from passively consuming content to actively interacting with it (Jenkins 2006). This is a trend that ties directly to technological innovation of the internet. Online activity was originally focused on consumption, it is only with the development of collaborative sites trying to harness collective intelligence (such as Wikipedia) that the focus has shifted to participation (Flew 2008, 17). With the development of this technology, now termed Web 2.0, it has become increasingly possible for individuals to create original

content, comment on the work of others, re-post and share the work of others, re-mix and alter content, and adapt digital content in innumerable other ways. Jenkins also sees this form of communication as a way in which publics can exercise power, and that through participatory culture for entertainment individuals and groups are learning how to exercise that power (2006, 256-257).

In examining concert videos that have been shared online, it is possible to look at comments and interactions of viewers as participatory interactions. These videos are not being passively consumed – first the videos must be searched for, then by watching, providing positive or negative feedback, and commenting on the video an individual viewer can influence the perceptions of others in relation to the video. Each comment voices an opinion to a public audience, and, as I will argue, can have a wide social impact.

### *Amateurism*

Amateurs are defined in two very important senses, first as “a person who does something (such as a sport or hobby) for pleasure and not as a job,” and second as “a person who does something poorly: a person who is not skillful at a job or other activity” (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/amateur>). Both of these senses of the word have been used in the discussions of online content creation, and their impact on culture. The idea of amateurism has often been used in the second sense, as a critique of the increasing prevalence of amateur video creation. Indeed, Andrew Keen argues that YouTube is marked by “the inanity and absurdity of its content. Nothing seems too prosaic or narcissistic for these videographer monkeys” (2007, 5).

The other side of the argument focuses on the potential of amateur video production. Therefore, it is argued that “Amateur videos are not simply representational practices. They are communicative, dialogic events that can provide the basis for community formation” (Strangelove 2010, 185). Amateur videos have potential because they exist beyond the sphere of traditional commercial media. Their messages are not controlled by corporate interests, and they often reflect the current cultural and political climate.

There is another aspect to amateur video creation which is less often considered. This is the quality differences between the videos themselves, and the expected appearance of these videos. For concert videos this is one of the more valuable contributions of theories of amateurism. There is a video aesthetic that is considered professional, and which people are conditioned to respond to. Among other techniques, professional videos tend to use steady images, smooth transitions, and a variety of angles of and distances from their subject. When these tendencies are broken by professionals it is usually to create an intentional effect, as can be seen in films like the *Blair Witch Project* (1999). This is evident in photography as well, with a clear example provided by Sarah Pink's considerations of the aesthetics of the photography of bullfighting (2011). Pink argues that there is a preferred aesthetic to these photographs, and an assumption that this aesthetic cannot be achieved without embodied experience of bullfighting itself (2011, 11). In much the same way, amateur video producers are often attempting to mimic a professional aesthetic in their own work (Strangelove 2010, 182), resulting in a wider appeal. For concert videos this mimicry may be reflected in attempts to duplicate camera angles, cuts, and zooms which require an understanding of the preferred aesthetic of the genre. These choices are observable in the videos themselves, and have an impact on the interactions that viewers choose to have with a specific video.

It is not the production of content that is currently undergoing a revolution, as Napoli (2011) argues, it is actually the distribution of content that has changed the media landscape with the emergence of Web 2.0. He states:

Even the term *user-generated* content, reflects this misplaced emphasis. [...] Users' capacity to generate content has been around for quite some time, due to the long-established availability of production technologies such as home video cameras, personal computers, typewriters, and home recording equipment. What is different today is the ability of users to *distribute* content, to utilize the Web to circulate their user-generated content (as well as, to the media companies' dismay, traditional media content) to an unprecedented level (Napoli 2011, 81; emphasis in original).

So, while these amateur productions have always been in existence, they have not had the visibility that is now common with websites such as YouTube. This is a redistribution of communicative power that can have profound effects on the mass media market. It can also have profound social effects.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY: SEARCHING FOR PEARL JAM VIDEOS

There are a wide range of websites where videos are shared and viewed. Not only are there multiple options popular in North America, but many regional and language specific websites also exist (examples popular in various countries are available here: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_video\\_hosting\\_services](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_video_hosting_services)). As my interest was in videos from a specific concert that had taken place in the United States I chose to search for videos on YouTube. YouTube is one of the most popular websites for posting videos, with over one billion viewers consuming over six billion hours of content each month (<https://www.youtube.com/yt/press/en-GB/statistics.html>). The website also allows for easy analysis of data such as posting dates, number of views for each video, and viewer feedback.

A YouTube search using just the term “Pearl Jam” can turn up anything from videos of fans playing covers of Pearl Jam songs to Pearl Jam’s own productions of music videos and promotional interviews. To combat this issue, I used the search term “Pearl Jam Portland 2013,” which provided the videos sorted by relevance, and then filtered to see only videos (and allowed for the exclusion of compilation “channels” or “playlists”). This resulted in close to 7000 results, a large proportion of which were from other concerts in the same tour. I chose to focus on the first twenty relevant videos, which allowed me to examine videos only from the concert I was interested in, as well as to see the Portland concert videos with the highest numbers of views. Twenty videos provided sufficient material to compare the videos to one another, as well as to reach some general conclusions about overarching themes.

The videos chosen were all one to two songs in length, varying to some extent in the amount of recorded discussion from the band on either end. It was also common to see multiple videos posted by the

same creator, often labeled comprehensively with the band name, concert date, location, and often the song name. Videos were also largely posted within one or two days of the concert, with only a single video posted about a month later.

In order to find a point of comparison I also searched both on YouTube and on the Pearl Jam home website for official concert recordings. While there were numerous videos posted on both websites, neither provided a full concert recording from any of their tours. The most recent full concert DVD available is from 2002, with documentaries comprising all other DVDs for purchase. While there is an option to buy a “bootleg” audio recording of each concert in the tour, there are no images from the events available for purchase. This lack of available official concert recordings for purchase may reflect a marketing strategy associated with concert sales; however, the band does not pursue removal of concert videos from YouTube and even allows discussions of YouTube videos on the community forum of their official website (as seen at <http://community.pearljam.com/discussion/226565/looking-for-video-of-these-songs-from-portland>).

As a counterpoint to the videos of the concert in Portland, I will also be examining two complete concert videos recorded at the concert in Philadelphia on October 22, 2013. One of the recordings was shot by a single individual during the concert, the other video is a composite of footage taken from a number of audience members. These videos provide examples of how viewer interactions differ with the length of a concert recording, the quality of sound and visuals, and the aesthetic choices made during filming. This video is an example that stands between the two categories of amateur and professional recordings, and the ways in which this dichotomy is being challenged in specific instances of audience video creation.

## VIDEO ANALYSIS

Anthropological studies of media often use a division of analysis into three parts: production, circulation, and consumption. By using this division, it becomes possible to clearly examine the aspects of the network that influence each stage and helps to clarify the analysis. These categories overlap, however, so while I am using the division as an organizational and conceptual tool, it is in some ways a



false one. Each step has an impact or influence on those that follow. In much the same way, plans for the circulation of videos after the event may have an impact on choices made during their production. I would also like to note that consumption has become a difficult category in this context, as it refers not only to consumption per say, but also to interaction with media. It is in this area that the conceptual framework of participatory culture becomes most helpful.

The individuals who record the videos, post them, and interact with them all behave as important actors within the network. Throughout this analysis I will use specific terminology to the individuals involved: video *creators* will refer to both the individuals present and actively filming at the concert I am discussing as well as the individuals posting the videos on YouTube. I want to acknowledge that these may be either the same person or different individuals, but I have grouped them into a single category as I have no way to differentiate. The full concert videos that I will be discussing represent an exception to this rule, and I will discuss the ways in which the videos address this in their labeling and credits during the production section. *Viewers* are the individuals watching and commenting on the videos that have been posted, again they may be the same individuals as those either filming or posting, but I have chosen to use a separate category to denote individuals involved in consumption of videos.

### *General Impacts*

There are some factors that influence all three of the areas that will be discussed in the following section. One such factor is the increasing democratization of technology access. In the past it was expensive to own, run, and maintain the equipment necessary for recording concerts—particularly for video recording. This meant that the majority of recording was completed at the professional level and disseminated either through mass media such as television, or through availability for purchase. That has changed with the price decreases over time for consumer electronics such as small cameras. Video recording specifically has become significantly more accessible with the incorporation of digital video recording capabilities into electronic devices designed with alternative primary functions—such as mobile phones. Even inexpensive phones are increasingly capable of recording video, with the technology undergoing constant

improvement. Even in parts of the world where consumer electronics purchasing is limited, mobile phones are used as a main source of communication

(<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IT.CEL.SETS.P2>).

The second factor that I would like to highlight demonstrates a contrasting view to the democratization of technology. Infrastructural limitations of internet access have a large influence on who can interact with these videos. While internet access is growing around the world, the *digital divide* is still very much in existence, and assumptions made of the democratic nature of representation in the “digital age” are largely ethnocentric and presume a level of access not necessarily available in all areas of the world (Ginsburg 2006). The videos shared and the comments posted on videos are from regions where internet access is widespread, or is becoming increasingly common

(<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IT.NET.USER.P2>). There are groups that are excluded from interaction with these videos purely due to a lack of access. Even with internet access rates growing worldwide, there are many regions that still see almost non-existent levels of access, such as many African countries. Language is another factor that is often identified as having a large impact. While the English language also dominates on many of the websites commonly used to share these videos, and may act as another barrier to interaction by viewers from non-Anglophone regions, this is not necessarily the case with YouTube. Titling of the videos themselves may require a minimal language ability to navigate and find the desired content; however, the website has been localized for 61 countries and languages (<https://www.youtube.com/yt/press/en-GB/statistics.html>). There are also some arguments that we need to be considering the *participation gap* as much as the digital divide (Jenkins 2007; Burgess and Green 2009, 70-72). Due to the likely importance that skills in participatory culture and online networking are going to have within the current century, lack of opportunities to be active in online contexts may need to be given equal consideration to basic hardware and software access.

This regional division of access to concert experiences is seen throughout other forms of infrastructural limitation as well. Not only is there limitation in the technological access to videos, there are limitations in access to the concerts themselves. The locations where

the concerts are chosen to be held may play a large role. Pearl Jam has specific geographical regions where they choose to tour—North America, Europe, Oceania (with increasingly limited numbers of concerts - six in 2014 and seven in 2009), and South America (though usually only in Argentina, Chile, and Brazil). Looking at past concerts, these are regions that have been revisited multiple times, while Asia sees only extremely rare visits (including a brief tour in Japan, Manila, Bangkok and Singapore in 1995, and a four concert series in Japan in 2002), and Africa does not see even limited concert tours(<http://pearljam.com/setlists>). This may reflect only the location of the strongest fan base; however, there is also a likely infrastructural component in this pattern as well. Concerts of the scale put on by Pearl Jam require stadium sized venues, public transportation for fans, and wide-scale marketing coordinated internationally. Identifying the reasons behind this divide would require further research, but in this context it is an important aspect to recognize as it affects who the creators and viewers of videos are and may therefore alter their interactions.

### *Production*

The production of concert videos is strongly influenced by the technology used to create them. This is frequently a cell phone camera or a small handheld camera, which have a relatively low resolution (though resolution is constantly increasing in progressive new models) and are difficult to hold steady throughout a full recording (such as the length of a song within a concert). Many video creators are holding their device up and away from them to attempt to gain a clear shot, contributing to the issue. Other limitations of the technology—including microphone quality, limited zoom capability, and possibly limited storage capacity—also contribute to a specific type of object being created.

Software also has an influential role in the production of videos. The format that a recording is made in will determine the level of post-production work, such as file conversion, that needs to take place after the recording is made. Software can also influence the size of a file, as well as the image quality. While this may be the original recording software that came with the device, there is an increasing presence of apps to help facilitate recording such events, including

examples such as YouTube Capture. This app was created by Google following their purchase of the YouTube website, and records videos to directly post on YouTube (Carter 2012).

Professional productions on the other hand, are capable of multiple camera angles, high quality sound recording, and a higher capacity to zoom for close views of the band, all of which creates a different object. There is a stylistic difference that is expected between professional and amateur quality concert videos, which includes both the technology involved and the choices made in the production. These choices play a large role. Amateur videos get little, if any, editing and post-production. Indeed, there are often fewer options for amateur creators, as they have only the sound and video recorded on a single device. Professional videos are edited composites of multiple cameras and independent sound recordings. In this way the technological devices that are used in recording are acting on the recordings themselves, and are also creating a set of expectations surrounding the final product.

Of the twenty videos examined from the Portland Pearl Jam concert, all but two of them showed at least minor issues with blurring and shaky images. With the low lighting of the concert venue, it was extremely difficult for the cameras to find a focal point. This was often an issue exacerbated by creators' attempts to zoom as much as possible, with the technology unable to compensate. The videos shot by creators closer to the band were the least likely to have these issues. Both the increased light available in those areas of the venue, and the decreased need to zoom for clear shots of the band put less strain on the technology used in recording. Many of the videos shot from closer up had additional issues with lens flare, however, as the lighting design often shone lights directly at the audience. Two of the creators, "Hans Meere" and "Mitch Q," chose to use the app YouTube Capture during the concert, which resulted in minor distortions that could be described as jittering, which were not seen in any of the other videos. The video with the fewest issues was of *Rockin' in the Free World* performed with Sleater Kinney (<http://youtu.be/3-KdikXzuko>), as not only the entire stage was lit during the performance of the songs, but the house lights were up as well. All of the videos were shot in a single take, and last for one to two songs. The length of these videos may or may not be the result of limitations of the recording technology used, or may demonstrate a choice made by the video creator related to song

preference. Video creators chose mainly to focus on the stage as a whole, with occasional use of zoom on specific band members ([http://youtu.be/7wkrAV\\_wUFU](http://youtu.be/7wkrAV_wUFU)). There were other interesting stylistic choices which showed up less frequently, including occasional shots of the audience and the large screens set up to provide close ups of the band to audience members too far away for good views (<http://youtu.be/oagdkdAYOOQ?t=7m26s>). These recording choices mimic those made in professional videos, such as in official music videos (see, for example, <http://youtu.be/qQXP6TDtW0w> or <http://youtu.be/Kj-sFIHQWLY>).

The first of the two full concert recordings is similar to the audience created videos posted from the Portland concert. There are occasional issues with blurring, with shaky footage and moments when the camera seems to have been jostled. The entire concert was also filmed in a single take, with alternative perspectives provided through the use of zoom. Despite these technological limitations, the video has good sound and video quality overall. The high-quality sound is most likely due to the separate recording of sound, which was completed by a different creator than the visuals. Each of these creators are acknowledged in the “about” section of the video description, neither of whom is the video’s poster. This description acts both as the credits for the video, as well as providing a playlist with associated times to help viewers find desired points in the video. The second full length concert video represents a different approach to recording, as it is a composite of a number of videos shot by various audience members. This video also provides credits, both within the written description of the video, as well as at the beginning of the video itself. This video has a closer association with professional video aesthetics, as it is able to cut or fade between views of the band members, the audience and the wider stage. The creator of the video was also able to avoid using clips that were blurry or had other issues, resulting overall in higher quality visuals. Interestingly, the main video that was pulled from in the creation of this compilation was the video discussed above.

It is not possible to discuss all of the actants that are influencing the recording of concert videos, as there are simply too many factors at work. It is important, however, to recognize the extent and variety of the influences. For example, the technology chosen for the light and sound design of the concert, the lighting and sound

designers who made those choices, and the operators during the concert all have a profound influence not only on what the audience hears live, but also on the resulting recordings. Individuals who may or may not be associated with the artist or group also can have an influence, for example security guards and ushers who have been hired by the venue itself may have instructions to prevent recording at the event.

### *Circulation*

Following recording at these events videos are circulated in a variety of ways, including posting on internet websites such as Vimeo and YouTube. As mentioned earlier, I have chosen to examine videos that have been posted on YouTube following their recording, as they provide a clear opportunity to examine the interactions that others have with the videos. YouTube allows for wide circulation of videos like many forums for posting, but also allows for effective searching. I was able to easily narrow down my focus to only those videos created from my specific concert example. Searching for videos tagged with the year of the concert and either the specific date or location provide a way to track the videos taken on that day. There are limitations resulting from inconsistent labeling however, as the creator is the individual responsible for titling and tagging of their own video. This can mean that information such as the location or date may have been left out of titles of videos recorded during the concert I attended. This will have affected not only my own ability to find these videos for research purposes, but also the ability of potential viewers.

There is an important aspect of temporality involved in these postings as well—videos are largely posted within a few days of the event, with a few exceptions posted within a couple of weeks of the event. This immediacy is also seen with the comments related to the videos, none of which were posted more than a month after the end of that leg of the tour. Though the band has continued their tour with performances in Oceania in January and February, and will be continuing later in the year with performances throughout Europe in June and July, most posting of videos and comments from the North American legs of the tour has not extended past this temporal boundary. The exception is seen with the full-length concert videos, the composite video, for example, was not posted until January. The

interactions have not ended either, as comments are still being posted in response to both videos.

### *Consumption*

A viewer's consumption of a video begins with their search, which as I mentioned above is heavily influenced by how the creator chooses to label their video. It goes beyond mere labeling however, as each interaction with the video has an influence on those that follow. Videos are sorted algorithmically based on a number of factors. Some reflect the creator, such as the length of time that the individual has been registered with YouTube, but others reflect the interactions that viewers have, such as the amount of time people have spent watching the video (YouTube Creators 2012). Once a video has been chosen by the viewer, YouTube allows certain types of interactions. At the most basic level, the number of views that each video receives is catalogued, with multiple views by a single individual having an influence over the overall ranking of the video in the search results. Viewers have other options as well, such as "liking" or "disliking" the video, subscribing to the channel of the video's creator (which will then add additional videos by the creator to the viewer's account), and commenting on the video itself.

The interactions of viewers with videos from the Portland concert vary significantly. The video with the highest number of views on the date data was collected was of *Rockin' in the Free World*, played with a guest appearance by the band Sleater Kinney (<http://youtu.be/3-KdikXzuko>). At 23,377 views this was by far the most watched video, and the majority of the comments focused specifically on the presence of Sleater Kinney. The rarity of this guest appearance has resulted in this video becoming an outlier from the remaining data. No other video had over 3000 views, with those that were below 500 views also receiving significantly less interaction through either likes/dislikes or comments. There seems to be a correlation between the number of views that videos received and the quality of the videos. Videos that are blurry, shaky, and from large distances are less likely to have received a high number of views. It is sometimes possible to identify these issues based on the thumbnail that the creator chose to represent the video, which is assumed to be a good indication of the aesthetic of the video as a whole. While this may

indicate that higher quality videos are receiving repeated views from the same individuals, this cannot be tracked, and there is an equal likelihood that the structure of the website itself is acting to enforce this pattern. Further videos are recommended to viewers in two major ways – through a recommendation column in the right-hand side that is generated algorithmically based on the current video and past searches by the viewer, as well as similar analytics to those driving the main search pages, and through videos connected via the link of the video’s creator. Many creators post multiple videos from a single concert. This trend can be seen in the videos from the Portland concert, eight of which were posted by two video creators.

The comments are perhaps the most useful source of information regarding the types of interactions viewers are having with the videos as objects, with other viewers, and with the video creators. As with the number of views, there are patterns to the comments reacting to the videos as well, with the highest number of comments occurring on the videos with the highest number of views. When these comments are all compiled together they fall within a few evident but flexible categories. First, comments directly related to the viewer’s own experience at the same concert, which then can be placed into two subcategories: comments on the quality of the concert generally, and comments of the viewer’s experience compared to that of the video’s creator. Examples include:

*“What a great show! I was there, so good. Thanks for the video. One of the best concerts I’ve ever been to for certain”*  
(<http://youtu.be/z4g6XmElsbI>).

*“Waited 20 years to see PJ in concert! Thanks for this reminder of a great evening in PDX”*  
(<http://youtu.be/z4g6XmElsbI>).

*“Awesome job on the video man [...] we were in just above you and to the right I believe. Section 335, what a great show”* ([http://youtu.be/Z\\_ysKmcKi-g](http://youtu.be/Z_ysKmcKi-g)).

*“I was literally two seats away from you mmmmmhmm”*  
([http://youtu.be/7wkrAV\\_wUFU](http://youtu.be/7wkrAV_wUFU)).



The second main category contains comments by viewers who have been to or plan to go to a different concert, or who had an external interest in the band—often these were fans from different areas of the world. This category includes comments such as these:

*“great set list[...] can’t wait for Seattle next Friday!!”*  
(<http://youtu.be/mVaKRLBbD2o>).

*“[...] Thank you for posting this, here in Europe it is really good to check them how they played in the States.....”*  
(<http://youtu.be/mVaKRLBbD2o>).

My third category was reserved for reactions to the videos themselves, including both remarks thanking the creator for their work when making the video, and remarks about the quality of the video’s recording.

*“Great video. I tried to use my iPhone and it turned out crappy. Was this with a digital camera? I’m going to Seattle show and was gonna try to bring a camera this time [...]”*  
(<http://youtu.be/mVaKRLBbD2o>).

*“The Moda Center has such great sound (they engineered it into the structure), and you can hear it in this video. Thanks for posting!”* (<http://youtu.be/tURrFPTsRMk>).

There were two main commonalities between all of the comment types: connecting to lived experience and appreciation to creators. One of the common threads running through the majority of posts is the expression of a personal connection to the experience, the relation of what they are viewing to what they had seen, to their future expectations, and to a general appreciation for the music.

There is additionally a theme of appreciation to creators for sharing their videos. This was often the case for fans who were unable to attend the concert, and sought out videos after the fact. Each of these types of comments can create chains of interaction that reference past and future concerts, give or receive advice for recording technologies, and generally build connections between previously unrelated individuals.

Regardless of the level of interaction that viewers displayed with any one video there were clear trends in the types of comments that were shared in reference to the videos. Many viewers provided comments of appreciation for the video being shared. The vast majority of comments, however, were in reference to the viewer's own concert experience, with additional comments sometimes added of their own experience in reference to what the video showed, for example comparing the location of the viewer's seat in reference to where the video was recorded from.

The reactions to the concert videos from Philadelphia, were strikingly similar to those from Portland, but on a much larger scale. There were over 200,000 views of the single take video, with over 200 comments reacting to the video. The composite video had only about 4,000 views and 17 comments, but has also been posted for a significantly shorter period of time. This may also be a difference related to the thumbnails that were chosen to represent each of the videos however, as the single take video shows a clear close-up of the band's lead singer Eddie Vedder, while the composite video uses a thumbnail of the concert poster placed before the credits of the video and gives no sense of the video's aesthetic as a whole. The comments from these two videos also fit within the same categories as the comments from the Portland concert, including comments such as:

*"I was at this show thanks for the upload great work!"*

*"Was standing ten back right in front of EV with a great set of fans about on both nights in Philly, simply THE best band on the planet. Roll on Europe in June July"*

*"Thanks for posting this!!! I didn't make it to the Philly show but seeing this makes it almost bearable!! ;) Love Pearl Jam and Eddie is amazing!!"*

*"Was supposed to go see PJ in Vancouver tonight but we couldn't make it. This helps fill the void. Great mix of new and classic greats. Thanks you for all you do Pearl Jam. :-)"*

*"I am happy to call this band home and also travel out of my comfort zone to see them. Italy 2014"*

*“this seems like it was pulled from the house camera with the quality and the sound. nice”*

*“What kind of battery/camera/memory card do you use?”*  
(<http://youtu.be/7aJsPNaZK4M>).

There are also a number of comments that reference the unique nature of the performance—a theme that did not emerge with the comments from the Portland concert videos. One example can be seen in this comment:

*“Sirens is so much more moving and effective with this imperfect, live and flawed as fuck vocal performance”*

Many of these comments were made in Spanish and Portuguese in addition to those in English:

*“La raja.... Estos son secos...gracias por subir el concierto. Gracias P.J port u musica. Eddie gracias...Linda musica... Wena voz...y lo major te Toca Siempre. Golpea fuerte....”*

*“Bien ahi el saludo para Argentina!!...en Yellow ledbetter”*

*“O audio esta bom... que pena que você estava bêbado tremendo muito. ....kkkk”*

*“Show maravilhoso com a bandeira do Brasil ao fundo. Obrigada Michael”* (<http://youtu.be/7aJsPNaZK4M>).

These comments also fell within the same categories, and many were directly related to Pearl Jam’s tour in Argentina, Chile and Brazil earlier in 2013. These comments were also scattered throughout the comments made in English, and frequently were posted in response to an English comment. With the online ability to quickly and easily translate between languages, limitations only exist in the use of slang and abbreviations (which can be looked up as well even if they are not included in the official versions of online translation software). Through these interactions the same connections can be created between international viewers as are found between viewers who attended other concerts in the tour. The actions of the band, including referencing past concerts in songs, as they do Argentina, and

displaying flags from countries they have toured in, as they do for Brazil, help to create a sense of community that extends beyond a single concert by referencing past experiences of viewers.

## CONCLUSION

Technology has a direct impact on individuals in a variety of contexts, altering the way in which people interact with one another and the world surrounding them, how they express themselves and to what audiences, and how they interact with the expressions of others. Technology will continue to have these influences, though in new and ever changing ways as one technological breakthrough follows close on the heels of another. Currently an examination of concert videos looks at works created by smartphones and portable cameras, but soon researchers may be examining the ways in which Google Glass (<http://www.google.com/glass/start/what-it-does/>) is changing the perspective of concert videos, or the way that recordings are consumed when they involve multi-sensory immersive recording through implants and biohacks (Monks 2014). Technology is not static, and research into the way individual technological objects act on human relationships and connections is by necessity not static either. For now, it is enough to say that the structure of websites creates a space with expectations, rules, and limitations. All of these factors combine with human agency to determine the content that each individual interacts with, and the connections that develop out of that interaction.

While technology is not neutral, the Web 2.0 is also not destroying the connections between people—as some doomsday-esque predictions have claimed it would (Putnam 1995; 1996; Turkle 1996, 2011, 2012). The number of researchers who disagree with those predictions is staggering, and there is an ever growing body of examples demonstrating the ways in which technology is helping communities to develop and transform (Broadbent 2009; Hampton and Wellman 2003; Katz et al. 2001; Wellman et al. 2002). Interactions online can create connections with lived experiences, and provide ways in which to share these lived experiences between individuals. While commenting on another person's concert video may seem like a limited connection, it is a step in building larger connections that may have previously been based on lived experience within much smaller geographic confines. These same types of

connections were built in the past, and again it is important to emphasize that technology is not changing the level of mediation people are experiencing, but increasing its speed and altering the form it may be taking. Concerts are special events, and it is the value of a unique, shared experience that individuals are using to build a sense of community. Referencing the location and perspective that each individual experienced gives a platform to build a connection that may or may not be built upon further. As one viewer commented in reaction to numerous complaints of specific songs not being played at Pearl Jam's second Philadelphia show:

*"[...] there is absolutely no song in their catalog that they are required to play. [...] The list changes every night, which is why each show is a special, unique experience – like fingerprints, no two shows are exactly the same"* (<http://youtu.be/7aJsPNaZK4M>).

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# FEELING ‘AT HOME’: RE-EVALUATING INDIGENOUS IDENTITY-MAKING IN CANADIAN CITIES

KATHARINE NEALE

## ABSTRACT

Since the 1950s the rural-urban migration among Indigenous<sup>1</sup> peoples across Canada has steadily increased with over half of the Indigenous population living in Canadian cities today (Howard and Proulx 2011). The predominant narrative in anthropological literature suggests that Indigenous peoples in urban environments risk cultural assimilation. This narrative, however, overlooks the transcendence of Indigeneity between rural and urban spaces, which have lead scholars to challenge notions of cultural abandonment when Indigenous peoples migrate to the city (Howard and Proulx 2011; Lawrence 2002; Newhouse and Peters 2003; Peters and Wilson 2003; Watson 2007). This paper will explore the ways in which urban Indigenous peoples in Canada construct, connect, and reinforce their identity within an urban environment. To approach these questions, this paper begins by exploring the historical context in which Indigenous urbanization has been situated. A theoretical framework of Indigeneity and place will be discussed, followed by an introduction to the emergence of Indigenous-run organizations nationwide, such as Friendship Centres. The Métis First Nations Friendship Centre in Saskatoon and the urban Inuit organizations in Ottawa will be showcased as exemplifying the dynamism and distinctiveness of urban Indigenous identities.

## INTRODUCTION

### *Historical context*

There are similar contributing factors that influence urban migration for both Indigenous peoples and settlers. In a survey conducted by the Environics Institute (2010), Indigenous men reported increased employment opportunities as a primary reason for

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<sup>1</sup> Referring to First Nations Peoples, Non-Status Indians, Métis and Inuit

migrating, whereas women reported reasons such as access to higher education and proximity to family. What distinguishes Indigenous experiences from other migrants is that Indigenous peoples are travelling within their ancestral territories (Newhouse and Peters 2003:6).

To better understand the processes of contemporary urban experiences, it is important to contextualize this process within the history of Indigenous land dispossession in Canada. Canadian cities were developed on lands typically used by Indigenous peoples as hunting and settlement areas. As cities expanded, the Crown implemented the 1876 Indian Act which sanctioned the forced relocation of First Nations communities to remote plots of land, often located great distances from urban centres (Newhouse and Peters 2003:6). Métis peoples were dispossessed of their land and compelled to settle on the outskirts of towns.

Not all reserves, however, were relocated away from urban centres. For example, the colonial expansion of the city of Victoria in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century encroached upon traditional Lekwungen <sup>2</sup> territory, leading to the Crown's designation of small plots of land around the Inner Harbour to the Lekwungen peoples (Blomley 2004:106). In the 1850s, these reserves were forcibly relocated to other areas in Victoria to make space for development and infrastructure. First Nations communities were perceived as "impediments" to urban growth (Blomley 2004:106-107). Today, the Esquimalt and Songhees reserves are located in the urban core of Victoria, with other Coast Salish and Nuw-Chah-Nulth First Nation communities situated in the Greater Victoria Area. While they may have been closely situated to the urban centres, the development of reserves disrupted ties between families and political relationships that are fundamental to Lekwungen social structures, contributing to the ongoing disenfranchisement that is on par with more remote Indigenous communities (Songhees Nation 2013:53).

By physically excluding Indigenous communities from urban areas, the Federal Reserve System institutionalized notions of 'difference' and 'otherness' that became historically embedded in the discriminatory treatment of Indigenous peoples in Canada (Peters and Andersen 2013:5). As Peters and Wilson articulate, "these mappings

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<sup>2</sup> Comprising the Songhees and Esquimalt First Nations

of space and identity also came to mean that urban places were increasingly seen as places where indigenous peoples were ‘out of place’” (2003:399). The establishment of reserves and land dispossession naturalized the stereotype that Indigenous peoples belonged in rural areas, as their cultural practices and lifestyle were seemingly incongruous with the urban experience (Newhouse and Peters 2003:6). Urban migration, and departure from reserves more generally, continues to be misconstrued as a sign that Indigenous culture has been abandoned in favour of assimilation into mainstream society.

### *Misconceptions in systems of knowledge production*

It is important to deconstruct the misconceptions of urban Indigeneity that have become commonplace in both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples’ imaginaries (Howard and Proulx 2011). Both anthropological and sociological systems of knowledge production have played influential roles in dictating where Indigenous peoples do and do not ‘belong’, both within and outside academia (Howard and Proulx 2011). Due to firmly imposed disciplinary boundaries, pre-1980s anthropological research focused almost exclusively on rural Indigenous peoples’ culture, history and politics. Conversely, sociology had long claimed authority over urban social issues. Lobo suggests this turf war led to, “an unspoken code by academics that anthropologists could ‘have’ Indians while sociologists could ‘have’ urban studies” (2001:14). As a result, sociologists problematized urban Indigenous experiences, emphasizing issues of substance abuse, crime and homelessness as chronic to the urban “culture of poverty” (Lobo and Peters 2001:13).

Successfully adjusting to cities was- and arguably continues to be- measured by an individual’s ability to successfully integrate his or herself into the dominant culture of the urban space. Notions of ‘success’ and ‘failure’ echo the Enlightenment rhetoric of sociocultural development as a linear progression from ‘primitive’ to ‘civilized’ (Howard and Proulx 2011:8; Stocking 1987). These binaries pervaded scholarly literature that emerged in the early decades of the Indigenous urban migration boom. David Newhouse (2011:23-26), a self-proclaimed urbanite who migrated from a rural reserve in Ontario, attests that mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> century academic

literature about Indigenous peoples does not accurately represent the lived experiences of those communities. Dwelling on crime and substance abuse as characteristic of the urban Indigenous experience, Newhouse argues, neglects the degree of resilience and strength urban communities have demonstrated over the past several decades (2011:26).

*'Othering' mentalities among Indigenous communities*

Ideas of incompatibility between Indigenous identity and urban spaces pervades relationships among many Indigenous communities. Indigenous identity is often perceived as enhanced for those who remain in their ancestral homeland, as opposed to those who migrate to cities (Lawrence 2002). Urbanization, Bonita Lawrence argues, is frequently equated with 'whiteness'—in turn creating a social divide between Indigenous peoples who live in urban and rural areas. In an interview Lawrence conducted on Indigenous migration, a Northern Métis respondent described feeling out of place in leaving the city: "I go home, and I'm not quite fitting in now. It's like white values have come into my head a lot. So my friends treat me a little bit differently" (2004:202). The respondent articulated feeling a disconnect between her lifestyle, sense of humour, and social values from those of her friends and family living back home. Some individuals believe that Indigenous identity and culture deteriorate in the urban context due to the physical distance from ancestral homelands and decreased social interactions with other Indigenous peoples (2004:203). Evidently, Indigenous peoples who spoke to Lawrence verify that there are indeed instances where culture is at risk, and they have a difficult time reconciling their Indigeneity in spaces that are not their ancestral lands. Correspondingly, some urban Inuit peoples in Ottawa identify tensions between Inuit who migrated to the city from the Arctic, and those who were born and raised in the South. Conflicts have arisen over the degree of familiarity with cultural traditions and language fluency, with Inuk identity perceived to be stronger among Inuit who lived in the Arctic for some time before moving to the city (Tomiak and Patrick 2010:136). Evidently, ideas of incompatibility between Indigenous culture and the city create a complex terrain for Indigenous identity making and preservation among those navigating urban landscapes.



## THEORETICAL FRAMING

### *Identity*

Indigenous identity is of fundamental importance to Indigenous peoples living in cities, particularly due to the multifaceted nature of identity construction and retention (Proulx 2006:406). As Lawrence articulates, “Aboriginal peoples’ racial identities are fraught with complexities hinging on legal definitions of Indianness, cultural knowledge, and connection to Indigenous land base” (2004:173). Lawrence (2004), Proulx (2006) and Andersen (2013) suggest that in order to fully grasp the implications of identity and identification, we must engage with the political, economic and social processes in which identities are enmeshed. Doing so will enable us to reject the notion that identities are static and unchanging, as well as push us to recognize the processes through which they are constructed.

Stuart Hall (1993) provides an analysis of cultural identities in the context of ‘diasporic’ experiences that can be used to conceptualize urban Indigenous identities in settler states. Hall distinguishes between two competing and overlapping conceptualizations of identity as ‘essence’ and ‘potential’ (1993:223-225). ‘Essence’, he claims, refers to an “underlying, authentic presence that binds a people together” (in Andersen 2013:49). Indigenous identities reflect a united front based on presumed shared cultures and histories, including a fundamental spiritual relationship with the land. The ‘essence’ discourse can also be used to track the emergence of essentialist beliefs embedded in mainstream discourse and state policy, such as Indigenous identities being inextricably tied to land (Andersen 2013:49; Scott 2001). ‘Potential’ allows for identities to ‘become’ something, which calls attention to the *processes* of history, culture and power that continue to engage in the construction of Indigenous identities (Hall 1993). Urban Indigenous identities are drawn to both impulses throughout their lives (2013:49). Whereas identity as ‘essence’ provides a sense of community and commonality in an urban environment, identity as ‘potential’ “acknowledges the discontinuities and fragmentations marking our colonial experiences” (Andersen 2013:49) and challenges conceptions of identity as fixed in the past.

Craig Proulx (2006) also offers an important theoretical approach to conceptualizing identity, focusing on processes of identification when analyzing discourse surrounding Indigenous peoples in North American cities. Parallel to Hall's positioning of 'essence' and 'potential', Proulx maintains that identities are constructed and should be contextualized to bring to light the agency of Indigenous peoples. Identity, he argues, is consciously derived from the individual and is imposed upon them by discursive narratives. This process occurs at the individual level of thought, the level of social relations and the bureaucratic, policy-making layer (2006:411). In the context of urbanization, Indigenous peoples in cities "construct their identities differently overtime using the resources and discourses available to them at the time" (2006:411). This point illustrates how identities are constantly being shaped by and adapting to changing contexts and circumstances in the city, as a result of personal choice or necessity.

For example, Proulx (2006:411) demonstrates how first generation urban Indigenous peoples' processes of self-identification in Riverton, Manitoba were greatly shaped by the assimilatory discourses that characterized that region and time period. Indigenous automotive factory workers in Riverton in the 1950s endured racial discrimination from their non-Indigenous counterparts, invoking a sense of shame and outright denial of their Indigenous identities as a defense mechanism (2006:411). Identities are, have been, and continue to be imposed on individuals and groups by colonizers, media sources, and academics that have the power to define them, resulting in harmful and oppressive representations that Indigenous peoples living in cities internalize (2006:412). As Proulx poignantly maintains, "the drunken Indian is ten feet tall, but a sober one is invisible" (2006:414). Stereotypical discourses that essentialize urban Indigenous peoples as homeless and troubled eclipses the many who are not, branding them as 'inauthentic' (2006:414). Examining the multitude of discourses that pervade urban Indigenous identity construction unveils the manner in which identities are both internally-produced and externally-imposed.

### *Place*

Identity and place are inextricably linked. This relationship is fundamental to theoretically situating the experiences of Indigenous peoples in urban settings (Basso 1996; Environics Institute 2010:28; Watson 2010:271). Public policy has “incarcerated” Indigenous peoples to geographic regions, such as the Ainu in Japan as described by Watson (2010:269). The Ainu’s Indigenous identities have been publicly restricted to their ancestral homelands in northern Japan, a reality that neglects the lived experiences of Ainu cultural practices as they adapt to and transform the urban landscape. Defining ‘place’ exclusively in terms of a connection to a land base limits one’s ability to understand Ainu place-making in cities, a process Watson maintains is largely social. Watson conceptualizes ‘place’ as “a social construction and relational site, a ‘meeting-up’ point of social relations” (2010:414) with which identity is constantly engaged. For example, many Ainu have opened up restaurants and various other businesses in Tokyo, creating places for cultural promotion and forming links to the larger Japanese community (2010:271). The social practices that create the foundation for place-making must be more closely examined in order to better understand the role of place in urban Indigenous identity-construction and resistance to cultural assimilation (Gupta and Ferguson 1997:7; Watson 2010).

Framing Indigenous identities in the city as ‘diasporic’ allows for a reassessment of place and place-making and its interconnections with urban identity (Watson 2010:273). The increasing numbers of urban migrants across Canada does not signify a loss to a sense of place; rather, it denotes extensions and transitions of social identities that connect new places to the old. Many Indigenous peoples who live in the city maintain close ties to their ancestral homelands and remain in frequent contact with their families living outside city borders, an integral part of sustaining their traditional cultural practices and identities (Environics Institute 2010:29, Watson 2010:271). In interviews conducted with Anishinabek peoples residing in several cities across Ontario on the topic of urban Indigenous identities, participants claimed that they regularly returned to their reserves or ancestral territories because they remained very important in their urban lives. Returning to these areas “provided Anishinabek with a physical connection to the land that they could not always experience in cities” (Peters 2005: 346). Evidently, many Indigenous peoples maintain social linkages with friends and family that bind them to

several places instantaneously. Engaging with identity as diasporic challenges the cultural abandonment perspective when Indigenous peoples migrate to urban centres (Watson 2010:271). Diasporic identities allow for greater flexibility in conceptualizing identity as a multi-faceted process rather than something fixed.

Indigenous peoples feeling 'placeless' highlight the importance of 'place' in constructing and reinforcing identity in the city. In many cases, Indigenous peoples without close ties to a particular community outside the urban context endure a constant struggle to establish a form of collective identity in the city. Lawrence refers to these individuals as being "truly diasporic" (2004: 191) as they are unable to pinpoint places in which they 'still belong'. This sense of placelessness often applies to those who were adopted, and whose families are scattered across the country. Nevertheless, the respondents who participated in Lawrence's (2004) interviews all reported how they grounded their 'diasporic' identities by researching their ancestral ties. Lawrence demonstrates how one participant was able to trace her lineage to a specific Ojibway region in Manitoba, a discovery she said strengthened her self-awareness and identity by connecting it to a place outside her current home in Ottawa (2004:198).

Traditional languages are equally important for reinforcing and building cultural identity in an urban space. Language reflects essential aspects of culture, providing fundamentally different ways of understanding the world (Lawrence 2004:198). It shapes the way individuals who practice a culture think and engage in customs and traditions. One woman whom Lawrence interviewed explained how the process of learning Cree has played a significant role in anchoring her 'diasporic' identity:

For me, it feels like—language is where you draw your nationhood, your identity from. It's like, what language are you from—that's where you come from, that language. It's not just words. I feel that there's a physical presence of something (2004:198).

Language thus became a tangible link to a culture from which these women felt disconnected in the city, a bond that served to reinforce their sense of community and identity. Lawrence's (2004) interviews demonstrate how Indigenous peoples who feel 'placeless'

in the city often seek out diverse ways, such as language revitalization and tracing ancestral lineage, to create social linkages that bridge the ‘urban’ and ‘rural’.

## THE EMERGENCE OF INDIGENOUS-RUN ORGANIZATIONS

The increase of rural-urban migration of Indigenous peoples in the 1950s triggered a growing need for culturally-sensitive organizations in cities; a responsibility that lay primarily within the Indigenous communities themselves (Jedwab 2009:80; Lobo 2001:76; UATF 2007:70). Sustained in part by private funding and federal grants, urban Indigenous-run organizations such as Friendship Centres, employment and healthcare facilities, and other community centres became key resources for urban dwellers. Laliberte (2013:114), Quart (2013) and Yamanouchi (2010:288-289) view these organizations as instrumental for unifying urban Indigenous peoples, carving out spaces for solidarity and knowledge sharing within the city. Urban Indigenous organizations come to symbolize places of resilience and sustainability as they promote the preservation of Indigenous cultures and languages in an urban context. Exemplary of Watson’s theory of place-making in cities, urban Indigenous-run organizations “actively enable people to belong and, though highly mutable, facilitates one’s feeling at home” (2010:274).

Urban Indigenous organizations have also played a critical role in promoting kinship relations between Indigenous peoples of different cultural backgrounds, a vital part of identity-construction and reinforcement (Laliberte 2013:114; Yamanouchi 2010:285). As previously mentioned, the identities of urban Indigenous peoples are largely influenced by close ties to family and friends living in their ancestral places of origin. This is particularly true in Canada, where many urban Indigenous peoples maintain linkages to their families living outside the city, and report kinship as the most important part of their identity. Kinship networks often manifest in the city between Indigenous peoples of shared ancestral backgrounds, culminating in a form of social organization (Yamanouchi 2010:285). The diversity of urban Indigenous communities poses a challenge to the development of social relations between Indigenous peoples who fall outside these kinship ties, both linguistically and culturally. Urban Indigenous organizations then become a space for individuals who are not related

by kinship networks to meet and socialize. By engaging in the various programs offered by these organizations, places are created for cross-cultural interactions. For individuals who feel isolated from their kinship roots, these organizations can provide them with the opportunity to *re-identify* as Indigenous by partaking in cultural activities and engaging with the urban Indigenous community (Laliberte 2013:114; Yamanouchi 2010:288).

### *Community Building*

A fundamental outcome of local Indigenous-run organizations is a heightened sense of community in the city. Urban communities do not develop within bounded spaces as they do on reserve or in other rural areas. Rather, they emerge as fluid spaces that extend their boundaries to different corners of the city in a needs-based manner (Environics 2010:42; Lobo 2001:76). Communities adapt to the fragmentation and diversity of urban landscapes, characterized by networks of social relations that are often grounded in Indigenous organizations and other communal areas. Within this fluidity, communities are multiple, dynamic and loosely bound as a spatial unit (Lobo 2001:75).

In discussing identity construction, Basso describes how “knowledge of place is therefore closely linked to knowledge of the self, to grasping one’s position in the larger scheme of things, including one’s own community” (1996:34). Indigenous organizations thus come to symbolize places in which individuals can engage with and situate themselves in the broader urban community without having direct access to a ‘traditional’ land base. Conceptualizing communities as contingent on relationships, rather than ethnically-homogenous places, allows for a better understanding of the way in which community manifests in a city (Watson 2010). In interviews conducted by the Environics Institute on urban Indigenous identity, respondents identified the importance of belonging to a community in an urban space, as a means of strengthening pride in collective and individual identities (2010:42). Among First Nations peoples, Métis and Inuit, 61 percent of respondents claimed family was fundamental to their sense of community in an urban context, and 58 percent answered friends (2010:50). Relationships with parents, relatives, neighbours, friends, and non-Indigenous peoples are foundational to

urban-based communities, as they work to shape identities by transmitting social and cultural values through everyday interactions (2010:42).

### *Emergence of Friendship Centres*

Native Friendship Centres (NFCs) exemplify the mobilization of Indigenous peoples in carving out places for cultural retention and identity construction in the urban landscape (Peters and Andersen 2013:25). In British Columbia, the Friendship Centre movement mobilized as a response to the growing demand for support services by Indigenous peoples for Indigenous peoples moving to Vancouver (BCAAFC 2014). During their inception, Indigenous organizations were perceived by the federal and provincial governments as being temporary, responsible for familiarizing Indigenous peoples with the dominant, settler culture until ‘successful’ integration was achieved (Ouart 2013:135). NFCs in the 1960s were intermediaries between Indigenous peoples who were new to the city, and pre-existing social service agencies. Although they provided a space for conversation and community gatherings for Indigenous peoples in urban settings, the primary role of NFCs in the early years of the migration boom was to provide referrals to government services for healthcare, employment, and social assistance (BCAAFC 2014; Ouart 2013:135).

The 1970s witnessed the growth of partnerships between social service agencies and NFCs across Canada. This growth was due in large to the agencies referrals of urban Indigenous peoples to Friendship Centres for more specialized, culturally-sensitive service provisions. Today, there are Friendship Centres located across Canada in most major cities. NFCs constitute the largest off-reserve Indigenous institutional network in Canada, playing a significant role in asserting the legitimacy of Indigenous organizations in an urban context (Jedwab 2009:80; UATF 2007:20).

## CASE STUDIES

### *Case study #1: Saskatoon Indian and Metis Friendship Centre*

The Saskatoon Indian and Métis Friendship Centre is exemplary of the ways in which Friendship Centres shape place-

making and identity construction in an urban environment (Ouart 2013:137). This Friendship Centre, established in 1968, was the first of its kind in Saskatoon. In order to get approval for funding from the City Council, the First Nations Board was compelled to frame their proposal as a means of integrating Indigenous newcomers into mainstream society, by providing referrals to non-Indigenous organizations (Ouart 2013:138). The Friendship Centre secured its funding from different levels of government by 1971, and began hosting organizations including sports clubs, Alcoholics Anonymous, arts groups, and the Native Youth Movement, among others. The multiplicity of volunteers involved in running the organization demonstrated the strong level of support the Friendship Centre received from the Indigenous population living in Saskatoon (Ouart 2013:139).

Participation from Indigenous peoples (primarily First Nations and Métis) in running the Centre enabled it to become a place of familiarity and community for the urban population. The organization was able to shift from the subordination of Indigenous cultures to the celebration of the diversity and distinctiveness of Indigeneity in the city. As Pamela Ouart maintains, the Friendship Centre “resisted ideas about the inevitability and desirability of assimilation by strongly supporting cultural activities and traditions” (2013:148). This specific organization set an important precedent for future Native Friendship Centres that would emerge across Canada with the objective of promoting Indigenous identities in urban spaces. It exemplifies the mobilization of urban Indigenous peoples in creating places for cultural retention that work to change the landscape of the city (Watson 2010).

#### *Case study #2: Inuit experience in Ottawa*

A more recent example of an urban Indigenous organization highlights the resilience of Inuit peoples living in Ottawa. Inuit urbanization in Canada is occurring at a lower rate than other Indigenous groups, with “fewer than 30% living in cities and fewer than 20% living outside of the four territorial regions of Nunatsiavut, Inuvialuit Settlement Area, Nunavik and Nunavut” (Patrick and Tomiak 2009:57). However, there has been a steady increase of rural-urban migration from Northern areas in recent decades. The large



population of Inuit peoples in Ottawa demonstrates the fluidity of their identity that extends beyond Arctic landscapes. Much like other urban Indigenous peoples, however, their identities are ‘diasporic’ and transnational, embedded in social linkages that connect them to their urban communities and ancestral homelands (Tomiak and Patrick 2010:138). Furthermore, the urban population of Inuit in Ottawa is by no means homogenous, with each Inuk experiencing a different urban reality (Patrick et al. 2011:72). By engaging in traditional practices such as speaking Inuktitut, throat-singing and eating food deriving from the Arctic, ‘diasporic’ Inuit identities are individually and collectively reinforced in the urban environment.

Inuit-run organizations have emerged in response to the growing number of migrants to Ottawa, illustrating another form of Indigenous place-making as resistance to assimilation in the urban context. The urban Inuit population in Ottawa are fairly tight-knit and unified based on their shared cultural traditions and ties to the Arctic, as well as their common experiences of socioeconomic marginalization in the city (Patrick and Tomiak 2009:59). The distance from home and the discrimination that they encounter from non-Indigenous urban dwellers prompted the creation of several Ottawa-based Inuit organizations. Centres such as the Ottawa Inuit Children’s Centre (OICC) recognize the importance of place-making through culturally-appropriate service delivery and cultural and linguistic preservation among the urban population. These services are critical when considering the financial constraints that inhibit the Inuit from travelling up North (Tomiak and Patrick 2010:139). Patrick et al. maintains, “The social and cultural spaces provided by Aboriginal institutions are crucial sites where Aboriginal identities are shaped and valorized” (2011:81). Linguistic continuity is a key factor that urban Inuit identify as being critical to ensuring their cultural identity is transmitted to future generations, a need that urban-based programs aim to address. Having language capabilities facilitates communication with families and communities up North, which are integral to the strengthening of individual and collective Inuk identity (Patrick and Tomiak 2009:64). The OICC plays a complex role in addressing the diverse needs of the urban Inuit, providing a linkage between the social processes involved in identity construction, reinforcement, and connection in the urban Inuit experience (2009:64).

Lynda Brown and Heidi Langille demonstrate how the process of identification shifts in response to the changing social and political climate (Patrick et. al. 2011:76-78). Both Brown and Langille are first generation urban Inuit and experienced their own identity construction in the 1950s and 60s when the “general discourse downplayed the value of their Inuit identity”, both in the media and in Canadian politics (2011:78). They reported their Indigenous identities instilled them with a sense of shame and embarrassment as children (Patrick et al. 2011:76; Proulx 2006:411). However, overtime, their identities were reinforced and validated by increased engagement with their urban community. Brown has been heavily involved in Inuit-run community centres in the Ottawa region, and reports feeling proud to see an emergence of cultural performance arts in the city in recent decades. Inuit organizations have provided her and her family with a space to practice Inuktitut, as well as engage in customary dances and songs (Patrick et al. 2011:77).

Despite the difficulties in travelling up North, Brown maintains ‘diasporic’ ties to the Arctic by teaching younger generations of urban Inuit throat singing, drum dancing and other cultural activities in these community-based programs. Brown claims that these programs give kids “a sense of who they are and pride, something I didn’t have when growing up...a sense of what it means to be part of a community” (Patrick et al. 2011:77). Similarly, Langille developed a strong sense of “Inuit-ness” later on in her life when she began her career at several Ottawa-based Inuit and Pan-Indigenous organizations. She worked for the Head Start program for preschoolers at the OICC, which she claims imparts a sense of collective identity in the children (2011:77). Brown and Langille both expressed pride in ensuring cultural and traditional Inuit values were being transmitted to future generations in the urban community (2011:76-77). The experiences of these two women and their involvement in urban projects illustrate how identification is an ongoing process, continuously shaped by and adapting to wider historical, political, and social contexts. These case studies also demonstrate how the Inuit community is actively engaged in creating places in the city for friends and family members to be proud of their cultural identities.

## DISCUSSION

### *Non-Indigenous perceptions toward urbanization*

Destabilizing the colonial mentality that many Non-Indigenous peoples have internalized is critical to the processes of recognizing and creating space for Indigenous cultures in the city. The Environics Institute surveyed 250 non-Indigenous, adult Canadians in several major cities including Montreal, Edmonton and Toronto in 2009 as part of an ongoing research project tracking attitudinal changes in the public. The objective was to gauge participants' perceptions toward Indigenous communities in urban centres. A noticeable outcome was the growing awareness of Indigenous presence in the city, and the valorization of urban Indigenous issues such as health, education, and poverty (Environics 2010:140-142). Although most respondents were familiar with the mainstream historical narrative of the state and its relations with Indigenous peoples, very few were aware of the contemporary experiences of the urban population. However, the majority of those interviewed expressed the desire to expand their knowledge base, acknowledging the inadequacy of the Canadian education system in fulfilling this goal (2010:142). The failure of the school system in educating the public about issues pertaining to Indigenous peoples in both rural and urban spaces should not be understated.

Lawrence affirms how non-Indigenous perceptions of 'Indianness' in casual conversations "range from a generalized tendency to believe that Native people have died out, to high levels of resentment when Native people assert their hunting and fishing rights, to the increasing prevalence of New Age desires to appropriate Indian realities" (2004:135). The general willingness to learn more about Indigenous peoples' experiences in the contemporary context, as expressed in the Environics (2010:142) survey, provides a hopeful perspective toward shifting stereotypical mentalities. This study also illuminates the pressing need for an improved curriculum in the mainstream education system that rejects narratives of Indigenous cultures within the urban landscape.

### *Anthropological approach to the problem*

Anthropology is undergoing a paradigmatic shift in their approach to research with urban Indigenous peoples, which has influenced the ways in which urban Indigenous peoples choose to engage with academia. The topic of urban Indigeneity emphasizes the recognition of relationships, kinship networks, and community as being integral to urban Indigenous place-making and identity reinforcement (Newhouse 2011:26). Part of anthropology's decolonization process involves recognizing the agency, resilience, and diversity of urban Indigenous peoples within in Canadian cities. As Gupta and Ferguson (1997:46) state, anthropology must re-evaluate its conceptualizations of Indigenous peoples being spatially and temporally anchored, and strive to be more attentive to the way in which places manifest in the city. It is the responsibility of non-Indigenous peoples to consciously alter these internalized, racist beliefs of 'otherness', an objective in which public education systems play a pivotal role.

Newhouse argues that there must be space made for the diversity of Indigenous identities to be recognized and reinforced in an urban context: "I am not advocating urban life for everyone; what I advocate for is the ability to choose... Racism, like extreme poverty, takes away the privilege to choose" (2011: 26). Lawrence (2004) stresses that Indigenous peoples, and arguably academics, must re-conceptualize 'belonging' and 'cultural authenticity' if they are to challenge assumptions of culture being lost in the city. A participant in Lawrence's interviews maintained "that Native people had to rethink what was meant by 'Indian land'—that when Native people agreed to limit 'Indian land' to reserves, they were ignoring the fact that all the land had once been theirs" (2004:204). Recognizing Indigenous identities as 'diasporic' and fluid, rather than temporally and spatially sedentary, enables us to deconstruct colonial narratives of the past while allowing for the possibility of a different, more inclusive future (Scott 2001:96).

## CONCLUSION

This paper has highlighted the resiliency of urban Indigenous identities amidst the predominant narrative of urban cultural assimilation. Identities are constantly being shaped, constructed, and transformed by issues experienced by urban Indigenous peoples in

their daily lives, through processes of community building, engagement in Indigenous organizations, language and cultural revitalization in Friendship Centres, as well as other forms of place-making where collective and individual identities come to be reinforced in the city. Julian Lang articulates the way in which Indigenous peoples continue to create spaces for themselves in urban settings despite the political, social and economic barriers that they encounter in the process:

It's true, you know, that enough can't be said about how destructive the city has been to Native peoples over the generations. However, I for one have left behind many fond memories, friends, and loves in the city...and I realize that going back to the city is a lot like returning home to the family (2001:151).

It is clear, however, that the practice of decolonizing knowledge systems that perpetuate 'us' versus 'them' mentalities in mainstream and academic discourse will be an ongoing challenge. Rejecting longstanding assumptions of Indigenous urbanization being incompatible with cultural retention begins at the individual level, through the actions of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples alike.

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# SOUNDING THE SOCIAL: THE SONIC DIMENSION OF COMMUNAL BONDING THROUGH CHORAL PARTICIPATION

SHARONNE K. SPECKER

## ABSTRACT

This study seeks to discuss the human relations inherent in creating collective sounds, and takes a sensory-based anthropological approach in examining how group singing participants experience social cohesion. Interviews with ten community choir members and two choir directors in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada revealed a wide range of sonic-specific social observations relating to choral participation. The responses involved sound production and harmony, creation and aesthetics, shared sound as social therapy, sound as collective memory, and sound as an embodied way-of-knowing. The results generated by a sound-based approach indicate the importance of further research of the sensory dynamic of social experience.

## INTRODUCTION

Singing communally has long been a cornerstone of social and musical experience. A perfect fusion of the sonic and the collective, it is largely represented in North America and Europe by the choral singing tradition. As of 2003, 23.5 million people participated in choirs in the United States alone, and the activity remains highly popular in Great Britain and many European countries (Judd and Pooley 2014). The small seaside city of Victoria, British Columbia, Canada is no exception to this phenomenon.

What is it about this community of shared song that retains such potency? In the present study I seek to examine the way in which participating in a collective singing experience creates feelings of social cohesion and community among participants. Specifically, I am interested in whether such feelings of interconnectedness are experienced in a manner that is unique to the act of singing and creating sound together. Based on evidence in preceding literature and theory, I suggest that shared singing has sonic, sensory, and physical

qualities that are perceived by participants as being influential in feelings of community bonding.

The beneficial attributes of group singing have been extensively studied and discussed, as have the social features of gathering together for a common cause. However, this research has been primarily focused on individual wellbeing, or on the generic benefits of being socially active. The present study is interested in the human relations inherent in creating collective sounds. Interviews with community choir members in Victoria revealed key factors in the sonic and social experience of shared vocal participation, and it is hoped that this research will shed light on the way in which individuals experience social connection through communal sound practices. The research sought to answer the following questions: 1) Do people experience social cohesion in a way that is specific to this musical/choral context? 2) Do choral participants express feelings of social bonding through terminology that reflects a sound-based experience?

A review of current literature reveals a considerable breadth of existing information as well as a need for further exploration on the topic of community music-making. Despite much evidence for participant experiences of social bonding, little attention has been paid to the sensory—specifically sonic or musical—components that may contribute to these experiences. Greater knowledge of these elements can have implications for future community-building initiatives, and may have value for intentional bonding activities in both musical and non-musical contexts. Drawing on research in various musical fields, and adopting an anthropological theoretical base, this study aims to uncover a deeper layer of the collective singing experience.

## REVIEW

Extensive research in various fields has addressed the topic of communal singing. Contributions are found across a wide range of disciplines, from psychology, health, and music therapy to sociology, social work, and music education. Further input can be found in the areas of sound studies, identity studies, and anthropology. Though rooted in separate disciplines, the topics and findings have many overlapping qualities tied to the social component of singing together

in groups. The shared experience of community, approached as a sense of connection and fellowship among participants, is a recurring theme.

The potential of group singing to generate feelings of community, long suspected, finds a biological base in physiological data collected over recent years. Research indicates that active musical participation raises endorphin levels (Dunbar et al. 2012) and synchronizes brain rhythms between co-participants (Lindenberger et al. 2009), and the act of singing has been shown to increase levels of the “bonding hormone” oxytocin (Grape et al. 2002). This evidence suggests that group singing has strong hormonal and neural foundations that promote heightened experiences of social connection.

Music therapy practices and research have also examined the social consequences of shared music-making, in both physiological and psychological contexts. Patients with neurological conditions were found to benefit from the social support network that arose from sharing a common interest with fellow choir members (Fogg and Talmage 2011), and feelings of interpersonal connectedness were evident among adult choristers who struggled with isolation due to chronic mental illness or disability (Dingle et al. 2012). In their extensive work with a choir of homeless men, Bailey and Davidson (2002, 2003, 2005) acknowledge that shared musical participation may have unique properties that can be conducive to greater wellbeing and interpersonal success, and participant responses included specific references to the choral process, such as the sensation of being fully physically involved in the joint creation of a musical product (Bailey and Davidson 2002). However, the authors choose to separate the musical experience from the social one, categorizing the first under “mental stimulation” and the latter under “group process” (Bailey and Davidson 2003). I propose that greater links may be drawn between musical engagement and social connection.

Silber (2005) proceeds in this direction in her study of a choir in a women’s prison in Israel. Coming from a music education perspective, Silber posits that choral singing has unique properties that facilitate social cohesion and interaction through the cooperative activity of multi-part group singing. She suggests that the non-verbal medium (Silber 2005: 253) of group singing has transcendental possibilities, and notes that the specific process of singing together to create musical harmony requires the interpersonal tasks of listening, blending, supporting, and trusting. Trust and cooperation is

established as a significant by-product of group singing activities (Anshel and Kipper 1988), and Silber's research confirms these positive social effects, indicating that the musical elements may be specifically responsible for establishing social cohesion. This pioneering study with a marginalized population sets a valuable precedent for further research on the sonic contributions to communal bonding.

It may be that these studies have focused extensively on disadvantaged or marginalized groups due to the critical need for—and clear evidence of—the explicit benefits of choral singing, and its potential function as an indispensable social tool for enhancing quality of life and aiding coping processes. Recently, however, in the wake of such findings, health and psychomusicology journals have also addressed the health and social benefits of choral singing among members of non- (or less-) marginalized populations (Eades and O'Connor 2008, Gick 2011). This is especially prevalent with respect to aging or senior citizens who may be experiencing isolation and depression (Cohen 2006; Cohen et al. 2006; Creech et al. 2013; Greaves et al. 2006; Teater and Baldwin 2014), though the emphasis is largely on the opportunities for interaction, rather than on the creative or musical activity itself. Bailey and Davidson (2005) compared the men's homeless choir with a middle-class choral example, bringing the subject matter closer to this research project. In Judd and Pooley's (2014) recent study of an Australian community choir, participant comments addressing the “sound of the music, the voices, the timbre of the voice, the music” (2014:275) provide support for the premise that the sonic activity and the social experience are linked, yet the connection remains largely undiscussed.

A previous study of the Victoria Gettin' Higher Choir by Kennedy (2009) provides a gateway to the present research. Strong feelings of community and social bonding are noted to be a significant aspect of participation among members, suggesting that this choir is a suitable choice for further research, but the socio-musical component is not addressed in depth. It is from this vantage point that the present study continues onward, seeking to reveal the ways in which people experience community in a specifically choral context. I suggest that the musical and social characteristics evident in Silber's (2005) study of choral effect on social bonding may also find a place in choral organizations aimed at a wider population.

To situate the topic within the social sciences, one must turn to the work of anthropologists and sociologists engaged in the human interpretation of music and sound practices. Anthropologist Victor Turner (1969, 1986) suggested that it is possible to feel strong sensations of interpersonal group bonding spontaneously generated by shared experience—a circumstance he terms *communitas*. This concept was echoed in relation to music practices by Edith Turner (2012), and although I have addressed its relevance to the social dimension of community choirs at greater length elsewhere (Specker 2014), it is worth noting here as it indicates an anthropological precedent for addressing intense social bonding in group activities (such as musical participation).

In his seminal article “Making Music Together”, Alfred P. Schütz (1951) discusses the process and effect of making music collectively, arguing that shared music making has a special capacity for bringing people together and creating social bonds and connections. Crucial to his approach is his concept of a “mutual tuning-in relationship” that occurs when two or more people share a synchronized musical moment. This is referred to, alternately, as transforming the “I” and the “Thou” into a common notion of “We”, drawing on the philosophy of Buber (1923). Schütz’s overall concept of being “mutually tuned-in” is significant, and indeed case studies mentioned above seem to support this notion (Judd and Pooley 2014; Silber 2005). Examples may include heightened listening to one another during music-making, collectively and simultaneously creating a musical or sonic product, or simply acknowledging one another’s presence during the process of singing or making music together (see Silber 2005). All of these experiences or responses are therefore dependent on the central element of sound—an element lacking in many other group activities.

Schütz suggests that this shared socio-musical experience is not dependent on symbolic forms of communication, but instead constitutes its own distinct means of interaction and understanding. Put differently, we do not understand sound through discrete, abstract entities such as words and language, but on its own sensory terms. This is a view echoed by Steven Feld half a century later (1996, 2003). Feld takes a similar construct—of music, or more generally sound, as non-symbolic communication—but frames it a new discourse. He introduces the term *acoustemology*, a synthesis of “acoustic” and

“epistemology” representing an acknowledgement of “sounding as a condition of and for knowing, of sonic presence and awareness as potent shaping forces in how people make sense of experiences” (1996:97). Feld focuses on the primacy of hearing and sound in the everyday life and sense of place of the Kaluli of Papua New Guinea. In so doing, Feld applies an acoustemological approach to the Kaluli sense of place, recognizing sonic sensory perception as a means of interpreting, comprehending, and making sense of one’s world.

The approach can also be applied with respect to interpersonal relationships and identity. Kimberley Powell adopts this concept and terminology in a North American context in her study of contemporary North American Taiko drumming groups and the way in which they shape Asian-American identity through practices of creating collective sound. Powell examines shared sonic participation and its potential for contributing to feelings of group cohesion, considering “sound as a dimension of learning and practice, an organizing presence that connects the sonic with the social” (2009:1). She finds that, among the Taiko drummers, the physical experience of making sound together builds a sense of unity, identity, and interconnectedness among group members.

Powell notes that she prefers the term “sound” to the more specialized term “music”, as it situates musical practices in their greater environmental context and allows one to better deconstruct “the ways in which social relations are embedded in sonic relations” (2012:102). I would further suggest that using “sound” allows one to also examine the physiological component of the sonic experience, in a way that may be less facilitated by the culturally based concept of music. Powell advocates a multi-sensory approach to sonic ethnographic work, following in the footsteps of Feld, who notes that “(s)ound, hearing, and voice mark a special bodily nexus for sensation and emotion because of their coordination of brain, nervous system, head, ear, chest, muscles, respiration, and breathing” (1996:97).

Feld (1996) approaches sound and voice as a full-body experience that links time, space, sound, physical and emotional components, and worldview. To use his ethnographic example once again, Kaluli ways of interpreting sound consist of “flow” (associated with water) and “lift-up-over sounding” (associated with the sounds of the rainforest as they overlap and travel upwards and outwards). The latter example is expressed through cooperative group singing

practices that involve layering of individual vocal lines to create a synchronic sensation “of togetherness, of consistently cohesive part coordination in sonic motion and participatory experience” (1996:101). Interestingly, these results do not depend on unison—as the opposite is desired—but the very act of singing together, in space and time, has the effect of sonic unity and consequent social coherence.

The feeling of embodiment that is characteristic of participatory musical practices is referred to by various scholars as being synonymous with the concept of “flow” elucidated by psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1988, 1990 in Dunbaret al. 2012; Lamont 2012; Turino 2008) (not to be confused with the Kaluli conception of “flow” mentioned above). The experience of “flow” is characterized as involving deep concentration and a pleasurable sense of timelessness, participation in a rewarding activity, and being fully engaged in the present moment (Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi 1988; Csikszentmihalyi 1990). Returning to Feld’s (1996) claim that engaging with one’s surrounding on a sonic level is in fact a multi-sensory and embodied experience, one can presume that sound has an impact on senses or perceptions on a level beyond simply hearing. This appears to be supported by indications in the literature that choral participants perceive singing together as, for example, requiring that one’s “whole body participates” (Bailey and Davidson 2003:26).

The embodied physicality of the vocal, sonic experience is further discussed by Feld in the following terms, creating interplay between the concepts of voicing and hearing: “One hears oneself in the act of voicing, and one resonates the physicality of voicing in acts of hearing. Listening and voicing are in a deep reciprocity, an embodied dialogue of inner and outer sounding and resounding” (Feld 2003: 226). This can be effectively applied to the experience of singing in a choir. Christopher Small (1998), in his book *Musicking*, sees music not as a singular object but as the product of relations between the sounds and between the performers, and as an activity that unifies its participants through the all-encompassing sonic performance itself. In the above statement Feld raises the possibility of heightened interpersonal connection through collective voicing, and by emphasizing the physicality of the experience in these terms, he addresses yet another prospective dimension of shared musical activity.



The physicality of singing or music-making, and its potential for generating social cohesion, has been addressed by authors besides Feld. Paul Filmer (2003), addressing the potential of coordinated, communal vocal practices as a means of determining and clarifying a collective social identity, discusses the physicality of shared singing in relation to McNeill's (1995) concept of "muscular bonding". The term denotes feelings of solidarity between members of a group resulting from shared physical, rhythmic activities—original employed in relation to drill and dance practices. Filmer (2003) argues that the act of singing together, being itself a physical, rhythmic, muscular activity of a kind, may have a similar effect on the social cohesion of participants. Thomas Turino (2008) broadens and rephrases this concept to "sonic bonding", suggesting that "(t)hrough moving and sounding together in synchrony, people can experience a feeling of oneness with others" (2008:2). The latter concept shares as its root the idea of physical sonic participation put forth by Feld (1996, 2003) and Filmer (2003).

Drawing on the ideas presented above, I approach the topic with the intent of determining whether choral participants express indications of being mutually tuned in to one another through shared music practices. I expect responses to show evidence of an embodied, multisensory experience, and of mutual bonding through the physical experience of singing. I also propose that experiences of singing together will be expressed in ways that are specific to the sonic medium, indicating a unique means of interpersonal bonding.

## METHODOLOGY

I conducted interviews with members of two community choirs—the Gettin' Higher Choir (GHC) and the Victoria Good News Choir—in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. To avoid the influence of compounding factors such as religion, obligation, or professional-level musical goals, I did not consider church choirs, school choirs, professional choirs, or choirs whose primary goal was the resulting musical product. Rather, I actively sought out choirs that were voluntary, amateur, secular, mixed-voice, and non-auditioned, and chose these two for their emphasis on openness and community.

Approval to undertake this project was provided by the Human Research Ethics Board at the University of Victoria.

Preparations for research occurred under the guidance of Dr. Alexandrine Boudreault-Fournier and Dr. Quentin Mackie of the University of Victoria Department of Anthropology. Observing the strategies of Kennedy (2009), Powell (2012), and Judd and Pooley (2014), the research was approached as a qualitative case study in which participant responses were gathered via semi-structured interviews. The sample obtained was a sample of convenience, as my ability to interact with a choir was dependent on the inclination of the directors, and following my announcement at a rehearsal, only interested and forthcoming choir members took the information and subsequently contacted me to agree to participate in the study.

A total of ten choir members were interviewed for the study, eight from the GHC and two from the Victoria Good News Choir. The two conductors of the GHC, Shivon Robinsong and Denis Donelly, also participated, and their comments provide context and give insight into the choir's potentially influential ideology and approach. However, the primary data is derived from members' responses, as the conductor-participant relationship is not the topic of this paper.

In the manner outlined by Bailey and Davidson (2003), the question period was flexible and adaptable, allowing me to pursue certain topics if they appeared to be of importance to the participant and valid to the study. The interview questions were primarily worded in such a way as to avoid incurring bias in a particular direction, although the conversational nature of the interviews must be kept in mind. The interviews were audio recorded.

Following collection of the data, the relevant portions of the interviews were identified and transcribed verbatim. This research involves the responses that referred specifically to sound or socio-musical experiences, from seven choir members and both directors. The other results contributed towards a parallel study of more generic, transferable, and versatile social components of the choral singing experience, with an emphasis on Turner's concept of *communitas* (Specker 2014).

For purposes of this study I felt that it was beneficial to take a sound-oriented approach, as it is more concrete, physical, and diversely applicable. However, for the purpose of intelligible interview questions and accessible responses, in the discussion of the results the terms "sonic" and "musical" may, when referring to the choral experience, be used interchangeably to accommodate responses

of participants. Full quotes have been included where particularly illustrative, but following the recommendation of Bernard (2011), comments of participants were sometimes judiciously edited for clarity. The identifying initials correspond to names where the participant agreed to identity disclosure, and have been altered for those who wished to remain anonymous.

Although participants may express views on the choral experience that are sonic-specific, this does not negate the fact that they may also participate in the choir for other reasons or experience community through different means. This is fully recognized. However, for the purpose of this study, I am interested in examining expressions of community that have a specifically sonic or choral basis, and I feel the relevant comments can be featured in this context.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Shivon Robinsong and Denis Donnelly run the Gettin' Higher Choir as an open, non-judgmental group singing opportunity where participants can experience “the tremendous benefits of singing—how good it feels and how it weaves community together” (Shivon Robinsong, unpublished interview). The potential social benefits were already in mind at the outset, although it was never expected to swell to over 300 members and reach the height of popularity that it enjoys today. Themes emerged of trust-building and connection, and of harmony as both a musical and social concept:

On the surface, we're all learning the song, we're learning the words of the song, we're learning the rhythm, we're learning the melody, we're learning the harmonies, all that—but the subtext of what's going on is, we're all practicing listening to ourselves and to each other at the same time. Which is a wonderful skill for building harmony, like, harmony in the community, harmony in the world. It's the same thing... Harmony only works when people listen to themselves, and to each other, simultaneously (Shivon Robinsong, unpublished interview).

The practice of harmony, and the associated requirements of mutual awareness and interdependence, appeared to be as important in this setting as in the prison choir led by Silber (2005). Shivon also

identified the aspects of shared aesthetic creation, cooperation, group support, and of being part of a bigger whole, all represented within a specifically sonic construct, and in a statement reminiscent of Schütz (1951) concluded that the experience “takes us all out of the ‘me, me, me, me’ into one big ‘we’” (Shivon Robinsong, unpublished interview). Denis touched upon the embodied aspect of group singing, as well as the process of being “tuned in”:

The breathing, and the making sound, and the working towards a common goal, and a big part of it is...just listening and being really tuned in, and having your voice match the other people’s voices, and being able to experience that. So you get the vibrations from them in your body and you pass your vibrations to them, and it all kind of becomes this soup, where the focus isn’t on any individual, it’s on what happens *with* all the individuals, because it’s something no one person can do by themselves (Denis Donnelly, unpublished interview).

Durrant (2005) has indicated that choir leaders are greatly influential upon the tone of the meetings and the identity of the group, which is applicable in this case, but given the scope of this paper the issue will not be addressed further at this time.

In discussing the social role of singing in a choir, participant responses represented two categories. One concerned what I will call the *generic* social aspect of singing in a group—factors that could be equally attributed to other group activities, such as gathering with like-minded people. The other concerned the *specific* social aspect—components or occurrences that seemed to be specific to the musical, sonic, choral experience. Participants also expressed a combination of the two attitudes. As mentioned previously, the first of these categories is addressed elsewhere (Specker 2014), and it is the latter that remains the focus of this study.

The study’s premise, at the time of interviews, was that the physicality of group singing, the synchronous, embodied properties of making music together, and the perception and production of multi-voiced sound in general would be the factors that most contributed to social cohesion. While these were indeed present in participant responses, they often merged or reflected personal as well as social experiences, and it became evident that there was further social bonding occurring through alternative channels. Feelings of shared

personal history and cultural knowledge were cultivated through choices in repertoire, and practices of group singing were also approached as a path to personal and social healing in a shared context. The emergent categories of factors contributing to social connectedness were therefore as follows: a) sound as a way-of-knowing, through multi-sensory, physical, or embodied experiences, b) sound production and harmony, c) creation and aesthetics, d) shared sound as social therapy, and e) sound as collective memory. These categories will each be further explained and discussed below.

### *Sound as a way-of-knowing*

I had drawn theoretical emphasis on the physicality of group singing from the concept of “muscular bonding” (Filmer 2003; McNeill 1995; Turino 2008), the notion that individuals share a feeling of unity and fellowship when engaged in repetitive physical activities together (such as marching or in this case, singing). However, this proved to be a challenging concept to elucidate in an interview setting. Responses by participants C., M., I., and T. suggested that for several participants, the strictly physical dimension of singing is a personal one and not related to social connection. Rather, the social physicality of the choir is addressed in a manner that is more multi-sensory and embodied, with impact felt through mental, emotional, or spiritual channels:

I: I’m singing, and my chest is vibrating, and my body’s vibrating, and these sounds are coming in at the same time... (It’s) physical, but a very special kind of physical experience to start with... Music is all through you—and that’s an emotional experience too, but it’s also a spiritual experience—my whole soul.

The participant went on to comment that he found the effect of communal singing to be beyond the capacity of language to describe. Feld’s observation that voicing and listening is a two-way, physically embodied sensory activity rings especially true in light of such statements, as does Schütz’s (1951) assertion that music—or sound—is a non-symbolic form of communication, and an experience that cannot be conveyed through conventional conduits. The uniquely human physicality of a choir was noted by participants Y. and T.,

pointing out that the instrument is the body itself. The broad scope of the choral experience, and the combination of physical, spiritual, and emotional components, seemed to invite responses that made reference to a unique way-of-knowing. Interestingly, the concept of “flow” as pertaining to a coordinated, embodied musical experience was also explicitly conveyed.

I: Some kind of thing happens, when you kind of flow, everybody flows together, where you’re not individuals any more, you’ve kind of been melting into some kind of amalgam or something, and then are carried by that—I guess on some level it’s an altered state of consciousness that I wouldn’t get hiking with a group of people, or even dancing... There’s something about doing that with all those other people, and making it flow together, and *them* doing another part, and *we’re* doing another part, and *that flows* together.

The statement seems to perfectly exemplify Csikszentmihalyi’s (1988, 1990 in Turino 2008) concept, and suggests that singing together with a goal of unity can have a powerful synchronizing effect. In this case, the feeling of cohesion with other members of the choir appears directly contingent on the participation in a shared sonic activity, further indicating an embodied, reciprocal connection between hearing and voicing (Feld 2003) and suggesting that such sonic interconnectedness can result in a potentially transcendental social experience.

### *Sound production, perception, & harmony*

Various responses made explicit mention of sound—whether it involved the production of sound, the perception of sound, or the particular practice and experience of harmony.

S: Feeling open, connected, engaged... Feelings of a nice sound created by the harmony or just the voices

T: I think... there’s a(n) enjoyment of making sound.

O: There’s something wonderful when you’re standing with a group of people and they’re all singing the same thing, you know, and it sounds wonderful... it’s quite nice sometimes just

to immerse yourself in the sound.

I: I think singing the sound is not only being immersed in the sound but it's also making the sound that is immersed in the sound. I think that that creates the emotional experience – I don't think the emotional experience appears before that... The sound creates something that happens.

Comments such as these suggest that sound is a prevalent component of participants' group singing experiences. In some cases the sonic element may be a personal perception, but often the choral sonic experience as a whole is a result of the shared effort and participation of a large number of people, bringing it into the social realm. The communal nature of producing a pleasing choral sound, and the positive feeling it generates, also has ties to aesthetic perceptions. The feelings that I. and O. express, of being fully immersed in the sound, represent a uniquely sonic experience that, in this case, has direct associations with the experience of communal bonding in a group, and relates to voicing and hearing (Feld 2003:226). This brings to mind Turino's (2008) concept of "sonic bonding" which, though deriving from the concept of "muscular bonding", may fit subtly better with a sonic, acoustemological approach, as it privileges the experience of physically *making sound* together. The comments indicate that some participants do experience social cohesion in a manner concretely linked to the process of creating and experiencing sound simultaneously and collectively.

Participants such as I., T., and Y. also commented on the supportive experience of singing a note at the same time and pitch as other people in the vicinity.

T: Hearing the other voices around you, I think you do feel... like it's not a mental or emotional support, it's actually like a "voice" support.

References to the people "around you" would usually refer to others in the same voice section—sopranos, altos, tenors, or basses. Even when the choir as a whole is singing multi-part harmony, people within their voice section would all be singing the same part. The above comments indicate that there is a sensation of support and

solidarity that may be derived from the vocal, sonic basis of singing in synchrony.

### *Harmony*

The concept of harmony, touched upon by past participants of choral studies (Kennedy 2009; Silber 2005), has shown itself to be an extremely potent, widespread, and far-reaching aspect of the social singing experience. So prevalent was the term that comparisons of unison singing with harmony became a cornerstone of the discussions. Defined simply as several different notes (pitches) sung simultaneously to create a pleasing sound—usually a chord—the term is also, as Shivon indicated, used to infer peaceful social coherence.

S: Singing in harmony, there's just no question. The experience, whether it's a round, and parts of the round create the harmony, or whether it's we do a song in unison and then the next verse maybe (is in harmony)—it's just visceral; and the tones and the resonance are maybe the ones that are just like 'oh! I don't know how that works, but oh!'. It feels pretty strong.

Y: When you're singing with other people and singing different notes—I don't know what it is—it sounds neat, and it feels good.

J: [Harmony] adds a huge dimension to the sound...[it] always adds a richness, but...spontaneous harmony can also be a surprise and be fun and, 'oh my goodness, look what we just did, without anything written down.

These quotes, as well as supporting comments by I. and T., capture the key outcomes associated with the idea of harmony. There is a perception of richness associated with sound and vibrancy, an awareness of others, recognition of interdependence, and feelings of pride and accomplishment, all of which appear to contribute to feelings of social cohesion between the participants and their fellow singers.

The term “richness” was, at times, used in a descriptive manner to refer to the overall vocal sound and the aesthetic experience. However, the concept was also evident in the perception of the



inherent diversity of the different parts, and recognition of what they can bring to each other. Some cited the latter as a source of connection between the different voice types.

I: Once we get going, get our parts—the sound is so beautiful, and I just like being part of that beautiful sound.

J: Look at the richness in that! That sound...If you just had sopranos it would be just kind of ‘up here’, but when you get this other bottom, solid (bass and tenor) sound...gorgeous. So, for sure, that’s a connection.

This brings us to the second point associated with harmony, namely an increased ability to listen to one another, and an increased musical and potentially social awareness. For some, the awareness came from experiences of listening to one another and learning to blend voices—as noted by Shivon in our conversation. For others, there also appeared to be an experience of heightened emotional awareness. Similar attributes were noted by Silber (2005). There was a component of becoming more conscious and appreciative of other voices, as well as learning how one’s part works with others, and seeing the bigger picture. Participants such as T. and S. also indicated being emotionally tuned in through that process.

S: Listening to others—I love that—again, a real supportive element. The basses...when they get it everyone goes ‘yay, that’s great!’...A resonance harmonally but also emotionally—a feeling that I get, whether it’s...catching the eye maybe of someone in my alto section or looking across, you know, when there’s a really beautiful chord or something, or that sense of meaning in a song and it just seems to have more power in it when you’re in a group.

This comment indicates how creating sonic harmony can have implications for perceptions of intra-choir relationships and connection. Reminiscent of Schütz’s “mutual tuning-in relationship”, the statement also further illustrates the potential for multi-sensory or embodied experiences in a choral setting, which can in turn affect bonding experiences.

Recognition of the interdependence and group effort required to create a work of harmony was present a several responses. Participants noted that it requires communication and cooperation, and that one can't do it alone. Some responses were also affiliated with the idea of creation and being part of greater whole, which recurs later in this study.

R: I love what you can co-create with other people, and you know, I can hear harmony in my head but I can't sing all the parts...I like singing harmony. You need other people.

T: I still get great joy out of how the music fits together, like the ups and downs, the length of the notes—being able to bring that into a physical life is really cool...But I think when you add the plus of the social side of it, the social support into the experience, it really does make it better overall.

T. also indicated an appreciation of good singers in the choir, suggesting a lack of competitiveness and an emphasis on mutual support and collectivity, in which a person with a strong voice is perceived to make the whole group that much better. She also notes that existing choir members have an obligation to rise to the occasion and fully sing their part, since the overall whole cannot be achieved without each singer contributing. An element of social responsibility is present, and a feeling of shared musical commitment.

Harmony also revealed itself to be an effective vehicle of collective unity through goal attainment. There was a strong sense of pride: in oneself, in one's particular section, and also in the choir as a whole, expressed by J., O., T., and M. This appeared to facilitate mutual bonding, as well also mutual respect. Support for one another was strongly evident, with the mentality that all succeed as the group succeeds.

J: (W)e'll sometimes applaud each other, like when the basses suddenly get their part, or do an extra super job, everyone'll clap, and vice versa. So it is...community. Certainly.

O: There's challenge when you sing in harmony, and something that's most amazing—once you actually get it to work! —it's really quite cool.

The challenge often appears to be what sets harmony apart from unison singing, and this ties into the aesthetic and sonic attributes of the experience as well.

### *Creation*

As evident above, the idea of musical creation comes into play in this choral context—creation being a relatively broad, diverse concept that appears to have different meaning for different individuals. For some, musical creation involves aesthetics, with relations to sound and harmony. For others, social meaning is derived from sharing the product with audience. For still others, working with a group towards a uniquely musical goal was paramount. Pride and accomplishment is evident here also, although not necessarily related to harmony specifically.

Statements such as the one below illustrate the way in which musical creation can have a strong sonic basis that contributes to feelings of interconnectedness. Aspects of Feld's (1996, 2003) reciprocal embodied resonance and Schütz's (1951) "mutual tuning-in relationship", though not directly stated, seem to be implicitly invoked by way of feeling connected with others in the space through the process of creating a greater sonic whole.

S: A bigger realm that just feels so profound, I guess, of being in a room and hearing the harmony and having my voice be part of it, or, you know, being part of a group that seeing the creation of this layering of stuff.

I suppose there is that sense of journeying, of all going together—and it could be from learning the songs up to performance, that feels like a journey—and there's exposure, vulnerability, I think, that I experience and witness in varying degrees—so that closeness, and just admiration and caring that comes from that.

Comments by I., T., and Y. echo the feelings of support and empowerment arising from the eventual choral performance or musical product. One participant suggested this phenomenon was applicable to any group activity, and another chorister expressed similar sentiments in relation to participating in theatre productions, so there are clearly also non-sonic examples. However, the statement

above was issued in response to the question of why she chose a choir and not another social activity, indicating that, for her, it represented a very specific experience, unique to singing and performing together in a choral setting.

### *Shared sound as social therapy*

Another aspect involved a communal experience of providing and receiving healing. Although there is much documentation of the personal, individual therapeutic benefits of choral singing, the intensely social, group-based process of healing was considerably less expected. Given the sonically grounded nature of the following comments, they evidently represent an additional way in which choral participants experience community through singing. Participant I., whose grandson was in critical condition at birth, elaborated on the healing aspect, as did S.:

I: The choir sang to us, and for us...they were just holding us in their hearts, but they were singing while they were doing it, and there's something about that.

What we do occasionally if somebody is not feeling well, or suffering, or tired, or just needs a little encouragement is we put them in the centre of the circle and then we sing to them—hoho, I tell you—THAT's an experience!

S: That sense of connection, being part of a greater whole...And having a place to grieve.

In these cases, it appeared that the aspect of *shared* awareness of therapy was equally as important as the *personal* experiences of healing. Further, the therapeutic qualities are intimately linked to the experience of participating in the sonic whole, bringing another dimension to the sonic means of connecting and bonding.

### *Sound as collective memory*

This category was unexpectedly prominent, and manifested itself in different ways. The clearest route involved singing repertoire

that was culturally familiar. Expressions also cited audience participation, and how performing familiar songs in a concert setting can strengthen feelings of solidarity, familiarity, and subsequent community. Within the choir itself, repertoire choices as well as informal gatherings provided opportunities for members to share social sonic memory.

T: I think the memories part of it is really cool, where you remember that you used to sing, because you had to, in elementary or church or whatever... A lot of the choir members are older, and they'll say, 'oh, yeah, I used to sing this in school when I was a kid'... And the audience has said this too—like we'll sing 'Take Me Out To the Ballgame' and the audience will sing right along—cause they know those words!

C: (Denis will) do a bunch of Beatles songs, and various things like that, and just get everybody singing songs that they know...just sort of a fun sing-along around the piano, at the end of the potluck...all these little ways of (creating) community.

Memory involving social, sonic experiences from past also appeared to be carried on into the present, with ramifications for feelings of community in the current setting. The participants below, from Danish and Quaker backgrounds, respectively, noted that they grew up in a strong cultural singing tradition that forged deep social ties.

O: You would sing at any occasion, birthdays, festival, Christmas—and everyone knew—and if not, could always follow along – it was a really connecting thing.

C: I grew up singing folk songs, and stuff, with people around, so I was used to the whole idea of singing in groups... I grew up in a very encouraging community of singers...For me it's just like...coming home, you know, it's like what I need based on where I've come from to feel comfortable, is good people to be with. And singing is a good thing to do.

In this context, the concept of 'sonic bonding' (Turino 2008) takes on a somewhat different colour. Bonding through sound becomes contingent on identifying personal or shared sonic memory,

adding another layer to the increasingly complex matter of experiencing community through sound and song.

## CONCLUSION

In this study I sought to determine whether the experience of singing together in a choral setting could generate experiences of social cohesion through uniquely sonic means. Drawing on previous evidence and theory from music and the social sciences, I expected that participants would perceive feelings of social bonding through the avenues of shared physical participation, a sensation of embodiment and synchrony, and sound production and perception. I approached these from an acoustemological standpoint, acknowledging sound as a unique, sensory way-of-knowing.

All these groupings were indeed represented, but not necessarily in ways that were predicted. Participant reflections on the shared sonic experience were fluid and complex, often encompassing multiple categories and concepts. Consequently, the boundaries between the predicted responses became necessarily blurred. The physical experience was revealed to be often indistinguishable from the emotional experience, rendering distinctions between the strictly physical, and the more generally embodied, obsolete. Sound and sonic perception were verified to be a particularly large part of the social singing experience. Participant responses showed that utilizing a sonic means of understanding the choral and social situation was common, reinforcing the necessity of an acoustemological approach in studying group musical activities. The process of vocalizing sound together brought about implicit feelings of mutual “tuning-in” and connection, creating feelings of collective unity in a specifically sonic manner.

Additional comments and concepts widened the range of sonic attributes predicted to be evident among responses, however. The act of jointly creating a musical product was an important community builder, and the therapeutic aspects of singing together were not limited to the individual experience, but became a collective cause. Memory also played a role for some participants, generating community and continuing the cycle of group singing from the past into the present. The many aspects and dimensions exceeded expectations, and the diverse nature of these responses illustrates the wealth of knowledge that can be gained from taking a sensory

approach to social experiences. This could further inform the way we consider, and subsequently address, social or interpersonal processes and contexts, from corporate team building to use of public spaces.

This study features a small number of participants in a very specific location and circumstance, and so should be treated as a limited case study, and not as a broad generalization. However, further work can be done in testing the applicability of these concepts and categories in alternate settings, and it is my hope that studies of this nature will expand the depth and breadth of anthropological research. From the responses gathered thus far, it is evident that the sonic potential to generate cohesion through singing remains strong, and such groups continue to be relevant—creating community, connecting individuals, and building bridges of sound.

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# THE LITERARY PEN: DECONSTRUCTING THE NORMALIZED VIEW OF THE INDIAN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL EXPERIENCE

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## ABSTRACT

Canadian Indian Residential Schools (IRS) were federal institutions operating between the 1880s and 1996. With IRS closure, survivors and their families began to speak publically to their experiences in IRS. The ensuing federal settlement agreement bore the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)—the most public forum for exposing and bringing to record the wrongs of that era. A main TRC goal has been to create a permanent and public archive of the legacy of residential schools from Survivor statements and archival documents. Indigenous peoples have contributed to the archive primarily in the form of oral testaments, presented within a process that has been shaped to center on the abuses (physical, sexual, and mental) suffered by students (Niezen 2013; Regan 2010). I argue that to discipline, in the words of Foucault, survivor narratives as such perpetuates their victimization. A range of Indigenous literatures and art that speak to the IRS experience represent other forms for bringing forth knowledge about the residential school experience; the narratives of which inform of strength and agency and can help others understand how the students survived their colonial environment. Among other things, these alternative chronicles are important to transcend the singular narrative of victimhood that bounds the existing residential school archive. This paper will present a sample of these alternative narratives using works by Basil Johnston, Thomas Highway, and Nicola Campbell.

## THE NORMALIZATION OF VICTIMIZATION

Despite the closure of the last residential school in 1996, the Canadian Indian Residential School (IRS) legacy is still being exposed and made sense of in academic, political and public spheres. It is also a relatively new and emerging subfield within Canadian

Anthropology. Experiential residential school evidence is largely based on survivor testimony, especially within Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Current discussions focused on the legacy of the residential school era and its remediation typically emphasize the concept of transitional justice. Within Canada, a transitional justice model has been adopted to respond to the massive injustices experienced by Indigenous peoples (Jung 2011:217).

Transitional justice is a legal framework that seeks to respond to mass human rights violations, recognize victims, and prevent the recurrence of past abuse in the future (Arthur 2011:1). For the purposes of this paper, I will argue that through the legal discourse surrounding the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement (IRSSA) the dialogue regarding the residential school experience has become disciplined<sup>3</sup> to focus on the physical and sexual abuse of children. Rather than focusing on concepts such as cultural loss or emotional abuse, the TRC has become focused on concepts more easily handled under tort law such as physical and sexual abuse. With the IRS dialogue being so narrowly focused and unwavering, the victimization<sup>4</sup> of IRS subjects has become normalized and has arguably caused more harm than reparation.

There are more layers of truths to the IRS experience than sexual and physical abuse. These experiences that have emerged from the IAP and TRC are not universal. Regardless, they have been extracted as the principle focus, and the most traumatic experiences have come to represent the experiences of IRS survivors everywhere. Indigenous literatures such as children's books, autobiographical accounts, and historical fiction about the residential school experience should be incorporated into academia as they represent other insights and alternative truths. These literary pieces offer experiences that move beyond the narrow realm of victimization and introduce

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<sup>3</sup> Testimony concerning physical and sexual abuse was favoured and emphasized by the legal system over other types of testimony. Thus, the narratives that survivors provide are often disciplined. Disciplining references the act of prioritizing and rewarding certain type of testimony over others, and as a result the act of testifying becomes 'trained' or 'controlled' to only speak towards specific kinds of abuse.

<sup>4</sup> Victimization is used to describe the unjust treatment (emotional, physical and sexual) of children at residential school. The act of constantly having to relive those harms continues to victimize survivors and their families.

narratives of agency. This is not to say that the narratives of physical and sexual abuse that come out of IAP and TRC testimonies are not important. IRS literature represents an additional path for unveiling the IRS past that can be used to educate both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. Exploring the agency of children in the schools is important to survivors<sup>5</sup> because it allows Indigenous peoples to explore new avenues of self-determination thus far not expressed to the public. Further, IRS literatures present a medium in which authors can distance themselves from a narrative of victimization, shaped by legislation, to one of agency. Overall, the incorporation of Indigenous IRS literature represents another avenue for survivors to speak to the residential school legacy and enact agency.

### *Indian Residential Schools*

*To do away with the tribal system and assimilate the Indian people in all respects with the inhabitants of the Dominion, as speedily as they are fit to change.*

(John A. MacDonald as quoted by Milloy 1999:6)

Indian Residential Schools were first established by the Federal Government in the 1880s. By the mid-1900s the schools had spread across Canada. Under the auspices of religious organizations, their foundational purpose was the teaching of Christianity and the attempt to make the ‘Natives’ more ‘civilized.’ In this vein, the residential school system sought to separate Aboriginal children from their families and to “[reclaim] them from a state of barbarism and [to introduce] amongst them the industrious and peaceful habitat of civilized life” (Milloy 1999:11). To do this work, attendance was made mandatory in 1920 and many children were forcibly removed from their homes by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. In many cases, they were taken to schools hundreds of miles away in order to prevent them from returning (King 2012:111). While there, children were taught religion, trades, ‘manners’ and other cultural behaviors associated with Euro-Western culture. As Niezen claims, the overall

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<sup>5</sup> Survivors are those who attended and experienced residential school. However, it can be extended to include loved ones despite having not attended the schools.

objective of these schools was to “correct the essence of their being” (2013:15).

All children forced into residential schools were subjected to a power structure aimed at assimilating them into ‘Euro-Western’ life. Many, as brought to light by the TRC, suffered physical, sexual, and mental abuse. It is important to acknowledge that although not all children had such extreme experiences in residential school, all children, nonetheless, suffered from loneliness and cultural isolation. Consequently, it be said that the vast majority of students were harmed in some way.

With the closing of the last school in 1996, the once silent voices of former students began to speak out against the abuses they experienced in residential schools across Canada. The result was the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement (IRSSA). The IRSSA resulted in: a public apology issued by the government to former students, a common experience payment for survivors with an adjoining Independent Assessment Process (IAP) for those seeking additional payment for abuses, the establishment of a healing foundation, and a budget of \$60,000,000 to fund a TRC in order to solicit survivors’ testimony and achieve a form of transitional justice (Niezen 2013:43-49). It is the IAP and the TRC that I will focus on in the remainder of this paper.

### *Transitional Justice*

Transitional justice is a formally sanctioned framework that is often applied to countries that are shifting from a former authoritarian form of government to one that is democratic (Jung 2011:217). This concept applies to states (such as Chile and South Africa) that are liberalizing both politically and in terms of their legal regimes (Teitel 2000). States that are undergoing these changes in government and adopt a transitional justice forum are attempting to redress past human rights abuses that were inflicted by the preceding state power (Teitel 2000:18), including: “genocide, torture, disappearance, massacre, sexual violence and other war crimes” (Nagy 2007:284).

The goal of transitional justice is to reestablish the relationship between the oppressed and the state. Transitional justice entails creating steps to developing that relationship with the ultimate purpose of achieving a ‘united’ nation. Those operating under a

transitional justice project want to make past abuses public knowledge, rehabilitate offending individuals into the renewed society (Teitel 2000:218), and provide healing for victims. According to Teitel “transitional justice offers a way to reconstitute the collective – across potentially diverse racial, ethnic, and religious lines—that is grounded in a political identity that arises from the society’s particular legacies of fear and injustice” (Teitel 2000:225). The purpose of transitional justice is to emphasize the individual as a civil being and reconstruct “the rules and conditions of political membership, representation, and participation that are basic to the individual’s place in the community” (Teitel 2000:227).

Jung puts forth that this transitional justice model is also being adopted “to respond to certain types of human rights violations against indigenous peoples” (Jung 2011:217). Thus, within Canada, this framework is being used (in the guise of the TRC) to confront the legacy of the Indian Residential School (IRS) system. But, this model is arguably limited in its ability to confront the issue of cultural abuse carried out during the residential school era. Laudable as the TRC is, I would argue that the transitional justice format that Canada has adopted with reference to the IRS system is too narrow in its focus on children’s physical and sexual abuse. In the next section, I will discuss how in Canada, by restricting the transitional justice framework, victimization has become disciplined into the IAP and TRC processes.

### *The Disciplining of the IAP and TRC*

This section will focus on the Independent Assessment Process and the TRC, each an outcome of the IRSSA. Both are blanketed under a transitional justice legal discourse aimed at recognizing past abuses and working towards reconciliation (Arthur 2011:272). Nagy argues that transitional justice is typically constructed to focus on specific sets of actors for specific sets of crimes (Nagy 2008:275). In Canada’s case, the focus has narrowed exclusively to the residential school experience and more specifically on the abuses that were incurred (Niezen 2013), not on the larger issue of Aboriginal peoples’ relationship with the state and settler society. I argue in this section that from the outset, through restricted legal framing, the emphasis has come to rest on the ‘victimization of abuse.’ Michel Foucault’s concept of disciplining illuminates an invisible



structure that governs a dialogue of victimization influenced by the IAP, TRC, and the Canadian public.

*Blackwater v. Plint* (2001, 2003, 2005), while occurring prior to the IRSSA, demonstrates the influence of legal discourse over residential school claims. In this case the plaintiffs argued that loss of language and culture was an injury that both Government and Church should be accountable for (Blackburn 2012:289). However, as the case proceeded through the courts, it was abuse that was emphasized because, unlike emotional and cultural abuse, physical and sexual abuse are domains that can be easily dealt with under tort law (Blackburn 2012:294). Assault was deemed authentic in contrast to cultural loss (Blackburn 2012:297). This case demonstrates the power of legal discourse to prioritize certain forms of harm, here being physical and sexual abuse, over others. Further, court cases that produced a higher monetary outcome were often prioritized by lawyers when being brought to trial (Niezen 2013). This methodology, as described below, is also apparent in the Independent Assessment Process.

The IAP would compensate three forms of claims: physical and sexual abuse at the hands of a school employee, at the hands of another student, or by an adult on the school premises (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada n.d.). The degree of victimization was validated and compensated through monetary means (Niezen 2013:45). Through the IAP, a survivor's testimony "is [measured via] a point system in which numerical scores are awarded under three basic headings: 'Acts Proven,' 'Consequential Harm,' and 'Consequential Loss of Opportunity' (Niezen 2013:46). These then become further subdivided based on their severity as determined by lawyers. Points were primarily allocated and based on the calculated severity of abuse, whether sexual or physical.

This procedure demonstrates the hierarchy of abuse and victimization. The worse the abuse, the more points a claimant earned and the more money they were given to 'remedy' their experiences. Niezen points out that this process, although uncomfortable, demonstrates the correlation between financial compensation and traumatic experience (2013:47). Compensation was viewed as a method for remediating past injustices. This form of reparation is severely limited in the healing of survivors as money does not adequately account or 'resolve' the weight of the harm (Niezen

2013:44-46). The legal framework was influential in prioritizing claims that spoke to physical and sexual abuse. This influenced the structure in which experiences would be recognized in the context of the TRC (Niezen 2013:49).

Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission is designed as a forum where survivors and their families can voice their experiences (Jung 2011:217). It is intended to build a historical record from these testimonies through their documentation while overcoming a legacy of harm (Corntassel 142; Jung 2011:229). The TRC marks a step towards a more just and equitable relationship between Canada and Indigenous peoples (Corntassel 2009; Niezen 2013:4). However, according to Nagy (2008:278), truth commissions tend to structure conceptions of violence and justice under a more universal legalistic model. This is apparent in the Canadian TRC as it has become primarily focused on the victimization of children (Niezen 2013:5; Corntassel 2005:142), and thus an overarching survivor identity has been forged. Truth-telling and personal narratives, key features of the TRC, are influential in the construction of this survivor identity (Arthur 2011:5). While the abuse children experienced is undeniable, their role as victims of this harm has become the single and central narrative (Niezen 2013). Survivors express the pains of culture loss, as demonstrated in the Blackwater case, but what becomes focused on is physical and sexual abuse. This is not to argue that bringing these harms to light and demonstrating Indigenous resistance is not important; however, this weighting towards abuse has prevented the sharing of other narratives. Emphasizing the survivor narrative of overcoming abuse (physical and sexual) has limited a larger and fuller historical narrative from being expressed (Niezen 2013:84).

Foucault's perspective of the disciplining of society is important for understanding the central focus of victimization in the IAP and the TRC. When power takes the form of discipline, it becomes ingrained through the use of three tools: hierarchical observation, the normalizing of judgment, and through experimentation (Foucault 1979). These methods have been successfully implemented through the IAP and in the current TRC.

Hierarchical observation<sup>6</sup> is a structure that coerces through observation (1977:170). It is a process that makes those inside it visible (Foucault 1979:172). Hierarchical observation places the individual under a microscope making them entirely visible. This tool is meant to subject the individual and silently pressure them to adhere to the demands of the observer. This process is especially apparent in the IAP. The legal framework gives precedence to trauma acts as an overbearing observer. Claimants were not forced to express claims of abuse over those of cultural loss so much as they were silently coerced. Through this hierarchy of observation, lawyers influenced survivors to speak to particular kinds of traumatic experiences.

Normalizing judgment is a second element of Foucault's conceptualization of disciplining power. It is a process in which behaviors become measured (Foucault 1979:181). Behaviors are gauged as being correct (normal) or deviant, resulting in the allocation of grades to levels of positivity or negativity (Foucault 1979). Gauging is demonstrated in the IAP by awarding larger compensatory monetary allotments to survivors claiming high levels of abuse. Those who did not experience high levels of physical and sexual abuse would have been discouraged from taking part in the IAP as absence of abuse would be deemed 'deviant' in terms of normalizing judgment. Additionally, those who could not accurately reflect on past experience due to its traumatizing effects and mental distress were also dissuaded from filing claims (Niezen 2013:48).

Last, according to Foucault examination, is a combined technique of observing hierarchy and normalizing judgments (1979:184). The TRC forum acts as an examination. In it survivors' testimonies are judged and different experiences take precedent over others. In constantly being examined, individuals who choose to speak in the TRC or those who chose to take part in the IAP are subjected and their experience of victimization is further established. According to Foucault, at the heart of examination subjection manifests itself onto to those "who are perceived as objects and the objectification of those who are subjected" (Foucault 1979:184-185). Thus, a hierarchy of experience was established, and examination compels those who

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<sup>6</sup> The hierarchical observer is not necessarily an individual but can also be a legal framework or a system of rules that pressures individuals to make particular decisions.

testify to emphasize physical and sexual harms done to them in the past over cultural harms (Foucault 1979:187).

Documentation also represents a means of examination (Foucault 1979:189). The power of writing as reflected in the documentation of testimonials, archiving, and academic treatments, further disciplines the narratives expressed (Foucault 1979:189). It is through the exercise of the techniques of disciplining that the individual becomes a ‘case,’ and, in being a ‘case,’ the individual may be judged, measured or compared with others in their very individuality (Foucault 1979:191), thus contributing to the established hierarchy. Throughout these processes, the message that is stressed is one of victimization. Narratives become measured in comparison to others arguably allocating higher status to more extreme cases of trauma than to others which are deemed ‘lesser.’ Those who feel that their experiences do not meet specific criteria have chosen to opt out of testifying in the TRC, perpetuating the emphasis on physical and sexual abuse. As one residential school survivor stated:

I almost feel guilty because, I mean, I had it rough in residential school.... Sister N wasn't the nicest person in the world. I didn't starve though. I had clothes. I had a warm bed. I wasn't abused physically, you know, or sexually abused. Um, she was pretty rough on us, though. But my story compared to our elders... it almost seems insignificant, if I could say that. (Niezen 2013:95)

The above comment demonstrates the disciplining of testimonies in the TRC, which I argue began through the initial IAP process. The statement expresses the speaker's awareness of a hierarchy of experiences to the point that they believe their narrative unworthy of being told. It is also a demonstration of the normalization of victimhood as a dominant narrative and the silencing of other, i.e. ‘deviant’, survivors.

### *Public Disciplining*

Disciplining not only resides within the boundaries of the TRC, but also extends to the general public. More specifically, public understanding and perceptions of the residential school legacy are

centered on the physical and sexual abuse of the children who attended the schools. Emphasizing survivors' residential school experiences of physical and sexual abuse triggered a shock reaction in Canadian 'settler' society (Regan 2010). But, does this mean we should continue to focus solely on abuse? I argue that abuse should not be the singular theme in looking back on the IRS legacy. Instead, stories of resistance are just as effective in raising awareness amongst the public and are more empowering to survivors (Haig-Brown 1988).

## THE POWER OF THE LITERARY PEN

*More important than the past itself . . . is its bearing upon cultural attitudes in the present. For reasons that are partly embedded in the imperial experience, the old divisions between colonizer and colonized have re-emerged . . . Are there ways we can reconceive the imperial experience in other than compartmentalized terms, so as to transform our understand of both the past and the present and our attitudes towards the future?*

(Edward W. Said 1993:17)

Canada, with its goal of achieving transitional justice through the TRC, has narrowly focused on the abuse of children in residential school. Through the legal framework, beginning in the IAP, a preferred narrative has resulted in survivors being cast as victims and essentialized as such. As a result, testimonies commonly emphasize physical and sexual abuse, and victimization has become normalized at the TRC and in the eyes of the Canadian public. This arguably causes harm to survivors, their communities and inhibits the healing process.

In this section I argue for the incorporation of Indigenous literature, such as autobiographies, historical fiction, and children's books, into academia as they represent other ways of knowing the residential school legacy. This other kind of testimony provides an alternative way of understanding the past so as to transform our understanding beyond the normalized victim conceptualization and challenge what the legal system deems important. As will be discussed below, Indigenous literatures demonstrate autonomy, a portrayal of Indigenous knowledge, and an expanding Indigenous identity that

goes beyond victimization. Different IRS experiences, such as a sub-culture of resistance, then become apparent. Through these incorporations, Indigenous peoples are offered an avenue to express their self-determination in shaping the experiences they present to the public. The medium of literature presents these experiences in ways that afford the writers emotional distance from the continued position of victim that occurs in the context of the TRC and so shifts the survivors' position to one of agency. Aboriginal writings can also be viewed as a method of teaching and presenting their experiences to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. Overall, IRS literature can contribute to the healing process and act as a way of destabilizing the disciplined structure that has been embedded in survivor testimonies.

### *A Sub-Culture of Resistance*

While the extent of abuse experienced by survivors has become increasingly known, we know little about how they survived. It is these experiences, represented in Indigenous literature, that convey to us those alternate truths. Indigenous literature speaks to a sub-culture of resistance against colonization that reflects the children's agency in the schools (Haig-Brown 1988). Further, this literature reflects the active agency of survivors to present particular experiences to the public that are not solely focused on victimization. These writings are important because they make obvious the fact that there are stories untold that can offer a more complete understanding of the IRS experience (Haig-Brown 1988:9-10).

Celia Haig-Brown (1988) in *Resistance and Renewal* speaks to a sub-culture of resistance by children within residential schools. Resistance could take form in the smallest actions: stealing food, using Indigenous languages whenever possible, or simply not resisting at all (Haig-Brown 1988:98-104). Resistance represents children's forms of power and control in an environment that seemed uncontrollable. Most importantly, this sub-culture was fundamental to their survival (Haig-Brown 1988:106). This is a central theme within Indigenous IRS literature and is reflective of the vitality and persistence of Indigenous peoples (Swann 1983:vv).

In residential schools, children of the opposite sex were separated (Haig-Brown 1988). However, in Campbell's children's

book *Shin Chi's Canoe*, she sets a scene in which the children have made up sign language in order to say 'Hi' or 'I miss you' to their loved ones (2008). In Thomas Highway's book *Kiss of the Fur Queen*, the protagonist Champion refuses to accept his Christian name 'Jeremiah.' He is aware that he will have to respond to his given Christian name, but will only concede to "Champion-Jeremiah" internally (Highway 2000:58). These examples demonstrate the self-determination of the children against the overbearing colonial structure (de Leeuw 2009:137). Basil Johnston in *Indian School Days* reveals another example of resistance and its sub-culture:

But as I was to learn later, the boys were not really waiting in the commonly understood sense of the word 'wait'. Though they may have appeared to be waiting, the boys in reality were exercising a form of quiet disobedience directed against bells, priests, school and, in the abstract, all authority, civil and religious . . . . They turned to the only means available to them: passive resistance, which took the form of dawdling. (Johnston 1988:29-30)

These narratives are important because they reflect an alternate unknown truth. They complicate the IRS discourse centered on victimization and contribute to a more complex understanding of the issue. These literatures represent experiences of agency that express survival and ultimately empower survivors.

### *Humor as Healing*

Humor is another element of this sub-culture of resistance. It is especially important to the assertion of autonomy and to assist survivors in the healing process. The use of humor acts as a healing method in the writing of the above authors and can be extended to communities as well (Gross 2009:83). Furthermore, knowledge and stories of residential school become humorously intertwined within a larger IRS narrative.

Humor symbolizes a coping mechanism that is employed by children within the schools and by Indigenous authors today (Fagan 2009:204). In both instances, humor represents a means of survival (Fagan 2009:204). In *Kiss of the Fur Queen*, Thomson Highway

explicitly speaks to his experiences of sexual abuse in residential school while using humor as a story telling method. Kristina Fagan asserts that Indigenous writers use humor and storytelling to establish meaningful relationships between past traumas in a culturally and socially appropriate way (Fagan 2009:206). The passage below describes humor as an important tool for healing, both for the individual and the community:

And sometimes we just tell stories for fun, to laugh, because laughter is healing. Coming from this storytelling tradition, it is odd to know that our stories are sometimes excluded from the material scholars call 'literature. (Monture 2009:116)

Highway is confronting his past abuse and his use of dark humor acts as a healing practice. An example is the retelling of a Cree story of Weesageechak and Weetigo by Jeremiah and his brother Gabriel. Weetigo is a cannibalistic creature that Jeremiah, metaphorically portraying Highway, associates with the priest that sexually abused him. Weesageechak, a Cree trickster figure, takes the form of a weasel and "crawls up the Weetigo's bumhole" killing the Weetigo (Highway 2000:118).

This story is important as it reflects multiple layers of resistance. First, the story can be regarded as resistance to abuse in which Weesageechak poetically kills the abuser. Second, while the story is dark in nature it reflects the use of humor as an instrument of resistance. Last, telling this story demonstrates the use of traditional Cree knowledge to resist victimization at the hands of the abuser and the assimilatory practices of residential schools. Highway is also employing the story of Weetigo and Weesageechack as a way of healing.

Basil Johnston also writes with a humoristic tone, using humor as a connection between the past and present. Johnston expresses how humor was practiced as a way of dealing with or resisting pain and suffering. For example, most students were starving, and food "was a reality that the boys could understand; it was a substance that could not only allay hunger but also bring some comfort to a desolate spirit" (Johnston 1988:137). They directed their insults at the food describing it as too salty and made jokes to the priests demanding that the priests ate it when they were scolded for



complaining about their meals (Johnston 1988:137). Here humor is utilized as a way of resisting physical suffering (starvation) and the impoverishment of the residential institution.

Within the pages of these literatures, powerful narratives are present. They exhibit experiences of resistance to abuse, not only physical and sexual, but to the residential school system as a whole. This contributed vitally to children's survival in Indian Residential Schools. They represent resistance by the authors to the disciplined structure as explained by Foucault within the Canadian legal framework. Last, but not the least, the stories in this genre of Indigenous literature are arguably liberating to survivors and contribute to the healing process.

### *Importance of Indigenous IRS Literatures*

There is great power in words (Swann 1983:xii), and, as I have explained above, Indigenous literatures (whether autobiographical or children's stories) are important in reflecting on and illuminating the residential school legacy. Indigenous IRS literatures represents an alternate form of truth-telling that is not governed nor bounded by the Canadian legal framework that has disciplined the TRC narratives (Fagan 2009:215). According to Regan, truth is not singular or absolute, but rather it is multiple, subjective, and power-differentiated (Regan 2010:62). Storytelling acts as truth in another form and offers responses in importantly different voices to the disciplining dilemma. It acts as an alternative to the observing that occurs in the TRC (Fagan 2009:210).

The truths that come though storytelling represent a multitude of experiences, both good and bad. The authors bring forth experiences of suffering and resistance to suffering that have otherwise gone untold. What emerges from Indigenous IRS literatures is a narrative of strength that is shared by children and by the authors. These literatures are important because they represent Indigenous survivors speaking to their past in a way they personally see fit. For example, Highway still writes about sexual abuse, but uses humor as a way of representing that difficult past. At the same time, he is demonstrating resistance by escaping the control of the TRC's disciplined structure. Robina Thomas (2007:242) states that stories represent resistance and telling these stories is a form of asserting

Indigenous autonomy. What is apparent is that Indigenous IRS literatures are vital to other ways of knowing about the past and making sense of contemporary situations.

### *Indigenous Agency*

These books reflect two forms of agency. First, they represent the agency of children as they resist the colonial regime. Children defied their school superiors in many ways that contributed to their survival in residential schools (de Leeuw 2009:137). Second, they represent the authors' agency in their ability to speak to their past in the ways they see necessary. Indigenous literature presents a new IRS narrative through autobiographies, historical fiction and children's books that, in a sense, frees the stories and allows the survivors their own voices and ways (Swann 1983; Weaver et al. 2006). Authors like Johnston and Highway have power in telling their stories and the truth-telling process is in their hands (Thomas 2007:245). As a result, our understanding of Indigenous peoples as victims and survivors of residential schools expands to include that of agent. The survivor identity grows to encapsulate agency as reflected in their reflections on the IRS experiences.

### *Literature as a Method of Teaching*

*It is not our intention to require you only to share your pain with us... We need you to look not only at the sadness and pain, but to talk about the good things that happened in the schools... It is important for your grandchildren to know why you survived*

(Murray Sinclair as quoted by Ronald Niezen 2013:61)

As explained above, Indigenous IRS literature brings forth new knowledge and this becomes a very important tool for the education of Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. This statement from Justice Sinclair during one of the commission's sessions speaks to the significance of bringing forth past experiences other than abuse. Justice Sinclair recognizes the impact positive experiences can have on Indigenous peoples. An example of "good things that happened in the schools" is Highway's recollection of his

traumatic past; while it is undoubtedly a negative one, the way he writes about his trauma can be considered a helpful narrative towards the healing process.

Indigenous literature has the power to instruct (Swann 1983:xiv), and expressing positive experiences is not only important for current survivors but contributes to the understanding of future generations. These pieces hold real knowledge, both good and bad, regarding the whole of the past that help in contributing to new ways of knowing about the past (Krupat 1992:17; Thomas 2007:245; Gross 2009:80). Further, these narratives can be used to pass on teachings about the strength of Aboriginal identity and instill a sense of pride and strength amongst survivors and future generations (Igloliorte 120; Thomas 2007:253; Regan 2010:6).

## MOVING FORWARD

As explained in Section I, the IRSSA legal framework acts as a hierarchical observation in which survivors are coerced into emphasizing their experiences of trauma. This begins in the IAP and is continuing, despite the intent of the commissioners, into the current TRC. These literatures are valuable because in and of themselves, and their authors, represent their various ways a resistance to such hierarchical observation. They speak not exclusively to trauma, but also remind by recounting other experiences of strength that was shown and continues to remain.

IRSSA, the IAP and even the TRC have combined in a disciplining that has further resulted in the normalizing of a victim narrative. Those that deviate from the narrative of trauma are considered deviant. Many survivors choose to withhold expressing the full range of their experiences because they believe their stories do not fit the preferred traumatic account. Indigenous IRS literatures, by presenting other forms of narratives that do not focus too narrowly on physical and sexual abuse, disrupt the normalized victim narrative. What they show is that this disciplined structure is not immutable, but can be changed through a counter-narrative that is part of and emerges within these literatures (Regan 2010:65).

In disrupting the hierarchical observation and the normalized judgment as disciplined by the Canadian legal framework (which has been argued to cause more harm than healing) survivors become

empowered. The deconstruction of the overarching power helps survivors feel unshackled by the system and gives them strength; they feel as though the power is back in their hands. These new perspectives promote healing and inspire survivors to share their experiences—experiences that include the full scope of residential school survivors’ experiences. According to Thomas storytelling not only validates the experiences of the storyteller (2005:252), but also has the ability to give others the strength, encouragement and support they need to tell their own stories. Other narratives destabilize the hierarchy and the normalized victim narrative. As these narratives continue to increase it is possible that the underlying structure, as described by Foucault, can be dislodged completely.

### *The Role of Academia*

With the TRC coming to an end, further initiatives need to be taken toward exposing the residential school past and promoting the healing of survivors and their communities. Arnold Krupat (1993:xxi) believes that academics have a responsibility to share their tools with Indigenous peoples, and academia provides a forum for the incorporation of Indigenous literatures and an outlet to shine light on the residential school legacy. I am not suggesting that academic exposure is the only context in which this can take place and it certainly cannot replace the narrative constructed by Aboriginal writers, but it represents one of many possibilities. The importance of having collaborative exchange between academic and Indigenous IRS literatures is three-fold. First, it makes new space for Indigenous voices. This undisciplined voice speaks to other IRS experiences and contributes to the empowerment of survivors. Second, it furthers the destabilization of the disciplining power that the legal framework has established within society. Last, it bridges new meaningful relationships between academics (especially anthropologists and historians) and Indigenous peoples.

In Section I, documentation was described as a means of disciplining and of aiding in the normalizing of victim narratives. However, the incorporation of Indigenous knowledge regarding the residential school legacy into academic documentation represents another method of disrupting the disciplined nature of IRS survivor narratives. Incorporating literature by Indigenous authors marks a step

towards deconstructing the underlying disciplining structure that governs the hierarchy of narratives. New narratives of agency, like Highway's, differ from victim narratives by highlighting individuals' resilience, potentially altering the hierarchy of experiences. Further, inclusion in academic analyses of the perspectives these 'other' narratives provide offer another procedure for empowering survivors and inspiring others to share their experiences.

Bridging the gap between the academy and Indigenous literature will mark a step toward strengthening the relationship between academics and Indigenous peoples, while simultaneously leveraging Indigenous self-determination. It also opens a new way of involving subjects (Regan 2010:65; Sluka 2007:182). In incorporating the knowledge held within these books, anthropologists are making space for the survivor voice and accepting survivor agency. Thus, anthropologists become "instrumental" or helpful figures (Deloria 1969:190) in Indigenous societies (Sluka 2007:180) and can interdict the public disciplining. The new knowledge that Indigenous literature brings to light challenges the academic view and its incorporation within the scholarly narrative challenges 'settler' society to question the normalized view of the victimization of residential school children (Regan 2010:55). More specifically, as an additional narrative it can contribute to the healing process and the empowerment of survivors and of Indigenous communities.

It also demonstrates what Paulette Regan (2010:42) would describe as an encounter between Canada or 'settler' society (i.e. anthropologists) and Indigenous peoples. While the legal framework represents the domination of Canadian ideology over that of Indigenous ideologies, academia acts as a means to bring together both sides to help shape a new relationship of mutuality and reciprocity (Regan 2010).

## CONCLUSION

Canada, in an attempt to achieve reconciliation, has begun to address the human rights abuses experienced in the IRS system through a transitional justice model. The focus is on the victimization (physical and sexual) of children over the cultural and psychological abuse because tort law can easily compensate those forms of harm. I have argued that disciplining power, as described by Foucault, is

woven through the IAP and TRC process due to the legal framework. Hierarchical observation, normalizing judgment, and examination, have resulted in testimonies that focus on physical and sexual abuse as the abuse experienced by the normalized victim. This ultimately hinders the healing process of survivors. As the TRC comes to an end there is little dialogue about how to continue the healing process and explore IRS history.

Indigenous literatures that speak to residential school experience present one resolution to disciplining power. The authors reflect on the entirety of the IRS experiences. These stories are important because they present new knowledge regarding IRS. An example is through the description of a sub-culture of resistance. These pieces also act as a way of educating Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities about the past. They can inspire others to share their stories and contribute to the healing process.

Indigenous literatures may also fall victim to disciplining power. However, they can act as a way of deconstructing the overarching discipline that has been implanted through the Canadian legal framework. First, through the presentation of alternative narratives not only focused on physical and sexual abuse. Second, authors still speak to abuses but do so according to their own terms and in ways they see appropriate (such as humor being used as a tool to discuss sexual abuse). Last, these powerful narratives can inspire other survivors (those who thought their experiences were 'insignificant') to share their experiences thus enabling a new generation to learn the full IRS history.

The incorporation of academic and Indigenous literatures into the sphere of the academy, where it heretofore has had little place, offers a hybrid path for disseminating the full scope of knowledge regarding IRS experiences to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. While Foucault forcefully argues that academia itself is a form of repressive documentation and thus disciplining, the joining of these two fields represents an additional opportunity to destabilize the disciplining power of which he warns. The coming together of academia and Indigenous IRS literatures also represents a way of forging new and productive relationships between the academy and Indigenous peoples through the incorporation of missing Indigenous voices that speaks to their own history. Ultimately, recognizing the

knowledge that the pages of Indigenous IRS literatures possess is a way of reflecting on the past and achieving transitional justice.

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