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"Vem Pra Rua": Music, Race and Social Media in the Brazilian World Cup Protests of 2013

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ABSTRACT

n Brazil, music and citizenship have long gone hand in hand. Based upon fieldwork in Salvador, Bahia, this article seeks to answer the following question: What is the relationship between Afro-Brazilian percussion, black identity, and youth activism? To address this question, I argue that black-identified music is a unifying tool used by citizens to assert their claims to rights and that in Brazil the demands for said rights cannot be separated from racial and socio-economic dynamics. To support my argument, I present a case study centered on the use of Afro-Brazilian percussion in the Confederations Cup protests of 2013 to illustrate how music is being used in the fight for rights today. I outline the circumstances that gave rise to nationwide demonstrations and provide thick description of two instances of protest I witnessed in Salvador. Next, I dissect a widely dispersed protest song from 2013 within the context of Brazil's history of protest music. Lastly, I look at the importance of social media in the breadth and scope of this social movement and government response.

Introduction

In Salvador, Bahia, Brazil, black culture and music have been at the center of local resistance efforts against injustice for decades. From the 1970s into the 1980s, re-Africanization—the new affirmation of black identity—began to emerge in Salvador. During this period, black traditions and institutions were reinterpreted, and transatlantic emblems of blackness were adopted, including the Black Power salute and the pan-African colors green, yellow, red, and black. There was also a rise of new models of collective organizing based on identity politics, such as the *blocos afro* (Afro-Brazilian drum corps) that use rhythm as a method of resistance. Black transnationalism played an important role in the growth of re-Africanization, especially in the context of the African-American Civil Rights Movement and the development of Jamaican reggae. Significantly, Olodum and Ilê Aiyê, the most famous *blocos afro*, were inspired by the Black Consciousness Movement and employed symbols from across the African diaspora. By drawing on these visual aesthetics and musical styles, *blocos afro* were able to align themselves with a larger, transnational affirmation of blackness. These groups effectively changed the previously white, European face and sound of carnival in Salvador forever.

Historically, race relations in Brazil have been portrayed in opposition to the black–white dichotomy of the United States. Brazil has been praised for its supposed racial integration and abundance of racial categories. Nevertheless, structural racism along with socio-economic discrimination has played and continues to play as significant a role in Brazil as it does in the United States. This is unsurprising given that according to the 2010 census, 51 percent of the Brazilian population identifies as *preto* (black/dark-skinned) or *pardo* (brown) (IBGE 2011). The majority of the black population lives in the North and Northeast regions. In Salvador, a city known as "A Roma Negra" (The Black Rome), the numbers of Afro-descendants are even greater than the national average: 76.3% of the population self-identified as *preto* or *pardo* (IBGE 2011).
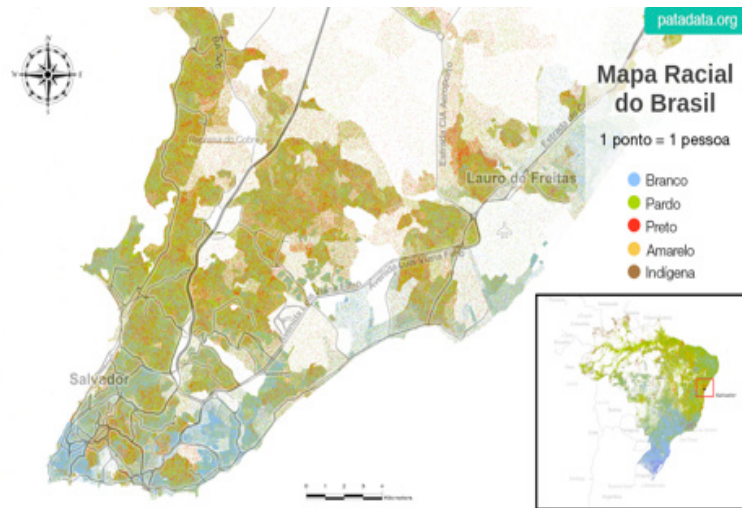
Figure 1. Racial dot map comparing Brazil as a whole to a section of the *recôncavo baiano* (coastal inlet of All Saint's Bay) in the northeast, focusing on the city of Salvador. Each dot represents one person in one of the five racial categories of the census: *branco* (white), *pardo* (brown), *preto* (black/dark-skinned), *amarelo* (yellow/Asian), or *indigena* (indigenous). Coincidentally, the blue areas indicating a significant concentration of white Brazilians on both maps are also the wealthier regions. Map based on 2010 census data from IBGE; processed and mapped by Rafael Viana, João Paulo Apolinário, and Tiago Gama. Individual maps edited into single image by author.

The goal of this article is to examine the use of music as black-identified cultural production within the framework of youth activism in Brazil. In particular, I explore the adoption of Afro-Brazilian percussion as a means of celebration and resistance in protests in Salvador. Through ethnographic fieldwork and textual analysis I sought to answer the following questions: What is the relationship between Afro-Brazilian percussion, black identity, and youth activism? How have groups of young people employed music and social media, in an effort to lay further claim to their rights? I posit that black-identified music is a unifying tool used by Bahian citizens to assert their claims to rights, while simultaneously affirming that the demands for said rights through nationwide protests cannot be separated from the racial and socio-economic dynamics of Brazil. To support this argument, I first outline the methodology for my ethnographic research; I then explore, through a literature review, the historical intersection of cultural activism and Afro-Brazilian identity, and the implications of employing

finally, I present a case study on the use of music and social media in the protests I witnessed during my fieldwork in Salvador.

Methodology

To address my research questions, I spent a total of ten months in Brazil immersing myself in various aspects of Brazilian society. During the summers of 2013 and 2014 I conducted primary and secondary research in Salvador, on which this article draws. Importantly, my identity as a black woman from New Orleans with Afro-Caribbean roots and my near-native fluency in Portuguese determined the spaces I was able to access and the way people treated me. In many ways, I was invisible—passing for Afro-Brazilian—until someone discovered my country of origin. After three years of Portuguese language study, I was able to speak the language fluently. Thus, my Brazilian accent often put me in the position of being praised as a highly skilled foreigner. However, when paired together, my blackness and my Portuguese fluency erroneously marked me as belonging to the marginalized group. Being an African-American passing for Afro-Brazilian encompassed positive and negative experiences, intensified the feeling of being an "outsider within" (Collins 1986), and created within me a sense of "double-consciousness" (Du Bois 1903).

In instances when these interactions were more positive, my near-native fluency in Portuguese was venerated and my Americanness was usually explained away with the fact that I possessed *uma alma brasileira* (a Brazilian soul). When combined with my black identity, I found that my informants were more than willing to share their stories with me during interviews and wanted to know about parallels in my life. Moreover, I was never harassed in the way that many of my white American friends were. Subsequently, I was able to venture into more "dangerous" (read: impoverished and non-white) territory without fear.

However, I also experienced racism and discrimination in ways that my white American colleagues did not. For instance, when waiting to meet a friend at a hotel in Rio de Janeiro, my blackness identified me as a non-belonging other. Despite being well dressed, I knew I was being watched; black women in high-end establishments are often perceived as prostitutes. Several staff members came to ask if they could help me; I politely responded in Portuguese that I was waiting for a friend. Though they continued to watch me uneasily, I was not asked to leave. When my friend arrived and we began speaking in English, I could feel the tension in the room ease. The kind of subtle racism I experienced in Brazil gave me a glimpse into the everyday experiences of Afro-Brazilians. Yet, unlike me, they did not have the option to pull the "foreign black card." In the larger scheme of blackness in Brazil, my American identity gave me a higher status and allowed me to use my othered blackness to escape from situations like the one described above. This knowledge made me uncomfortable.

In June of 2013, I arrived in Salvador and spent my first month becoming acquainted with the city and engaging in participant-observation. Having studied Afro-Brazilian percussion since 2009, I enrolled in supplementary lessons with drumming master Bira in the historic area of Pelourinho. With him, I learned well-known Bahian rhythms including samba-reggae, funk, samba-merengue, and rhythms associated with Candomblé (Afro-syncretic religion). During our sessions, I conducted several formal and informal interviews with Bira and community members he introduced me to. Over the course of my two summers, his shop became my home base—a safe place to which I could always return. My connection to Bira and his family opened many doors in the Pelourinho neighborhood, and I was able to observe practices and performances of local *blocos afro*, including Olodum.

Figure 2. Map showing neighborhoods in the *centro histórico* (historic center) of Salvador and the location of Pelourinho in proximity to All Saint's Bay. Image created by André Koehne (2007)

My first month in Salvador coincided with the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) Confederations Cup, in which Brazil competed as the following summer's World Cup host. I watched all of the soccer matches on television with the masses gathered outside Bira's shop. There, I photographed the throngs of people that passed by in the street and crowded around to buy cans of beer while they watched the game through the shop's window. Watching television was necessary for my consideration of the atmosphere created by the *Copa* (cup). It drew my attention to the discrepancy between the number of black and brown faces in the stadium audiences on television compared to those I saw in the street. Nevertheless, a sea of yellow with crests of green filled both the stands and the streets, and I joined in the collective swing. For each of Brazil's games, the air vibrated with the rhythms of Olodum as they performed in Pelourinho. I observed how people engaged with each other in public spaces and how they interacted with the ever-present military police.

Figure 3. Image depicting a crowd simultaneously watching an Olodum performance and a soccer match during the Confederations Cup. A station for the *policia militar* (military police) can be seen in the top right-hand corner. The flags waving in the foreground decorate the historic city center annually during the *festas juninas* (June festivals) celebrating St. John the Baptist, St. Anthony, and St. Peter. Photograph by author.

In Brazil, celebration and resistance often seem to go hand in hand, and the protests of June 2013 significantly shaped the landscape in which I conducted my research. The FIFA Confederations Cup also coincided with widespread bus strikes. Nationwide, there was an attempt to increase public transportation fares, and young Brazilians took to the streets in protest in all major cities. What began as widespread demonstrations against the price hike grew to include the people's frustrations with the policies of the ruling class, and inadequacies in the public and social services guaranteed by law. Moreover, there was frustration over the misappropriation of public funds in the building of new stadiums for the FIFA World Cup, including Salvador's Itaipava Arena Fonte Nova ("New Fountain Arena", sponsored by Itaipava beer).

During these demonstrations, the military police were omnipresent and often violent. Most protests were peaceful until the military police intervened and caused riots, resulting in civilian injuries and deaths. News coverage on Rede Globo (globe network), Brazil's television monopoly, looped footage of officers throwing teargas bombs into crowds, beating civilians with nightsticks, and indiscriminately shooting people with rubber bullets. Izabel, my host aunt, discouraged me from participating in the protests, saying that it was not my fight. "You look just like any other nigger" in the street, she warned—my status as a foreigner would not protect me as it did those of European descent. Though I tried to avoid direct engagement, the bus strikes often left me stranded in the city center where the majority of the protests occurred. Moving through the crowds, I documented what I saw through photography. At each of the protests that I observed in Salvador, there were always musicians integrating percussion into the demonstrations and driving the different chants.

Literature Review: Afro-Brazilian Cultural Production and Community-based Mobilization

To supplement my fieldwork, I undertook a literature review to gain a better understanding of the relationship between Afro-Brazilian percussion, black identity, and youth activism based on the previous works of experts.

Michael Hanchard's book *Orpheus and Power* (1998) argues that while culture is a force that has the ability to unite people, "culturalist" (as opposed to cultural) practices have also impeded "certain types of counter-hegemonic political activities because of their reproduction of culturalist tendencies found in the ideologies of racial democracy and in Brazilian society more generally" (1998, 21). Hanchard's analysis is not intended to denounce culture as valueless in political struggles, but rather to point out that cultural practice and identity formation alone cannot, and will not, make institutional change when fetishized and considered as ends in themselves. It is easy for these

culture-focused efforts to remain disconnected from other kinds of more substantive remediation.

In Hanchard's analysis, *blocos afro* are an example of relatively successful "race-first" entities that have been able to bridge the gap between the cultural and the political, and to utilize racial identity as a principle to organize collective action. In an earlier article, Hanchard (1994) argues that blackness is perceived to be the antithesis of modernity, which is a major component of citizenship in the West. As a result, Afro-Brazilians have been consistently excluded from full citizenship in Brazil simply because of the color of their skin and socio-cultural practices associated with it. Despite this, members of *blocos afro* celebrate their blackness. Hanchard exalts the fact that the *blocos afro* operate outside the canon of national symbols that constrain their counterparts (the samba schools of Rio de Janeiro), and utilize Afro-Brazilian and pan-African identities and racial discrimination as principal themes.

Going beyond Hanchard's argument that cultural expression alone is not enough to incite change, George Yúdice (2003) looks at how culture is invoked as a problem-solving mechanism in multicultural societies. Importantly, he addresses the issue of government cooption of culture-as-resource. Both preservation and gender- and race-sensitive investment in culture are seen as ways to strengthen civil society, which ultimately serves as the ideal site for political and economic development.

Most relevant to this article is Yúdice's engagement with the idea of cultural agency, and his critique of the usefulness and efficacy of "cultural" NGOs and community activist organizations in Brazil. Yúdice reasons that cultural activism is a process of multilevel negotiation among various entities and that social strife can be transformed "into a resource that 'NGOized' cultural groups can mobilize to seek empowerment" (2003, 6). Yúdice argues that though different forms of black

diasporic music are used to open space for activism and contest power structures, culture also functions as a mechanism to maintain marginalized groups' oppression through social management. Thus, culture becomes a battleground where managerial regimes can divert the political efforts of cultural and identity-based groups. In Brazil, this is further bolstered by *brasilidade* (Brazilian-ness), a racial discourse of inclusion that has long been a tactic for suppressing racial and cultural-affirmation-based movements. If culture is communal then there is no basis for reclamation of rights and resources.

The useful anthology *Brazilian Popular Music and Citizenship* (Avelar and Dunn 2011) moves beyond the broadness of culture as an apparatus in social mobilization to focus on popular music as a tool used by disenfranchised groups to assert claims to citizenship. For the authors, music is both an agent and an image of citizenship, and in the Brazilian context it has played a role in challenging the foreclosure of citizenship for certain subaltern groups. Definitions of citizenship, including who constitutes a citizen, and what rights are associated with an individual's status as a citizen within a democracy, have been highly variable across cultures, societies, and nations. This book also challenges Hanchard's assertion that culture has not promoted institutional change and offers a critical look into selected instances where the relationship between musical practices and the production of citizenship in the process of political and social transformations can be observed. Particularly relevant is Fredrick Moehn's contribution (2011), which explores how discourse about music and musical practices narrates the "audiotopia" (Kun 2005, 14)—the metaphorical space that music helps us imagine and has the possibility to be a safe haven—between factions of a stratified society. Moehn suggests that the ambiguous musical space where culture meets class, history, violence, and the state can be a refuge from both or either of the two Brazils—the privileged and the marginalized. He also suggests that that space of audiotopia can be a place where people can mobilize, as in the example of artists who

use music as a way to critique social exclusion and promote citizens' rights. In the following case study, I will explore the creation of an audiotopia during the Confederations Cup protests of 2013.

The Audiotopia of the Confederations Cup

When I arrived in Salvador in the summer of 2013, I met Brazil in a state of unrest. As mentioned above, there was a series of protests in all of the country's major cities sparked by a twenty-cent increase in the cost of transportation. Known as the *"manifestações dos 20 centavos"* (twenty-cent demonstrations) or the *"jornadas de junho"* (journeys/days of June), the protests coincided with the FIFA Confederations Cup. Here, I focus on the role of music in marches and demonstrations in Salvador. I first outline the circumstances that gave rise to nationwide protests. Then, I provide thick description of the two instances of protest that I witnessed in Salvador, each of which incorporated elements of Afro-Brazilian percussion. Next, I dissect the song "Vem Pra Rua," the anthem of protestors in 2013, within the context of Brazil's history of protest music. Finally, I look at the importance of social media in the breadth and scope of this social movement and government response.

Never underestimate the power of twenty cents. In 2013, 15.7 million Brazilians were living in poverty despite the implementation of social welfare programs like Bolsa Família (family allowance) (Secretaria de Assuntos Estratégicos 2013). While this number is a vast improvement on the 43 million people living in poverty in 1992 and the 41 million in 2002, socio-economic inequality still plagues the nation (Secretaria de Assuntos Estratégicos 2013). Most impoverished Brazilian citizens depend on the public transportation system to get around and make a living. An increase that might seem small has the potential to significantly impact someone's finances and ability to survive between paychecks, especially considering recent inflation. This fact, along with disgruntlement in regard to misappropriated tax money and inadequate public services, motivated the Confederations Cup

protests. Beyond a simple fare increase, these protests represented "mobility in the most literal of senses: the right to mobility which is also the right to the city, to collective decision-making, to opportunity, to justice" (Williamson 2013).
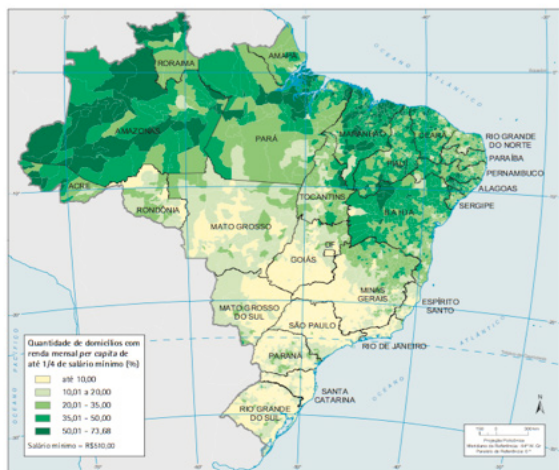
Figure 4. Percentage of households in Brazil with a maximum per capita income of ¼ of a *salário mínimo* (minimum wage, which in 2010 by federal regulation equaled R$ 510.00 per month or R$ 2.32 per hour). Based on 2010 census data from IBGE (2011). Data shows that the largest concentration of low-income households is in the north and northeast regions of the country.

Yet, it was not just the marginalized poor taking to the streets in protest. Across the country, people of all ages, shades and socio-economic statuses were demanding a price readjustment. Leading the charge was a group of young, white college students called the Movimento Passe Livre (Free Fare Movement). These public demonstrations were organized via social media (primarily Facebook and Twitter), and were the largest since those calling for the impeachment of former president of Brazil Fernando Collar de Mello in 1992.

Demonstrations took place in over a hundred cities in Brazil and cities with a Brazilian diaspora around the world. The first demonstrations against the price were held in Natal, Rio Grande do Norte between August and September 2012, where protestors were able to convince the municipal government to reduce public transportation fares. Similarly, in March of 2013, protests in Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul resulted in a judicial decision to reduce transportation prices (Zero Hora 2013). However, in May-June 2013 the protests began to spread to other major municipalities. In Goiânia, Goiás, where the cost of a ticket was raised from R$2.70 to R$3.00, demonstrations became violently destructive after it was revealed that local bus companies were benefiting from tax breaks while continuing to increase passenger fares. A number of students were arrested for vandalism and civil disobedience after four buses were stoned and set ablaze. Nevertheless, the fare returned to its previous price after a preliminary injunction (O Globo 2013).

Marchers took to the streets because they "believe[d] the state [was] betraying citizens by turning over the economy to private interests" (Lesser 2013). In São Paulo, the fare increased from R$3.00 to R$3.20, even though the federal government exempted public transportation from the PIS (Social Integration Programs) and COFINS (Contribution for Social Security Financing) taxes, so that it would not contribute to ongoing inflation (Último Segundo 2013). This sense of betrayal incited more protests and vandalism. Given the tax breaks awarded to public transportation companies, adding twenty extra cents to the bus fare would only benefit the profits of private and government entities that own public transportation systems. Ironically, Brazilians "pay the highest taxes of any country outside the developed world (36% of the GDP) and get appalling public services in return" (H.J. 2013). Chances are that the people paying the increased fare would never see their R$0.20 improve their transit experience. Nor would the fare change manifest itself as an increase in the salaries of bus drivers, train conductors, or maintenance

personnel. What's more, the whole country had seen fare increases the year before and Brazilians seemed to be fed up with not seeing a return on their investment.

The protests and transportation strikes of June 2013 show that *samba e futebol* (samba and soccer) are not the only things that have the power to unify the Brazilian people—though both are intertwined with the period's civil unrest. While the demonstrations in Brazil began as a response to the R$0.20 increase in bus, train, and metro fares, they quickly grew to incorporate other grievances. More than twenty cents, the protests of 2013 represented a stand against government corruption and injustice. They represented a stand for a more direct, participatory democracy; "The public does not accept more state support for the national team than for national citizenry" (Lesser 2013).

A major point of contention was citizens' dissatisfaction with public social services and the misappropriation of public funds in preparation for major sports events, including the 2013 Confederations Cup, the 2014 World Cup, and the 2016 Olympics. With a final estimated price tag over US$ 11 billion (nearly three times what was spent by South Africa in 2010), the 2014 World Cup in Brazil was the most expensive since the competition began 85 years ago (Koba 2014). Much of the infrastructure promised for the *Copa* that would benefit host cities in the long-term, including expanded airports and public transportation systems as well as twelve new or renovated soccer stadiums, was not completed in time for the games. Moreover, approximately US$ 3.6 billion of the money used for the stadiums came from taxpayer money (Neely 2014). It is not hard to see why people would take to the streets to demand better-funded transportation, healthcare, and education when so much money was spent—money that could have funded improvements in public education, public transportation, and public health, such as the construction of 123 hospitals (BOL 2013). Notably, the new stadiums will not provide sustainable revenue. What's more, a large portion of the population was

unable to afford tickets to the matches. Given the percentage of impoverished Brazilians who are also of African descendent (illustrated by figures 1, 4, and 5), the lack of racial diversity seen in the stadium stands was to be expected, but was still shocking considering how Brazil advertises itself a rainbow nation (Araújo 2014).
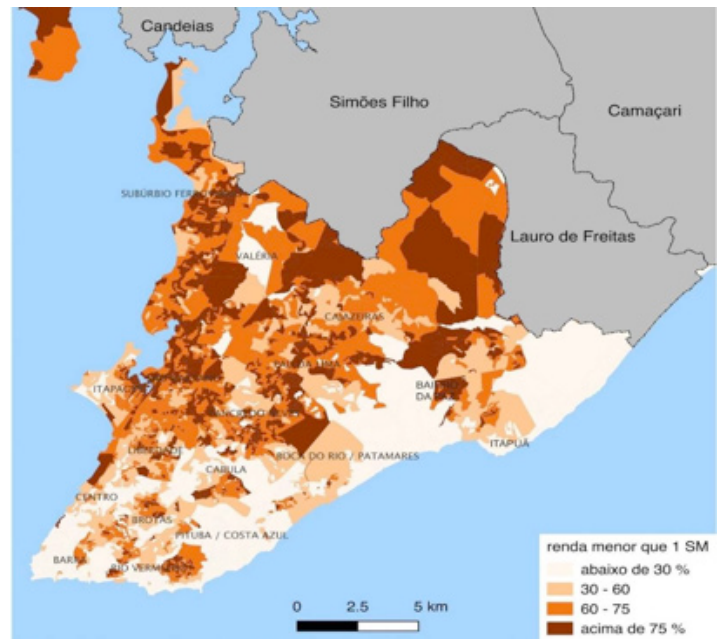
Figure 5. Percent of households in Salvador with a per capita income less than one *salário mínimo* based on 2010 census data from IBGE processed and mapped by Inaiá Maria Moreira de Carvalho and Gilberto Corso Pereira (2015, 17). Data shows that less than 30% individuals living closest to the coast live with less than one *salário mínimo*. As illustrated by figure 1, the majority of these people self-identify as white.

Because I arrived in Salvador at the beginning of June 2013, I was able to witness civil society express its discontent first hand alongside the fervor around the Confederations Cup. I watched their objectives shift and grow as citizens realized the power they held. Buses were the perfect place to people-watch and to experience firsthand why citizens were protesting. Almost everyday in June, I rode the bus from Itapuã to downtown Salvador for over an hour, experiencing for myself why people would take to the streets over twenty cents.
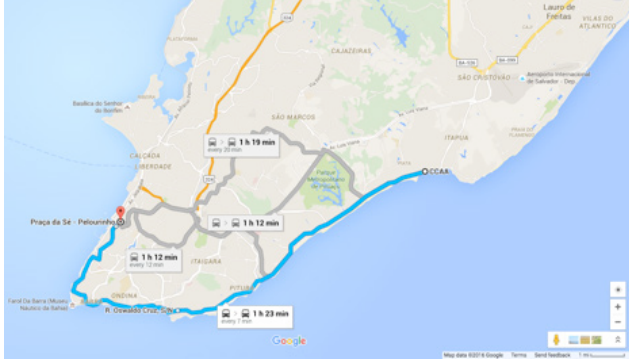
Figure 6. Map depicting bus route from my home stay in Itapuã to Pelourinho. The coastal bus route originates at Salvador's airport, passes through the majority of its wealthy, white neighborhoods, and terminates at Praça da Sé in the historic city center. This is the same bus route that most Confederations Cup and World Cup tourists utilized in the summers of 2013 and 2014. Screenshot taken from Google Maps.

I saw people who in the long run probably would be unable to afford the R$ 0.20 increase. Unlike in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo where the public transport systems are integrated, the fare change in Salvador would mean a single ride would cost R$3.00, without the possibility of a reduced fare transfer to other bus routes. During my bus rides, I saw stoic fare collectors and overworked bus drivers; people on their way to and from work; students who pay full price for public transport; and vendors, poets, preachers, and family members of individuals with serious illnesses, all hoping to get a *real* (unit of Brazilian currency) or two from a couple of hungry or sympathetic passengers. Most bus riders live below the poverty line. Most of these people are black. None of them would benefit from the fare hike. Giving up an extra twenty cents would not get them where they are going any faster, nor would it fix the broken stop-request-buttons. An increase in transportation costs would not complete Salvador's stalled metro project, thirteen years in the making. The price increase would not keep passengers from being victims of petty theft while traveling or from ducking bullets when shots are fired near a bus stop.

At my homestay with Izabel during the summer of 2013, we would watch television and switch between channels: on one we would see people excitedly cheering on the Brazilian national soccer team, on the other we would see Brazilians citizens being violently corralled by military police in the streets around the country. As I watched, a similar back and forth began to emerge as a dilemma within me: to join in or to sit on the sidelines from the comfort of the living room as a revolution unfolded before me on the television screen. Despite the call of protesters singing, "Come to the streets," I made the choice to observe from a distance.

In this intense and exciting time of protest, I could not help but think about how these public demonstrations would shape my research. While I had come to Brazil with the intention of examining the relationship between Afro-Brazilian percussion and black identity formation, community engagement, and political activism, the June protests complicated my understanding of that relationship. Historically, many *blocos afro* have tried to bridge the gap between cultural production and political activism by raising black consciousness. Because Bahia has the highest concentration of African descendants in Brazil, any political movement has the potential become a part of the black movement. Yet, demonstrations in Salvador were not perceived as such. Instead, they were part of nationwide movement led by white youth that distinguished itself in Salvador by employing elements of Afro-Bahian culture. A year later in a 2014 interview, Ubiratan, the leader of a local percussion-focused nonprofit in one of Salvador's poorer, periphery neighborhoods, pointed out:

Of course we have a lot of barriers; there is still a lot of discrimination. There are times when we are excluded. Unfortunately, people want to use our culture, but don't want us to be empowered by it. Generally, a lot of people take advantage of us; they use our image to make a profit on us. When there is a profit to be made, they choose the price. When it's advantageous they use us, but usually blacks don't benefit from this. Those who are benefiting are the whites. […] I think we have to be grateful to have the opportunity to fight to be valued. This is our struggle; strengthening the culture is part of our work here [at our NGO] as well.

Speaking to this oppressive form of cultural appropriation based in the multiculturalist rhetoric of Brazilian nationalism, Ubiratan further illustrated the complexities of this burgeoning social movement's deployment of culture-as-resource. During the Confederations Cup I encountered protests organized by primarily middle-class, white university students rather than a movement propelled by re-Africanized Bahian cultural groups, as seen in previous decades. Although many of these protesters would not identify themselves as *preto* or *pardo*, they invoked blackness conceptually through the use of the region's black-identified music.

On June 20, 2013, just a few days after the opening of the FIFA Confederations Cup, protests in Salvador escalated, following the example of demonstrators who took to the streets in the southeastern cities of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. Singing the Brazilian national anthem, people amassed at Campo Grande (big field), the traditional stage of carnival in Salvador, and attempted to march to Salvador's newly remodeled Fonte Nova stadium during the Nigeria versus Uruguay game. Although protestors were stopped before they made it to Fonte Nova by police officers armed with rubber bullets and teargas bombs, they did encircle one of the FIFA vehicles and delayed its arrival to the stadium (Barros Neto 2013).

Two days later, on June 22, 2013, nearly 20,000 citizens, primarily youth, took to the streets in the early afternoon. The Italy versus Brazil match was scheduled to be played in the Fonte Nova arena later that evening and I went to watch it with Izabel at her friend's house. Forty-eight hours prior, military police had been deployed throughout the city when FIFA officials threatened to cancel the match after plans for the march to cut off a major highway appeared in newspapers and on social networking sites (Hafiz 2013). Protestors once again gathered in the center of the city at Campo Grande and over the course of the next six hours they made their way towards the outskirts. As they walked, marchers chanted *"Salvador vai se unir! A tarifa vai cair!"* (Salvador will be united! The bus fare will fall!), and called out to observers to join their cause (Hafiz 2013).

Though it began peacefully, the demonstration ended in violence when a police barricade confronted marchers. The scene soon looked like a war zone. Even as they pleaded with officers not to take violent action, civilians were shot with rubber bullets and teargas bombs were thrown into the crowds (Hafiz 2013). After the Italy-Brazil game had finished, the son of Izabel's friends came home. He and his girlfriend, both white and in their twenties, had been part of the protest and were shot at with rubber bullets. As the son spoke, his frustration with the unchecked police violence and the larger situation of corruption and inequality was as vivid as the violet bruises blossoming on the pale skin of his arm. Later that night when I arrived home, I checked the Facebook pages organizing protests and came across an image of a black man holding a sign from the protest in Salvador quoting Afro-Brazilian poet Gullewaar Adún. It read: *"Por que as balas de borracha na pele branca comove mais que as balas de verdade que mata a população negra todos os dias?"* (Why is it that rubber bullets hitting white skin cause more of a commotion than the real bullets that kill the black population every day?)

In the following section of this article, I provide an excerpt from my field notes and thick description of the demonstrations in which I unwittingly participated during the 2013 Confederations Cup. Importantly, I give special attention to the use of music and percussion in the protests in Salvador.

Thursday June 27, 2013

Today when I awoke I thought it would start just like the rest of my days have in Bahia. I thought I would wake up, get something to eat, go to my drumming lesson, walk around Pelourinho for a while, and then take my bus back home to Itapuã. However, today had other plans for me. I went to Campo Grande with a friend for lunch at Sorriso Maria (Mary's Smile), a little mom and pop *lanchonete* (lunch restaurant). It had just started to drizzle and people were beginning to crowd under the building's overhang on the corner. There were no free tables inside, so the waiter sat us down with a man fiddling with a professional-grade digital camera and a Macbook Pro, proclaiming that he was *gente boa* (good people). After smiling and nodding for us to sit, the first thing this man asked us was if we were in Campo Grande for the protest. It was around 13:30 and I told him we were just there to have lunch. When I asked him what time the protest would start, I discovered that within half an hour, Campo Grande would be full of young protestors from the Movimento Passe Livre. It seemed that after weeks of trying not to get involved I had walked right into the middle of a protest.

Our lunch companion was a photographer for the Bahian newspaper *A Tarde* (The Afternoon) and had been covering the recent events and protests of the Confederations Cup in Salvador. After we finished our lunch, we said goodbye and wished him luck. The protest had started and since the buses were no longer running, I had to walk to Pelourinho for my drumming lesson with Bira. The closer I got to Praça da Sé (Square of the [Holy] See), the more military police I saw amassing on foot, lining the

streets on motorbikes, sitting on the backs of pickup trucks, and flooding out of camouflage armored buses. The *batalhão de choque* (shock battalion) had arrived and I assumed they would be going to Campo Grande to meet the protestors.

Figure 7. Shock battalion of the military police await the arrival of protestors in Praça da Sé. Photograph by author.

Naively, I thought that by the time my drumming lesson was done, the police would be gone, the protest would be over, and the buses would be running again. I was wrong. Today would be the day that I accidentally joined a protest. I had two options: to stay where I was until the protest escalated and was disbanded or to walk through the crowd to find a bus home while everything was still peaceful. I went with the latter. Almost as soon as I started walking in the direction of the protestors a man walking the opposite direction said to me, "*Tá em guerra menina, não vá!*" (It's war, girl, don't go!).
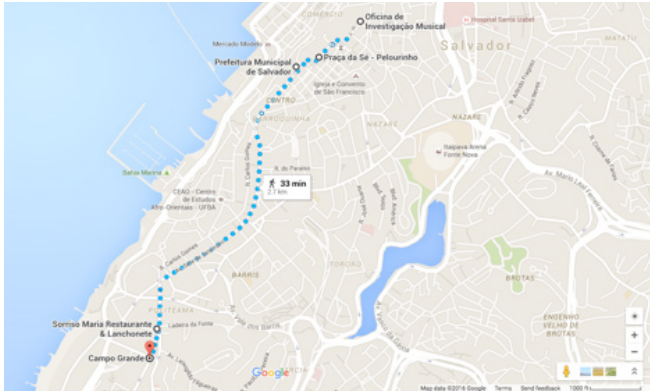
Figure 8. Map of the route I walked from lunch at Sorriso Maria to my drumming lesson with Bira at Oficina de Investigação Musical (Shop for Musical Investigation) and back from the Praça da Sé bus stop to the bus stop at Campo Grande. This map also shows the proximity of the protests outside the *prefeitura* to Fonte Nova stadium where the soccer matches were held in Salvador. Screenshot taken from Google Maps.

As I made my way to the back towards the Praça da Sé bus stop, I could hear the protestors chanting *"Eu quero, eu quero, eu quero passé livre sim!"* (I want, I want, yes I want a free pass). Soon I could see them surrounded by the tight-lipped police officers. The protestors had marched from Campo Grande to Praça da Sé to stand outside of the *prefeitura* (city hall), calling for free bus passes for students, an end to corruption, and better education and health systems with chants and picket signs. There were even signs against Brazil's largest media outlet, *O Globo*, which was not accurately covering the nationwide protests. Demonstrators called out to onlookers and passersby, *"Vem, vem, vem pra rua ver que a luta cresce!"* (Come, come to the streets and see the fight grow).

Figure 9. Protestors in Salvador gather outside of city hall with a sign that reads "out with the Globo network." Photograph by author.

About halfway through the crowd I came across a make-shift *bloco afro*, which happened to include Bira's daughter. There were young people playing snare and bass drums, along with plastic tubs and jugs tied around their waists. I had arrived in Salvador wondering about the relationship between Afro-Brazilian percussion and political activism, and here it was—perfectly not how I anticipated it would be. The expectation that the *blocos afro* would operate in the present, disrupting the status quo just as they had in the history books I had read was unrealistic; organizations evolve and shift focus. Additionally, I had erroneously surmised that Afro-Brazilian percussion would simply be a tool used in community-based activism and citizenship education, emphasizing ethno-cultural affirmation. In that moment, the difference between reading about something and thinking you know a little about it, and meeting that same thing in the field functioning completely differently from what you expected, was thrust upon me. The cultural influence of the *blocos afro* on the protest-scape of Salvador seemed self-evident. If this was war, as the man had shouted to me, where people were fighting for their rights, it seemed appropriate that there was a drum corps present continuing the legacy of the first *blocos afro*.

Figure 10. Protestors playing drums and plastic and metal containers. Photograph by author.

In the streets there was no division between "performer" and "spectator." No one was wearing a uniform with a specific *bloco's* logo, although some had shirts associated with the Movi-mento Passe Livre. Everyone was chanting and there was a sense of ordered disorder. Those individuals with instruments played in unison, but they were also free to play or not play. The main goal seemed to be to drive on the chanting as opposed to giving special attention to the instrumentation or rhythmic variation.

Figure 11. Saxophonist plays in the street as protestors march on. Photograph by author

As I walked by, I took a few photographs and kept moving through the crowd. It was not until I had walked all the way back to Campo Grande that I found a bus to take home. Later that night, while

watching the news with Izabel and her mother, it was reported that the protest downtown had gotten violent and the police had used teargas bombs on the protestors.

Sunday June 30, 2013
While waiting for my friends to arrive at Campo Grande, I decided to photograph the Movimento Passe Livre protestors.

Figure 12. Demonstrators amass in Campo Grande. Photograph by author.

Many people were carrying Brazilian flags or wearing green and yellow soccer jerseys. There were also some individuals wearing the white Guy Fawkes mask from the film *V for Vendetta* that have come to symbolize resistance to government oppression. Others wore shirts that read: "Don't hit me!" Evident in the protestors' chants and in their signs was a call on the government to use tax dollars and other public monies to invest in them as members of Brazilian society through education and health, rather than investing in an excess of new soccer stadiums for the World Cup. Picket signs also demanded a "free pass" to end racism and homophobia (a reference to the proposed *"Cura Gay,"* or gay cure legislation), the right to take to the streets and protest, an end to police brutality.

Figure 13. Protestors with drums assemble and chant in Campo Grande. Photograph by author.

Figure 14. Protestors chanting and using metal and plastic bins as percussive instruments. Photograph by author.

People were jumping, clapping, chanting, and shouting their grievances. *"Da Copa, da Copa, da Copa eu abro mão! Eu quero investimento na saúde e educação"* (The Cup! The Cup! I can do without the Cup! I want investment in health and education!). Similar to the previous protest, there were two makeshift *blocos afro* comprised of *surdos* (bass drums), *caixas* (snare drums), and metal and plastic containers. These two groups of percussionists functioned as an organizing force behind the songs and chants of the protestors. They alternated between using a basic clave beat (played by all instruments present) and the samba-reggae rhythm (with each instrument playing a particular role) as a musical basis for the chants. Eventually, as more people began to arrive in Campo Grande the two percussion ensembles merged and played the samba-reggae rhythm together while protestors sang *"Vem Pra Rua"* (Come to the Streets).

Social Media and The Sound Track of Protests in Brazil

Music has always been a conduit for change in Brazil. From activists and nonprofits associated with the *blocos afro* uniting Salvador's black community, to political authorities and private institutions promoting their interests, music has been used to mobilize the masses. Historically, Afro-Brazilian music has played a significant role in the development of Brazilian national identity at the hands of the government—a prime example being the acculturation and whitening of samba music beginning in the 1930s (McCann 2004). Incidentally, those who oppose the actions and policies of the government have also employed music. This was especially true during the military dictatorship that lasted from 1964 to 1985. Figures such as Bahians Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil were even exiled for their outspoken musical critiques of the government. Even so, the meaning behind their songs still resonates with listeners today. This is equally true with any song that challenges an oppressive power regime. Music is protean, able to traverse dividing lines of race and class and embody multiple meanings. With the rise of the Internet, music has become even more accessible and is widely shared via social media. This is quite significant considering the important role social media played in how protests were organized nationwide. In this section, I will

analyze the song "Vem Pra Rua" (Come to the Streets) and its social media presence within the context of the June 2013 protests.

Originally written by Henrique Ruiz Nicolau as a jingle for a Fiat advertising campaign during the FIFA Confederations Cup of 2013 and performed by Marcelo Falcão—the lead singer for the reggae-rock band O Rappa, known for its socially conscious lyrics—"Vem Pra Rua" quickly became the anthem of protestors. Interestingly, despite its commercial beginnings, the song began to take on a life of its own and was appropriated by protestors (RomaFiat RJ 2013). In the words of Fiat's marketing director João Ciaco, "The song doesn't belong to Fiat anymore, it's the people's" (Scheller 2013).

Come on let's go to the streets
You can come cause the party is yours
Cause Brazil is going to be big
Greater than ever before
Come go with us
Come cheer and show support, keep moving forward
Leave home, come to the streets
To the largest grandstand of Brazil
Ooooh
Come to the street
Because the street is Brazil's largest grandstand
If this street were mine
I would order it tiled
Everything in green and yellow
Just to see the entirety of Brazil go by
Ooooh
Come to the street
Because the street is Brazil's largest grandstand
Come to the street!

As the theme song for the 2013 protests, "Vem Pra Rua" can be interpreted as a metaphor for Brazilian citizens' engagement in the democratic process. Each time I heard "Vem Pra Rua" being chanted, protestors carrying drums and other percussive objects played the same underlying driving rhythm heard in the recording. The song begins with an open invitation for listeners to come out into the streets. In its original commercial context, the "party" referred to in the second line probably implies a celebration for the World Cup. However, within the context of a demonstration, asserting that "you can come cause the party is yours" reaffirms protestors' right to physically disrupt the status quo, to claim the space at a "party" (read: democracy) that should cater to them, and to add their voice to the conversation on citizens' rights. Because Brazil has always been the "country of the future" (Zweig 1941), it is through this civil engagement, occupation of space, and airing of grievances that protestors see Brazil as becoming "greater than ever before."

The second and third verses also carry the weight of multiple meanings. On the surface, listeners are invited to leave home and come cheer in the streets as they support the Brazilian national team. However, as illustrated in the description of demonstrations in the previous section, protestors used these lines to encourage onlookers to join and support the growing movement. While the phrase *"bola pra frente"* literally translates to "ball to the front" and conjures the image of a soccer player kicking a ball forward, figuratively it is used as a motivational phrase to encourage persistence. The line "leave home, come to the streets" emphasizes the sense of transition from a complacent collective contained within private space to dynamic group of protestors a in public space taking direct action. This is supported by the singer's desire to see the street tiled in green and yellow as fans/demonstrators go by in the following verse.

As I previously mentioned, most Brazilians were unable to purchase tickets to watch matches in the new stadiums and the faces in the stands were largely white (Araújo 2014). This makes the line "the street is Brazil's largest grandstand" particularly striking. During both of my summers in Brazil I watched most matches on the streets of Pelourinho with the *preto* and *pardo* masses with the pulse of the *bloco afro* Olodum vibrating in my feet and fans' cheering voices filling the air. The street can in effect be seen as a set of bleachers. Yet, unlike those in the stadiums, the street is inclusive; everyone, including impoverished Afro-Brazilians, has access this *"arquibancada."* It is in the inclusive environment of the street where the people are able to assemble and make their voices heard through protest. The street is where people believe they have the potential to change Brazil.

In addition to music, in the protests of June 2013, social media played a significant role in terms of demonstration organization. This is far from surprising considering that Brazil is the second largest user of Facebook and Twitter in the world and the fact that 85% percent of the population is comprised of highly sociable urban youth (41.5% are under the age of 25) (Williamson 2013). Because "Vem Pra Rua" resonated with so many Brazilians, the phrase exploded on the Internet. What started as a jingle-turned-protest-song took on another life and meaning. The hashtag #VemPraRua was used prolifically to share information, photographs, memes, and videos related to the protests. A group of organizers came together to create a website called vemprarua.org which compiled in one place information on planned protests all around Brazil. Thereafter, vemprarua.org evolved to be a comprehensive portal with a reach beyond the act of public demonstration. The site includes and archive of photos and videos from the protests. Importantly, because of recent political scandals, vemprarua.org and other social media platforms became active again in the wake of nationwide protests on March 15, 2015 against President Dil-ma Rousseff and corruption within in the Brazilian government. These protests continued throughout 2015 and early 2016.

Subsequently, in April 2016 the Brazilian National Congress initiated the process for President Rouseff's impeachment; on August 31, 2016 she was removed from office for breaking budget laws. For better or worse, by combining Hanchard's "culturalist" practices, such as using Afro-Brazilian percussion in protests, with strategic mobilization via social media, Brazilian youth have been able to incite some institutional change.

Not only were Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram major sources of information for people who wanted to learn more about the movement and get involved, but they also served as a platform for the movement to gain direction. A major complaint of government officials and mass media outlets was that the protestors had no clear demands. As a result, on June 18, 2013 a collective named "Anonymous" released a video on YouTube entitled "Anonymous Brasil-As 5 causas!" (Ascinco Causas).

In one minute and forty-five seconds the narrator of this short video—wearing a *V for Vendetta* Guy Fawkes mask—asserts that the protests are a good place to begin building a new Brazil. According to Anonymous, lowering the cost of public transportation is not enough, so the collective suggests five further reasons why people would be speaking out, asking for collaboration, and adherence to the causes. The Five Causes call for the following: 1) rejection of PEC 37, a proposed amendment to the constitution that would give the police exclusive power to conduct criminal investigations and limit the power of federal prosecutors in the Ministério Público (Public Ministry) to investigate crimes. The amendment could potentially hinder attempts to incarcerate corrupt police officers and politicians; 2) the removal of Renan Calheiros from his position as president of the Brazilian National congress; 3) investigation and punishment for irregularities in the work done in preparation for the World Cup by the federal police and the Ministério Público Federal; 4) a law making corruption in congress a heinous crime; and 5) an end to the privileged forum (Ascinco Causas 2013).

Less than 24 hours after its release, the video went viral with over a million views. Within a few days it had been re-posted about 1000 times on other YouTube channels and video sites. This rapid dispersion on the Internet, and subsequent attention by mass media sources, allowed the "Five Causes" to become commonplace in protests in different parts of the country.

This flurry online activity spurred a response from the Brazilian government. The following week, on June 24, President Dilma Roussef held a meeting with mayors and governors from all over the country and proposed five pacts and a referendum in response to the demands of protestors. These were: 1) fiscal responsibility and control of inflation, 2) political reform and eradication of corruption, 3) improvement of public health, 4) improvement in the quality of public transportation, and 5) improvement of the education system (Mendes, Costa, and Passarinho 2013). When the senate approved a bill making corruption a heinous crime on June 26, it seemed as if change was coming to Brazil.

However, the *jeitinho brasileiro* (Brazilian way) can be counterintuitive. In early July 2013, the Brazilian government announced that royalties accrued from petroleum drilling in the pre-salt layer off of the coast of Brazil would be used to fund improvements in the public education and health systems (Senado Federal 2013). While Brazil has taken steps to reduce the effects of global climate change by decreasing deforestation in recent years, this new oil policy intertwining public services and government business interests has the potential to not only affect Brazilian citizens, but the entire world. By funneling oil money into revitalizing public service, the Brazilian government has put its citizens in a position where they are supporting an initiative that will be to their own detriment in the long term. In this instance, one cannot separate the struggle for citizens' rights and the struggle for environmental protection. It seems the country took one step forward to take two steps back.

In an interview with one of my informants during my second summer in Salvador, I asked this teenage Afro-Brazilian musician about changes in Brazil after the June 2013 protests. Though her parents had kept her from participating in the demonstrations because of police brutality, she vehemently supported the uprising, saying:

> Brazilians only do nice things for those from abroad because if the *Copa* weren't happening, everything would continue as the same shit. The *Copa* finished and everything went back to normal with only a few renovations of the space, but everything is the same shit. For me nothing changed. The hospitals continue to be a shit, the transportation continues to be shitty, and everything continues to be shit—education. It's all the same, but when the [foreign] people were here, the *gringos*, everything was all nice, everything was cool. Now everything is the same shit, back to reality. […In the protests] I think for the first time the people knew what they were doing; they realized [the government] was just doing [those improvements] for the *Copa*. It's more than a ten-cent increase in transportation fares. I think it was because the people woke up to what was happening.

Given my experiences during the protests in Salvador, I am inclined to agree with her. Not two days after the games were over, the military police who had been standing guard at all of the major bus stops frequented by tourists during the World Cup were gone. Everything had changed, and yet everything was the same.

Conclusion

Over the course of this paper, I have argued that Brazilians use music as a tool to assert their claims to rights, both in the streets and through song. To demonstrate the importance of music in the process of claiming citizenship rights, I pointed to an example from my fieldwork. The protests of June 2013 following the in-crease in transportation fares across the country illustrated how music is used in direct action. Not only did protestors assemble make-shift percussion ensembles and invoke blackness by playing the rhythms of *blocos afro*, they also employed a shared musical vocabulary based on the appropriation of the Fiat jingle "Vem Pra Rua" and other chants posted on social media. Considering the historical role of music in national identity formation, it would seem that for Brazilians, music continues to be a shared language able to mediate across racial and class lines. Moreover, as an-thropologist Maureen Mahon affirms, "music […] is a medium of expression that involves the formation of social relationships, the construction of identity, and the development of collective practices" (2004, 102). Building on the ideas of ethnomusicolo-gist Thomas Turino, she writes, "As both a cultural product and social process, music brings people together, articulates who they are, furthers their political goals and gives meaning to their lives" (Mahon 2004, 102; Turino 1993, 5). From the use of Afro-Bahian rhythms to the cooption of a commercial jingle, the protests of June 2013 illuminate how music in Brazil serves as such a multi-faceted platform.

Within this framework of music as a unifying entity, the use of Afro-Brazilian percussion and the samba-reggae rhythm at the protests is especially notable. This music that was being used is black-identified and inseparable from Afro-Brazilian subjectivi-ty. When asked about the use of Afro-Brazilian percussion in the 2013 protests, my drumming instructor Bira believed it had to do with the traditional usage of war drums in Africa and Europe and the fact that Afro-Brazilian rhythms resonated with the people of Salvador.

He said:

> There was always music with instruments as protest, now I think this is a result of this [historical practice…]. The *blocos afro* have an influence even in this, in the demonstrations because [the protestors] learned a lit-tle of this [Afro-Brazilian history]. Inasmuch no one is going to play a [military] march, like they played in the streets in the old days, they are going to play the percussion of *blocos afro* or *samba*. The *bloco afro* be-came trendy; it could be played fast or slower. It's in the [collective] memory […] if it wasn't they would play something else.

Whether consciously or not, as a part of their demonstrations the young Bahian protestors of all racial identities felt inclined to utilize rhythms whose history is inseparable from the struggle of *preto* and *pardo soteropolitanos* (people of Salvador) to value their blackness, to be included in segregated carnival practices, and to assert their right to public services. Because marginalization in Brazil is so strongly associated with blackness, it's fitting that a black form of cultural expression such as percussion would be employed to contest hegemonic power in an instance when the masses felt alienated from government policies.

Here, I return to the central questions posed at the outset of this paper: What is the relationship between Afro-Brazilian percus-sion, black identity, and youth activism? Moreover, how have groups of young people employed music and social media, in an effort to lay further claim to their rights? The relationship between the three entities in the first question is embedded in the local, giv-en Salvador's racial composition and history of cultural activism. The current generation of *soteropolitano* youth have embraced the legacy of community-based and black-identified rhythmic resistance established by the blocos afro in the 1970s and 1980s.

The World Cup protests were built on the backs of the marginalized, their music used to open space for activism. As my informant Ubiratan pointed out, Afro-Bahian culture has been consistently appropriated and commoditized without necessarily benefiting the black communities that birthed the culture. While protestors demanded accountability of government officials and improvement of public education and health, it remains to be seen if their activism will impact the communities who have long lived without consistent access services guaranteed by the Brazilian constitution. As for the second question, youth utilized music and social media as tools to claim space—physically by occupying the streets and virtually to illuminate the issues, communicating their demands and organizing the masses on the Internet. Because it is an aural medium, protest music—whether commercial or 'organ-ic' in origin—could be found in both places, adapted to best serve the agenda of the demonstrators.

In closing, I would like to return to Frederick Moehn's application of audiotopia—the metaphorical space that music helps us imagine and that has the possibility to be a safe haven between factions of a stratified society—to Brazil. Moehn suggests that the ambiguous musical space where culture meets class, history, violence, and the state can be a refuge from both or either of the two Brazilian realities. Or, the audiotopia can be seen as a place where mobilization can take place (Mohen 2011). Based on my fieldwork and the audiotopia created by the Confederations Cup protests, I know both to be true. Music is simultaneously a currency, an escape, and an apparatus. The citizen has the power to decide which path to take.

Acknowledgements

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Freedom and Emptiness: Investigating the Experience of Meaning-Making among Non-Religious Students

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the experience of university students who identify as non-religious. Drawing on the philosophical frameworks of Nietzsche's notion of nihilism and Sartre's ideas on Atheist Existentialism, the research explores how non-religious students experience and give meaning to their non-religiosity. Ten in-depth interviews were conducted with students aged 18-25. According to the interviewees, being non-religious means that a God or a predetermined purpose in life does not exist. From this perspective, inner tensions arise, each encompassing feelings of freedom and empowerment as well as feelings of emptiness and heaviness. The article explores three main themes from the interview material, which relate to Sartre's notions of freedom and abandonment. The first focuses on the tension between freedom and emptiness: in the absence of a god, individuals can create the life that they themselves will, which allows them a great sense of empowerment and responsibility. However, for many, this also results in feelings of emptiness and despair. The second theme discusses the participants' value of their own sense of critical awareness in contrast to a certain longing for the blissful ignorance that religion, in their eyes, provides. Finally, the tension between participant's concept of 'nothing out there' and the existence of 'something' is explored. This research draws on philosophical theories of meaning-making to illuminate ethnographic accounts of the lived experiences of non-religious individuals, thereby contributing to the anthropology of religion and belief, as well as philosophy and other fields closely concerned with processes of meaning-making.

"At one moment, we understand our situation as one of high trage-dy, alone in a silent universe, without intrinsic meaning, condemned to create value." (Taylor 1992, 68)

In contemporary society, the significance of religion has considerably decreased (Taylor 2007). During the Enlightenment period in the 18th century, when science and rationality gained considerable influence in the public sphere, religion began to no longer hold the same authority as it had before (Bruce & Glendinning 2010; Uskoković 2010). With the shift away from an idea of an absolute God, the influence of Christian values and the promise of life after death declined. According to the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, this could ultimately result in nihilism: the denial of any values, truth or purpose in life (Auxier 1987; Hatab 1987). However, Nietzsche himself did not reject the existence of any value in the world. Nihilism, he stated, is something that we must overcome. A strong morality should not be imposed on the individual by an external force, but can be developed within oneself, and can be found within the very will to live (Hatab 1987). This idea of 'overcoming' nihilism is what led us to our research project of deconstructing how students who identify as non-religious find their sense of meaning in the absence of a God or other pre-determined purpose.

Our study developed into an investigation of how students (aged 18-25) who identify as non-religious relate to the meaning and consequences of this non-religiosity. What does it mean to be non-religious? How do non-religious students relate to the idea that God does not exist? How do they find or look for a sense of purpose in life? As the research progressed, three main themes emerged, all of which can be connected to Jean-Paul Sartre's notions of freedom and abandonment in the absence of God,and are further supported by Charles Taylor's emphasis on the lived experiences of individuals within contemporary secular society (Sartre 2007; Taylor, 2007).

Through this research it be-came apparent that religiosity and non-religiosity do not exist in a state of oppositional rivalry. Rather, they result in different lived experiences that are often filled with tensions and contradictions. After placing our research in its social and historical context, this article will delve into these themes and the tensions that arose in the understanding of the individual's experiences of non-religiosity.

Enlightenment, Nihilism and Existentialism

In his book *'A Secular Age'* (2007), Charles Taylor investigates the background and social context in which people develop a sense of meaning or purpose in life. According to Taylor, we have moved from a society in which religion seemed almost 'naturally' interconnected with people's daily and public activities toward a society in which religion is experienced as just one of the many ways we can give meaning to the world around us. The predominant narrative about the movement from a religious to a secular society is one of substitution (Taylor 2007). From 1500 onwards, traditional religious systems, which were built around the idea of the Christian God, were challenged by the development of science and by the increasingly valued 'sovereignty of the individual' (Manschreck 1976). The emergence of Protestantism in the 16th Century challenged the old system by emphasizing the importance of the individual's relationship with God, marking the beginning of a long period of criticisms of traditional, religious and dogmatic systems (Manschreck 1976). This development led to the Enlightenment, often considered as the greatest leap forward in the creation of a 'better', more rational humanity (Israel 2006; McGrath 2006). At this time, empirical science broke through as the 'true way' of finding knowledge (Israel 2006). Skepticism and a critical stance towards religion, together with reflective self-awareness, were fiercely promoted among scientists, philosophers and intel-lectuals (O'Brien 2010). As a consequenceof these ideals,

religion was increasingly seen as a failure, keep-ing humanity ignorant with its coercive, dogmatic prescriptions (Manschreck 1976).

All in all, a predominant idea is that science came into existence, gave people the means to discover the world as it truly is, and freed them from the illusions of blind faith. Taylor, however, nuances this argument, understanding the secularization of modern society rather as a development in which various advances of human understanding - not only in the natural sciences, but also in philosophy, art and literature - gave people a different understanding of what it means to be human. In a way, these developments led to a new 'toolbox' with which people could develop a humanistic account of a meaningful life without resorting to the notion of a god (Taylor 2007).

Today, this perceived contradiction between the critical, self-aware individual and the dogmatic, faithful believer is still very present. While religion is often seen as an external force that promotes blind faith in a 'supernatural' power, the development of values and meaning from within oneself, by thinking and reflecting critically, has become increasingly important in contemporary society (Martel-Reny 2014). According to Taylor (2007), there exists the idea that modern civilization, in which the free individual can flourish, cannot but bring about the end of the religious era. Indeed, more and more people define themselves as atheists (Goodman and Mueller 2009). Whereas 'theism' means 'belief in a God or gods', atheism as its antithesis denies the existence of God or any other supernatural power (Goodman and Mueller 2009).

What, then, does it mean to live in a secular society? Taylor (2007) argues that secularism can be understood in three different ways. Firstly, religion is no longer inseparable from the social sphere: when we carry out activities in public spaces, the norms, values and principles that guide us no longer necessarily refer to God or any other religious belief. One could, for instance,

enter the realm of politics without believing in God. Secondly, secularity can be understood as a decrease in the number of people engaging in religious belief and practice. Thirdly, secularity entails a move from a society in which the existence of God is an unquestioned aspect of human life, towards a society in which religion is just one way of living among other alternatives. In this sense, secularity incorporates the whole social and private context in which the development of our moral, spiritual and religious understanding and search takes place (Taylor 2007). Our research focuses on this third aspect: the lived experience of non-religiosity and the alternative ways of meaning-making that non-religious students develop. According to Taylor, non-religiosity could lead to the development of more humanistic spiritual experiences, but could also lead to feelings of meaninglessness and purposelessness (Taylor 2007).

This latter idea was previously articulated by Friedrich Nietzsche, who, at the end of the 19th century, boldly celebrated the death of God (Manschreck, 1976; Nietzsche, 2010). Together with our belief in God, he stated, we must also bury all Christian values and ideals of love, pity and kindness, for they lost their credibility at the same moment God was murdered (Auxier 1987; Nietzsche 2010). The loss of this moral value system can result in the idea, in Dostoevsky's words, that, "If God does not exist, then everything is permitted" (Manschreck 1976, 87). Furthermore, if one does not believe in God, the idea that there is a heaven or a life after death suddenly becomes severely implausible. Everything a human being does, creates or achieves will be lost when he or she dies. According to Nietzsche, the death of God can result in nihilism: the paralyzing belief that there exists no absolute value, truth or any purpose in the world (Manschreck 1976; Auxier 1987). In their article on atheist students, Goodman and Mueller state that this link between nihilism and the absence of God is still present. Atheism, they argue, is often associated with nihilist ideas, being "characterized as a dark force that rejects the values of goodness, morality and purpose" (Goodman and Mueller 2009, 56).

Jean-Paul Sartre's introduction of the notions of freedom, aban-donment and despair offers an additional perspective to these questions of human existence in the absence of God. Greatly influ-enced by the ideas of Nietzsche, Sartre discusses the consequences of 'the death of God' in his essay 'Existentialism is a Humanism' (2007). According to Sartre, the idea that God does not exist will result in the ultimate freedom of the individual subject. In order to clarify this, Sartre first explains how a knife is manufactured. When making a knife, one already knows what kind of purpose it will serve once it exists. In this way, for the knife, essence precedes existence. If God existed, human beings would not differ from the knife inasmuch as they would be created according to a certain concept, in order to serve a definite purpose on earth. Howev-er, Sartre states, God does not exist. Therefore, humankind has no fixed nature or purpose, nor is it created by anybody; human beings are ultimately free. Existence precedes essence, that is, a human first encounters the world and him- or herself, lives and creates, before s/he becomes something (Sartre 2007).

Furthermore, a human being is not an object but a subject, and can never transcend this subjectivity. While some critics argue that calling humans 'subjects' deprives them of dignity, Sartre states exactly the opposite. It is exactly this subjectivity that makes human beings different from objects, and exactly this subjectivity that makes a human ultimately free and responsible for what s/he is (Sartre 2007; Fischer 2016). If there is no God, "man is nothing other than what he makes of himself " (Sartre 2007, 22). How-ever, together with experiencing ultimate freedom, humankind feels abandoned and empty if there is no God or higher power. As Sartre states that humans' freedom cannot be absolutely tied to anything, such as religion or politics, this freedom automatically involves a sense of emptiness, of not belonging anywhere (Man-schreck 1976). Sartre's ideas on atheist existentialism were reflect-ed time and time again in the material we gathered in the inter-views. Therefore, we have used Sartre's philosophy as a framework for our analysis as we delve into the lived experienceof non-religious students.

Apart from the idea that non-religiosity can have nihilism, or feel-ings of emptiness and abandonment, as its consequences, many studies argue that it can also inspire 'new' searches for meaning and purpose in life. The secularization of society and the shift to-ward an individualistic society brought about new trends among individuals identifying with other spheres of spirituality and alter-native ways of meaning-making. In our study, spirituality refers to a search for meaning in which one experiences something 'deeper' than everyday life. While spirituality could be connected to reli-gious experiences, it can also stand in contrast to mainstream, tra-ditional forms of religion. While spirituality focuses mostly on the *inner experience* and authorization of the individual, religion is sometimes seen as *externally imposed* and dogmatic (Vincett and Woodhead 2009). The term 'spiritual' in today's society is closely associated with notions of the autonomous subject, freedom, and empowerment, aspects that became central themes throughout our research and are very much linked to Sartre's notion of the free individual.

Religious studies scholar Martel-Reny (2014) investigates the meaning-making experiences of adolescents in Quebec, and their definitions of and personal relations with religion and spirituality. As Martel-Reny describes, the participants of the study "saw a dif-ference between religion and spirituality – the former as a struc-turing force that curtailed individual freedoms, the latter as an elective and private choice that is free from the dogmatic taint and power struggles they associated with religion" (Martel-Reny 2014, 185) In Martel-Reny's research it was assumed that the meaning making activities and convictions of adolescents who iden-tified as non-religious were automatically spiritual. However, we did not want to approach our research with the assumption that all non-religious processes of finding meaning would necessarily be of a spiritual nature. Rather, we also focused on the everyday lives of non-religious students, such as love of music, relationships with their friends, or sense of belonging to community.

The findings of Day's (2009) three-year case study investigating mainstream religious belief in Euro-American countries supported our hypothesis. This research showed that participants' construction of beliefs were mainly rooted in their personal relationships. Day's findings call for a closer look into the forces of meaning in the everyday lives of young adults, and "such a shift necessitates a relocation of the transcendent to the everyday and social" (Day 2009, 1). This study highlighted the need to probe more deeply into the everyday experiences, and personal relation-ships of our participants rather than only asking explicitly philo-sophical questions in the interviews.

The focus on alternative ways of making meaning is further illuminated in Taylor's writing on 'The Ethics of Authenticity' (1992). Taylor states that the excessive individualism originating from the 18th century Enlightenment does not necessarily result in meaninglessness and purposelessness, but can also inspire people to start looking for moral 'authenticity'. In a way, individualism and the 'death of God' have resulted in the idea that people have the freedom to determine their values and morals themselves. This led to a feeling that became deeply rooted in modern consciousness: that every human being has *his or her own way of being human* (Taylor 1992). This ties in with the idea that 'every individual should have agency to give meaning to life in his or her own way', an idea that gained significance in the 1970s with the emergence of the New Age spiritual movement (Vincett and Woodhead 2009). This trend can be regarded as congruent with the emer-gence postmodernist consumer society, in that people practice a certain 'religion shopping' and combine religious notions with ideas emerging in the natural or social sciences. In a way, peo-ple create their own sense of meaning and "use, recycle, combine and adapt existing religious ideas and practices that they see fit" (Hanegraaff 2009, 340).

In our research it became apparent that while the absence of any prescribed or pre-determined meaning in life could result in nihilism, it could also result in a sense of empowerment and freedom. When the external world imposes no values on people, they are free to create their own sense of authenticity, selfhood, and path in life (Taylor 1992).

Methodology

Our ethnographic research consisted of ten in-depth interviews with students from Maastricht University aged between 18 and 25 who identify as non-religious. The participants were recruited through acquaintances and a message posted on a Facebook group of the University. Some volunteered whilst others were asked to participate. All came from educated backgrounds and were pursuing either their Bachelor's or Master's degree at the faculties of Law or Medicine, the Conservatorium, University College Maastricht, or the School of Business and Economics. The participants were raised in different countries, and came from a variety of religious and non-religious backgrounds. The interviews lasted between one and two hours and, with the participants' consent, were recorded using a digital sound recorder.

We chose to interview students of this age range as this life period is often experienced as a time of significant transition. Student life is typically perceived as a time of heightened independence and freedom in comparison to other life stages. At this time, as we have observed and experienced, questions arise about oneself, the surrounding world and one's place within the world.
We used the in-depth interview approach as it allowed us to gain access to the personal experiences of the participants. The nature of the semi-structured interview gave the interview a somewhat informal tone, which gave both interviewees and interviewers a certain sense of freedom while talking about personal topics (Hesse-Biber 2014). The interview questions focused on the participant's religious or non-religious background, their sense of values and morals, moments/feelings of purpose in their lives, and

their reflections on death. In order to protect the identities of the interviewees, the names used throughout the article are pseudonyms.

After carrying out and transcribing the interviews, we began drawing out their recurring patterns. Once these were identified, we undertook a process of clustering and coding the patterns into a broader framework of umbrella themes. These themes were then developed in memos (Hesse-Biber 2014) as we reflected upon each theme in connection with our secondary sources, analyzing the relations of the themes with one another through a series of mind-maps.

Furthermore, as researchers we interviewed one another in order to understand our own position within the research, our views and personal experiences, whilst also having the opportunity to reflect how appropriate our questions were. Understanding and reflecting upon our own processes of meaning-making strengthened our deep interest and engagement with the research, whilst also illuminating the significance of our own subjective positioning in the role of researchers. We treated this data as we did the data from our other participants, including them in our material for analysis.

Being Non-religious: the Tension between Freedom and Emptiness

"We are condemned to be free." (Sartre 2007, 29)

Since all the interviewees identified as being non-religious, the conversations often focused intensely on the meaning they gave to this non-religiosity. In the participants' eyes, being non-religious mainly involved the conviction that God or any other gods did not exist and that therefore, there was no clear, predetermined purpose in life. Although some of the interviewees defined themselves as spiritual, or speculated about the existence of 'something else' in life, they emphasized that they did not tie these beliefs or

Interestingly, these ideas about non-religiosity led to two main experiences. On one hand, many participants stated that the absence of any God or a definite goal in life gave them a feeling of ultimate freedom, resulting in the experience of a certain empowerment. On the other hand, a feeling of emptiness or loneliness was often emphasized, for the idea that there was 'nothing', or at least no greater being looking after them, resulted in a feeling of being ultimately alone. It should be noted, however, that none of our interviewees felt either free or empty, empowered or lonely. It was exactly the interplay between these feelings and convictions that made this tension between freedom and emptiness in relation to non-religiosity so interesting. One of the interviewees, Franceska (21), described how her stance towards religion had changed over time. Growing up in the Netherlands in a family in which religion, spirituality and agnosticism were all present, she stated that although she used to be religious as a child, she changed her views when someone close to her died. In a way, she discovered that she no longer needed this idea of a God or an afterlife in order to enjoy life and find a sense of meaning in it. In her interview, she put a lot of emphasis on individual freedom, although on the other hand, she stated that the idea that there is nothing after death sometimes scares her.

> The very funny thing… that there was nothing there anymore looking after you, or that there was no life after death made me feel really free or something, in a strange way… like "oh I could make my own thing of this! I don't have a purpose in life I just make it myself!" And sometimes the idea that there isn't anything after death really scares me because I think about nothing and I cannot know what nothing is… I think it's really difficult for everyone, secretly, to imagine what nothing is, than to imagine was something is. Because we know what something is, and nothing is just so scary, it's incomprehensible because we never encountered absolutely nothing in our lives, because life is something in itself.

In this quote, the tension between 'freedom' and 'the incomprehensibility of nothing' is very explicit. On one hand, Franceska says that the idea that there is 'no one' or no life after death 'frees' her in a way, for she has the chance to create her own sense of purpose and meaning. On the other hand, she states that there is "nothing there anymore looking after you", implicitly reflecting on a certain feeling of abandonment. The idea of 'not knowing' what 'nothing' is scares her, because it is an idea impossible to comprehend. In the later section entitled 'Something and Nothing', we will delve more deeply into the participants' stance towards the idea of nothingness.

Interestingly, Franceska uses the word 'make' in order to describe her search for a purpose, which suggests an active stance towards her way of living and personal development. Whereas 'looking' for a purpose would imply the idea that one could 'find' an already determined goal or meaning, 'making' a purpose emphasizes the idea that one can create one's own sense of being. This idea was also emphasized by other interviewees. For instance, Lia (19) who was raised in a Christian family in Palestine, stated that although you never know where and how you will end up, you very much 'shape' your own life. These ideas relate to Sartre's view that, for human beings, existence precedes essence. If God does not exist, "man is nothing but what he makes of himself" (Sartre 2007, 29). The consequence of having ultimate freedom comes with a large responsibility: a person is left to create him- or herself and is therefore also entirely responsible for what he or she is.

The importance of this responsibility was emphasized by Amanda (22). Amanda was born in Bulgaria and had, together with her parents, developed a rather critical stance towards religion. Religion, she said, can result in the transfer of responsibility to something else.

> To a certain extent I feel that religious movements… especially with monotheistic religions… they kind of… it's a bit of a transfer of responsibility to something else. It's like: "I had a terrible day or someone died, it's God's act and I don't have to deal with it."

This notion of 'God's act' recurred in many participants' responses in relation to this sense of blame. However, as Amanda went on to explain, the transference of responsibility to God is also a transference of power. As with many other participants, she described feeling responsible for her own actions and life as a source of empowerment: to be responsible is to be free, and vice versa.

> It's an act of a person, it's not an act of God. It's as simple as that. You can do whatever you want, and that's what I choose to do… I'm just trying to be a person, not just an automated human being. It's good to be a person right here, right now.

In this quote, she clearly states that an 'act of God' does not exist, only an act of humanity. Interestingly, she then rephrases what Nietzsche and Dostoevsky stated about the consequences of God's death as she says: if God is not there, "you can do whatever you want" (Manschreck 1979). According to Sartre (2007), this is the starting point of existentialism. Instead of turning toward a nihilistic view, Amanda goes from God's non-existence to a sense of empowerment, by stating that she does what she chooses to do. In this choice, her responsibility and her freedom exist simultaneously. This feeling that meaning can be found in freedom of choice is embodied in the words of Taylor: "It seems that significance can be conferred by choice, by making my life an exercise of freedom, even when all other sources fail" (Taylor 1992, 29). Even when life has no intrinsic meaning, we can create meaning through the exercise of our free choice.

Furthermore, the fact that she speaks about being a 'person' and not just an 'automated human being' can be linked to Sartre's notions of human subjectivity and free will. Human beings, he states, are in contrast to objects free to be what they will themselves to be. This idea that human beings have a free will can be attributed to the individualism very much present in Western societies, influenced by Enlightenment ideals about free will and critical awareness of oneself (Vincett and Woodhead 2009; Manschreck 1976).

However, although freedom, individual choice, and responsibility were often mentioned and elaborated upon, the idea that there was no God or purpose was also described as a source of fear and abandonment. Franceska, for instance, suggested not only that there may be no purpose to be found, but also that perhaps, in the absence of God or a greater purpose, creating this purpose is futile in itself.

> So in a way it's really scary, because if there is nothing there or no purpose then you are just looking at a blank page. And you don't even have to write it, you can just go on staring and that's a very scary thing…

By using the 'blank page' metaphor, she makes clear that there is no ready-written story, no clear purpose for people who do not believe in God. Furthermore, they do not even have to 'write' their life story, for there is nobody out there who cares whether you do or not. Rather than a feeling of empowerment, she reflects a feeling of ultimate futility.

Damien (20) grew up in an American, Catholic/Jewish family in Hong Kong, and identifies as a strong atheist. He stated that although he knows that God does not exist, he would prefer to be religious, for if there is no God, "you struggle because you only have yourself". Whilst Damien once held a very negative stance on religion, he now experiences a certain longing for the sense of relief that he perceives religion as providing.

And then I decided I'm a full on atheist, I don't believe in any religion, there is no use in it. I thought to myself: there is no reason for me to be religious, God doesn't exist. But now, my view on religion has kind of changed. I wish I were religious but I can't be. Because… I don't believe in it, but I can understand how people that have a faith in a God benefit more than people that don't believe in a God. Because if stuff gets hard for people that aren't religious, they're alone, they have nothing to turn to. But if you're religious and something is going on in your life, you can say: "oh, I'll look up to the sky and hope that God is there and heave a sigh of relief." But if you have absolutely no belief in a God, that sigh of relief isn't there. Then what do you do? So… yeah.

Damien's change of view on religion reflects what Sartre described in his notion of despair and abandonment in an interesting way. Without God, non-religious people find themselves in a state of loneliness, unable to experience this 'sigh of relief', or the idea of a purpose provided by the divine. Later in the interview, Damien said that the absence of a definite purpose causes a feeling of emptiness. This is what Taylor describes as the possible negative slope of non-religiosity: the experience of an absence, or exile, in which we melancholically long for belief, but we cannot possibly believe anymore. "What dominates is a sense of damnation, of deserved and decided exclusion forever from fullness" (Taylor 2007, 6).

Sartre, too, writes about this negative slope. The idea that God does not exist is in his eyes "severely disturbing" for the individual, for there are no a priori values to be found, neither is there the promise of a life after death. Man stands, in this way, completely alone. "Indeed," Sartre states, "everything is permissible if God does not exist, and man is consequently abandoned, because he cannot find anything to rely on" (Sartre 2007, 29). This quote strongly represents Damien's view that if you are non-religious, "you have no one to turn to".

All in all, the internal tension between 'freedom' and 'emptiness' that our participants explicitly and implicitly describe, is perhaps best summarized in Sartre's famous words: "man is condemned to be free" (Sartre 2007, 29). Freedom is often perceived as having a positive connotation, empowering the individual being. However, the responsibility for one's own being can also result in a feeling of unbearable heaviness and abandonment. In that way, for many, being free was considered a curse as well as a blessing.

Critical Thinking versus Ignorance

The idea of freedom also related to the participants' evaluation of critical thinking, in which a similar duality between empowerment and heaviness came about. Throughout the interviews, all of the participants reflected on the importance of critical thinking, valuing their ability to critically analyze religion and belief, the world around them, and themselves. There was often a strong sense of pride in their achievements as they expressed their sense of autonomy to actively reflect upon their own and others' beliefs. We discovered that the familial context had a significant influence on the value that participants attached to this critical thinking. All of the interviewees' parents were either non-religious, or encouraged the participants' own explorations of religion and beliefs. This realization helped us to understand the participants' sense of personal development and the beliefs that they now hold. They often stated that they were proud of their parents' openness or grateful that they were given the freedom to develop themselves freely. This pride and gratitude further underlines how the interviewees felt free to develop their own sense of meaning. Rather than having a dogmatic view externally imposed on them by their parents, they were allowed and supported to develop their own critical stance towards religious belief and identification.

Many participants stated that through thinking critically, they were able to see more widely and deeply than those who followed religious beliefs. In the eyes of most of the interviewees, religion was very much associated with dogmatic beliefs and the promotion of ignorance, hindering the development of the critical individual. Linked to this idea of religion as dogmatic is the perspective that religions are static and absolute. For instance, Alexander (25), who grew up in a Finnish non-religious family, reflected on his ideas that religions, due to their self-acclaimed divinity, were not as prone to changing their ideas as what he calls 'intellectual ideologies' would be.

> Religion is different from other ideologies, because most religions have this self-acclaimed divinity, so that they are correct, they are the truth. Religion is always absolute. I mean, most religions. (…) Whatever your interpretation is, it is more difficult to change your mind if you think you are fulfilling the word of God. It is more difficult to let go of this. It is possible to change it, but it's more extra effort. Other ideologies are different, for instance, socialism… People who came up with socialism are aware that it is a theory about society. And when you change this theory, you are not changing the word of God or divine things, you are just changing a theory, an intellectual thing. It's more self-aware, it is an intellectual concept. And religion doesn't have that. It's a divine source.

Here, Alexander speaks of the difference between religions and 'other ideologies', such as socialism. According to him, 'intellectual ideologies' are more self-aware than religion, for they rely on theories instead of a 'divine source'. He believes that it is difficult to change one's claims if they are considered to be the word of God; to change them would indirectly imply that God was wrong. Later in the interview, he also states that religious people tend to ignore 'proof' or 'facts' that oppose their God-based worldview. This idea

was linked to all of the participants' responses that reflected the relevance of scientific value in contemporary society, which has been on the rise since the Enlightenment (McGrath 2006; Bruce & Glendinning 2010; Uskoković 2010). Science was perceived as the antithesis of religion, as it is seen to be based on human reason and empirical evidence rather than blind faith. They spoke of reading a vast array of literature, such as Dawkins' book on The God Delusion, or other sources in which religions were challenged by atheists or scientists. Reason, in this sense, is perceived as being necessarily connected to atheism and the challenge to dogmatic belief systems represented by historical figures such as Copernicus, Darwin and Freud (Taylor 2007).

Moreover, some participants made a direct link between 'being intelligent' and being an atheist. They implied that it was impossible to be both critically reflective and religious because scientific proof or rational thoughts often spoke against religious convictions. In this way, our non-religious participants viewed themselves as having more of an objective stance towards the world around them than religious persons, a notion which could have its origin in Enlightenment ideals (Manschreck 1976; McGrath 2006).

Science was in the 18th century already celebrated as the 'Promethean liberator of humanity' from religion (McGrath 2006), yet it seems as if for our interviewees, this connection between scientific thinking and the liberation of the individual is still very much present. Essentially, this value of critical thinking is linked to Sartre's notion of freedom and self-autonomy. While critical thinking enables us to face the meaninglessness of the world, it also encourages us to design our own rules of life, the rules by which we choose to live (Taylor 2007).

Strikingly, the participants often spoke of processes of critical awareness of themselves and their own subjectivity. In a way, they stated that the fact that they were aware of their own subjectivity would allow them to come closer to the truth. The 'absolute' character of religion, which Alexander mentioned above, would prevent religious persons from thinking 'outside the box' or allowing themselves to think or reflect on worldviews that are different from their own. In a way, the perceived religious ignorance about or denial of subjectivity were seen as forces that took religious persons further away from the objective 'truth'. Anna, (22) who was raised in a Jewish community in Australia, described how it felt to step away from the religious community 'bubble' she grew up in. To her, the notion of subjectivity was linked to empowerment and autonomy.

> Maybe it's a sense of autonomy… and although it is quite affected by family and schools that I went to, but I think I always had this feeling of kind of being connected to a bigger picture instead of just… I heard this quote by this poet that I really liked and she said she was brought up with the notion of a blind man touching an elephant, and like you know, you're always touching something much bigger than you think it is.

The Indian parable of the 'blind men and an elephant' gives an insight into this feeling that 'no-one's worldview can ever be complete. The story describes a group of blind men who each touch a different part of an elephant such as the tusk, trunk or leg. Since they each only touch one part of the elephant, they find themselves in complete disagreement over what the elephant is like (Wang 1995). It is a tale about the significance of subjectivity and the impossibility of attaining total truth. According to Anna, the more critical we are, even of our own subjectivity, the deeper we can move towards a sense of greater understanding of the world around us. By moving away from the 'religious bubble' that she grew up in, she came to realize more and more that objective

truth does not exist. This relates strongly to ideas inherited from the 18th century that religion can counteract the freedom of the self-critical individual. In this way, atheism becomes more and more appealing (Manschreck 1976).

However, whereas most interviewees highly valued their ability to think and reflect critically, some interviewees also perceived the idea that they were 'second-guessing' everything as a curse. They felt that religion could provide support and answers which would lighten a certain burden. Although in their eyes, religious people were less self-reflective than non-religious people, this 'ignorance' could be seen as bliss. Frances (23), a German student who was studying for a Master's in Business, identified as a strong atheist. He stated that those who he perceived to be 'stupid people' were definitely more happy than intelligent people; according to him, these 'stupid people' did not have the urge to think about the big questions in life and were in this way released from a certain heaviness. He furthermore stated that if his assumptions were indeed true, he would rather be ignorant. Furthermore, Damien (20), who consciously chose to be an atheist because this, for him, was linked to intelligence and critical self-awareness, also described critical thinking as a source of a dark heaviness. He then claimed that religion would allow one to live a happier life, "'cause you have an answer, you don't go looking for an answer, because you already have it. You can just live your life." In this way, the tension between the desire to be critical and ignorant is clearly expressed. While the idea that religion keeps one ignorant was sometimes seen as negative, some participants also expressed the feeling that, at certain moments in their lives, they longed for the ignorance and simple happiness they thought religion could provide. Religion, in their eyes, would allow them to 'live in the answer', instead of in an atmosphere of uncertainty and doubt that would sometimes prevent them from simply enjoying their lives.

Something and Nothing

The third duality we encountered in our data was a tension between the 'belief in 'something' and 'nothing at all'. While analyzing the interviews, we discovered that although all participants identified as non-religious, only three of them stated that there existed absolutely nothing beyond the physical world. For instance, Frances (23) stated that he was happy to enjoy life in this moment and after death would just "rot away in the ground". Furthermore, Alexander (25) stated that he did not need spirituality or the idea of a supernatural being or power in order to live a rich life. The world as it is, he stated, was already enough.

> I don't miss being religious. I mean: just this! This is enough! And I think that if you can let go of this [idea that there must be 'something'], you could also enjoy the world more as it is.

For these participants, it felt as if they had found meaning in simply the physical world around them, without the existence of a higher being or spiritual energy. In this way, life in itself became 'something'. These experiences connect to Taylor's (2007) notion of another condition of non-religious experience in which we live our lives as well and fully as possible, without ever focusing on the supernatural. It is the idea that human life, here and now, is the goal. Looking for transcendent explanations beyond this life would mean running away from the reality of our earthly existence (Taylor 2007). In fact, most participants stated that 'life in itself' could already provide them with a sense of meaning.

These 'moments of purpose' were often connected to creativity, personal achievements or a sense of connection to other people. Together with the majority of our interviewees, Dean (23), a German student whose parents had both left their church, emphasized the importance of human connection at various points during the interview. In line with the findings of Day's (2009) study, he stated that he found a sense of meaning and support in many forms of human relationships, whether it was just having fun together, having a discussion, or 'sharing body warmth'.

> It depends on the relationships. And in all these, like, themes, I would say, I would really have this moment like: "yes, nice! I am happy that I have this person in this moment in this way."

What was striking about the findings was that almost every interviewee related this sense of meaning to the importance of enjoying 'this moment', here and now. We can understand this significance of presence as related back to the notions of individual autonomy and meaning-making. The participants each held the belief that they were left to create their sense of meaning and purpose in their present life; there was no paradise to come, only the present moment (Taylor 1992).

In a way, almost all interviewees explicitly or implicitly said that they could have an experience of 'meaning-making' without the idea of a God. Tom (18) was baptized and had joined religious classes in church although his parents were both agnostics. When he grew older, he let go of his religious beliefs. Tom explained during his interview that he and his brothers had a discussion about religiosity with their grandmother. When she mentioned over Christmas that she was disappointed they did not go to church with her, Tom and his brothers tried to explain why, to them, religion was not the source of meaning.

> So we had to tell her that we find courage and things in other things… sometimes we experience, it's not a religious feeling, but when you're at a good concert, and you're there with other people and you just feel that it's perfect. That really is the feeling that she is looking for with a God, I think. We really had to explain that we don't need to believe in a God, but that we can understand how she thinks. (…) It was a long discussion. She was really emotional. It hurt her, I think. (…) But she got fine with it, because she… we told her that we experience things, but we don't just call it God. It's because we can be happy without the concept of a God, by just finding support in each other, in moments.

In this quote, Tom emphasizes that he and his grandmother were actually looking for the same feelings, the same moments of 'feeling that it is perfect', but that the source of these experiences was just different. During the discussion with his Grandmother, he stated that he also experienced 'things' but just did not give the name 'God' to them. In similar ways, many of the other interviewees stated that by finding support in moments, in this life here and now, the belief in God or anything supernatural was made redundant by them. This ties in with Taylor's (2007) account of the different lived experiences of non-religiosity. According to Taylor, people start developing new ways of developing their moral or spiritual life, in which they can experience a certain 'richness' or 'fullness' in activities or moments: at these particular, almost 'magical' instances, life appears to be fuller and more complete than it normally seems to be.

However, all but the three interviewees who stated that there was nothing beyond the physical world implicitly expressed a certain unwillingness to accept the idea of absolute nothingness. Although at the beginning of the interviews, some clearly stated that there was absolutely nothing, they significantly questioned this idea once the discussion went into the consequences of this

nothingness. For many, the idea that there was absolutely nothing after death was experienced as incomprehensible, very sad, or simply unbearable.

Tom was the only interviewee who made this inner turmoil very explicit. Although he emphasized at various points that he did not need the idea of a God in order to find meaning in life, he contradicted himself when he started talking about an afterlife. During the interview, he spoke about the funeral of his great-aunt, which had taken place a couple of weeks earlier. As she was his first close family member to die, he experienced this as an important turning point in his life. In the interview, he describes how he linked her death to the idea of an afterlife.

> I pictured her in an afterlife. I was there when they put her in the grave. And it was a family grave, and there were already four coffins in it… and I thought it was really sad if that's it. They put your body in there and you just lay there and until you're gone, one day. I thought that was really sad, so I hoped for her that her soul, or how do you call it, would go to a place where she is comforted, sees her parents again. It was also raining and I was in the train, and it was raining and I thought: she's now just in that grave, and it's raining on her, that is really sad, to go that way. So I hope that she has a place to be. That's not how you wanna… end. (…) I think I know there is nothing, but that thought makes me a little sad.

Tom states that he knows there is nothing, but still hopes there is an afterlife because the idea that nothing will remain of you when you die is very depressing. In a way, his rationality is contradicted by his feelings of sadness caused by the idea of an infinite nothing after death, a tension that is reflected in Sartre's notion of despair in the absence of God or an afterlife.

Similarly, Damien (20), who identified as a 'full-on atheist', began to doubt his earlier assumptions when he started talking about the idea that there was absolutely nothing. "People who really just believe that it's just there and no one created it… I can't do that either. Something must have created all this." Damien's words echo those of Franceska at the beginning of this report, as she described the idea of nothing as impossible to comprehend. To think that there is absolutely nothing 'out there' can be as incomprehensible as the idea of a God. For Damien too, his ideas on atheism are contradicted by his unwillingness to accept the emptiness that is nothingness.

Following Damien's reflections, it was interesting to see how he related the idea of a 'creator' of the world (who would in turn have to be created by another creator) to mathematical equations. He compared the idea of the infinite sequence of creators to ideas of larger infinities. In the same sense, all interviewees who expressed a certain notion of the spiritual tended to relate these ideas to scientific proof. For instance, Amanda (22) linked the idea of an afterlife to the law of physics that energy cannot be lost.

> I think there is something really after death. Purely again, in terms of physics, energy can't be lost and if we consider the human soul… it's pure information and energy that every living creature carries, so energy in nature can't be lost. So it must go somewhere, like somewhere… your physical body might die but everything that you gathered throughout your life, like energy, it has to go somewhere, it might go into the soil when they bury you in the ground… but it has to go somewhere.

She states that although one's physical body might die, the 'energy' of the human soul is impossible to lose and that it 'must go somewhere'. In this sense, she uses natural scientific ideas in order to

verify her spiritual notions. This appeared in a number of other interviews as well, as all participants who spoke of their spiritual beliefs such as human connection, spirits, afterlife and life energy linked these ideas to natural science.

These findings connect strongly to the value of critical thinking discussed in the previous section. As participants reflected on science as the crucial tool for critical, autonomous thinkers and the antithesis of blind faith in a religion on one hand, it was particularly interesting to note that spirituality on the other hand could exist hand in hand with an empirical view on the world. Even more, scientific proof was seen to strengthen the spiritual experiences described by some of our interviewees. In this way, it became possible to be both spiritual and critically reflexive. These findings could be an explanation for the increasing number of people who relate to different notions of spirituality in contemporary society. The value of self-autonomy, which is central to the ideals of the Enlightenment, is also very present in modern spiritual movements.

All in all, the spiritual 'something', which is often perceived as the experience of something beyond the world around us, was brought back to the physical world by the way in which our participants related their spiritual views to science. Although natural science and spirituality are often considered as disassociated from one another, our interviewees related both within the empirically accessible realm.

Conclusion: the dualities within the experience of non-religiosity

This study aimed to investigate how students who identify as non-religious experience this non-religiosity and give meaning to their lives. For our participants, being non-religious meant that God or any divine being, who could provide answers and create purpose did not exist. Interestingly, from this point of departure, three main dualities emerged in our data, each relating to one another.

The idea that there was no God or definite purpose in life led to a certain experience of empowerment and freedom. Through the exercise of their own free will, students felt that they were able to create, make and will their own sense of being in the world. In fact, their answers reflected Sartre's notion that human beings are only what they make and will themselves to be. Consequently, each person is also fully responsible for what he or she is, something that was repeatedly emphasized by our participants, who related this sense of responsibility to a feeling of power and autonomy, which came with a certain sense of loneliness. The idea that there was no-one 'out there' whom they could rely on related to feelings of futility, despair and abandonment. Furthermore, the idea that one is fully responsible for what one is came with a certain heaviness and fear.

All participants connected the idea of being non-religious with their ability to think and reflect critically on themselves and the world around them. Because the participants mainly saw religious believers as blindly following religious dogma, they themselves felt empowered by their critical and rational stance towards the world. However, many simultaneously experienced the ability to think critically as a burden. The interviewees' responses reflected the idea that the critical thinker is, in a way, 'cursed' to question everything that he or she encounters. Being ignorant, or even 'blind' to the world as it is, was sometimes longed for and seen as a blessing.

Furthermore, the participants reflected on the tension they experienced between the belief in 'something' and 'nothing'. The majority of the participants did not state that there was absolutely 'nothing', for the idea of nothingness was experienced as sad or incomprehensible. Some interviewees identified as spiritual, or spoke of spiritual experiences. Interestingly, however, they 'validated' most of their ideas about spirituality with reference to scientific groundings. In this way, spirituality in fact became more aligned with the values of rationality and an empirical stance towards the world. Spirituality was, in a sense, brought back to the

material world. Furthermore, the emphasis on the individual within contemporary notions of spirituality meant that spirituality and individual autonomy could go hand in hand, relating back to Sartre's and Taylor's notions of creating one's own meaning in life (Taylor, 2007).

These findings relate to Vincett and Woodhead's (2009) analysis of New Age spirituality, in which the individualism and consumerism of modern times are reflected in the phenomenon of a certain kind of 'idea shopping', in that people develop their own individual sense of meaning, which reflects their unique combination of spirituality and natural sciences. However, our research only scraped the surface of the emergence and significance of spirituality in the context of contemporary (consumer) society. Prospective qualitative research delving more deeply into the manifestations of the experiential realms of spirituality in today's society would be a recommended point of departure for future studies seeking to understand the nature and role of spirituality in contemporary societies. Furthermore, the tension between scientific thought and religiosity that our interviewees reported could also inspire for future research. For instance, it would be interesting to interview natural scientists about their ideas of meaning-making. Perhaps inner conflicts that lie beneath the common, almost 'logical' acceptance of non-religiosity would emerge.

All in all, the themes discussed reflected a duality or inner tension within the experience of being non-religious. Our participants related in varying degrees back to this tension between freedom and emptiness, empowerment and unbearable heaviness. It is within these tensions that we can move towards a richer understanding of the experience of the non-religious. The significance of this research does not lie in questioning the future of religiosity and non-religiosity in contemporary society, but rather in exploring the tensions within the lived experience of the non-religious. We are ultimately left questioning: what does this inner turmoil mean for the ways in which we live our daily lives? What are the consequences of this way of living on a broader

societal level, for instance in the realms of politics, education and family and friendship? And, finally, these experiences of non-religiosity could point to a shift from a lived experience in which the individual aims to 'find' or 'discover' the essence or purpose in life, to one in which the individual first exists and encounters the world, and then, within this existence, 'creates' his or her own essence or purpose. This may be a shift from asking, 'what is the meaning of life?' to asking, 'how can we, ourselves, create our meaning in life?'.

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A Look at Lived Hierophany: Eroticism, Ethics and the Eucharist in a Greek Orthodox Hermitage

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ABSTRACT

Based on two months of research in a small monastery in Northern Greece, this paper explores the conceptions, definitions and practices of Orthodox Christianity as understood by Father Makarios, the monastery's abbot. I describe his emphasis on the sensuality of Christian practice, first examining how his definition of Christianity revolves around an individual's pursuit of Christ, a pursuit which rests upon both Christ's love for humanity (demonstrated in the Crucifixion) and humanity's seeking love for Christ. I go on to analyze this sensuality of monastic daily life, arguing that Makarios' definition of Christianity informs the ideal of his own pursuit of God (in which he seeks union with Christ). This definition and pursuit are mirrored in two daily examples: the consumption of the Eucharist, and Makarios' relationship with his disciple. I contend that in this monastery, sensuality is the medium and technique through which Christ is sought and the ineffable is made tangible in the everyday practices of the monks. Sensuality becomes a lived hierophany – a manifestation of the sacred.
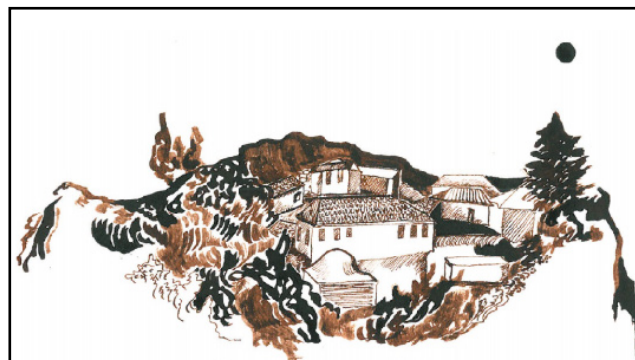
Figure 1, The Field Site: the hermitage of Marouda from a distance, Lilly Kizer-Taylor, ink on paper, 2015.

Christianity is the opposite of religion. In the various religions people offer sacrifices to a god. In Christianity the exact opposite happens: God offers a sacrifice to the people, even His Son. God the Father offers His Son as a sacrifice to people to show them that He truly loves them, in order to reconcile them with Himself. The Apostle Paul says this in a wonderful way: "We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:20). What religion can present something like this? This is completely contrary to every religion. God is appealing to us to be reconciled with Him. All this is like an erotic story. Christ comes to earth, He tells everyone "I love you", humanity is indifferent, and Christ in order to "prove" His great love for man...commits suicide! Saint Nicholas Cabasilas likens Christ to a manic lover Who in the end, to prove His erotic love sacrifices His life. This is Christianity. It is something completely different from religion, it is not legalism. True Christianity is a true and lasting revolution, not a religion. The objectives of the revolution of Christianity are so wide, so great, with the result that this revolution will end only with the Second Coming. Whoever views Christianity as something static, as something that lacks movement, does not understand anything.

- Father Makarios, lecture excerpt[1]

To be sensual, I think, is to respect and rejoice in the force of life, of life itself, and to be *present* in all that one does, from the effort of loving to the breaking of bread.

James Baldwin, the *Fire Next Time*

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Father Makarios, brushing a fish bone from his beard, leans a little closer to me. "Lucas," now putting his hand on my shoulder, "try to have a wish to eat your God." Pausing for a moment as if reading the reaction on my face and anticipating my next question, he continues, "Don't think about this as a theologian. Don't try to analyze it. Just try to grow this wish. My good boy, this is my wish for you." He then expressed, as he commonly did in moments of joy, company, prayer, wine, "I am so happy. Ah, I feel so close to you. *Doxa tu Theo*. Glory to God." And after making a gesture toward his heart— his hands spreading, from his chest, out and up— he raised his glass of wine to toast to the other ten men who gathered around this table for our post-liturgical Sunday feast.

This article is an attempt to give context to this wish, placing Makarios' advice in relation to the tables, Fathers, pilgrims, habits, liturgies, churches, and prayers that I experienced during my stay in and around *Gerunda* (elder) Makarios' *killey* (a small monastery) of Marouda on the famed peninsula of Mount Athos. And yet in doing so, I am doing exactly what he suggested I do not do—analyzing this wish as a theologian might (or, in this case, as an anthropologist). This duality composes the underlying questions of the following paper: one, seeking to make sense of Father Makarios' wish in relation to the everyday life, the rhythms and the rituals of the killey Marouda, and two, recognizing that such a project involves opposing the central logic of its inspiring question. In navigating this opposition, I attempt to enter and make sense of the life world of Marouda, examining its liturgies and social relationships, while also acknowledging that to enter such a lifeworld requires attending to an internal component, a pursuit, *a wish*, and a presence of the divine, which are largely unknowable for the unbelieving anthropologist and often indescribable for those who live to seek them.

I frame my exploration around the interplay between the material manifestations of that which is immaterial. I look to how God is eaten, how icons open up a potential divine relationship, and how an erotic love for God manifests in the subject formation of elder-disciple relationships, all in order to better understand the central feature of monastic life for the residents of Marouda and Father Makarios' definition of Christianity: the internal pursuit of and relationship with God.

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This study might be considered an exploration of lived religion, its everyday manifestations and practices— attending to the vernacular and subjective expressions of larger canonical, textual, and formalized religions. The introduction of an anthology on this subject, *Vernacular Religion and Everyday Life* begins by examining how religion as a term, as well as the methods used to study the term's contents, have prioritized both written forms and formalized liturgical rituals ("Bowman et al. 2012, 5). Their project, however, is to emphasize the various individual and specific expressions of belief — 'articulated belief' as opposed to 'belief system'— thus working against the prioritized view of unified religion and the historical (and Christian) roots of this notion (Talal 1993; Bowman et al. 2012, 6). In large part, I try to do the same thing, focusing on how these articulations manifest in the daily life of Marouda and its inhabitants.

Yet belief is a difficult thing to define and a difficult thing to study. Bowman and colleagues argue that "although expressions of belief can be observed and studied, there is still something mysterious and elusive about them, as they tend to conceal more than they reveal. Beliefs have a great potential to be transformed into long narratives or elaborate rituals, although in daily life they seldom become anything bigger than short statements, expressions of modality or religious acts" (Bowman et al. 2012, 10). We might return, as we will continue to do, to Gerunda (elder) Makarios' simple comment to me. Try to grow a wish to eat

your God. Such statements of advice and expressions of belief were mirrored again and again as people—monks and visitors—spoke about the Eucharist as literally God, the many miracles of Mount Athos, and the descriptions of the infinite life soon to come.

As with the above statements, and as with my entire research project, it often seemed that these articulations were simple, short, literal, and even habitual in a way that led less to my own clarified understanding and more to obfuscation. As in Makarios' advice that began this paper, our conversations usually consisted in simple declarations of truth, advice, wishes, and emotions in which follow-up questions were not always possible, and if so, were rarely fruitful. I often felt that such statements and practices left no room for my field notes and me. It seemed I was unable to move past what these expressions were in their external form in order to make analytical sense of what was being said or done. In fact, the initial articulation of my research question was a result of this naive frustration: where is this religion taking place? Even though it seemed all around me, it felt like I was searching among these moments of literal and commonplace articulations for something that was impossibly abstract. I shifted questions: how, in this particular killey, does belief manifest itself? But this led to a potential problem with the assumptions underlying a study of belief.

Anthropologist Webb Keane (2008), in addition to many others, has focused on an overarching conflation of religion with belief, suggesting that this focus on belief itself has been limiting to an anthropology of religion. Keane is mainly concerned with the assumption that a search for belief posits that practices, prayers, and the materials of religion are evidence for something else— namely an underlying belief. This is exactly what my own initial difficulties mirrored: the deceptively simple articulation of belief is only deceptively simple when I am searching for a presumed presence of something that exists behind these articulations.

Keane asks us whether, rather than relying on an assumption of representation, we might "benefit from an approach to materiality that does not always expect it to provide evidence of something hidden, such as belief" (2008, S110). In other words, it might be productive to view these moments—be they Makarios' wish or the quick gesture of a cross over a yawn— as whole unto themselves, not doorways to something internal that the anthropologist may or may not enter. And in this way we reach again to Makarios' own wish for me: try to grow a wish to eat your God and do not get caught up in making analytical, academic sense of what this means.

But, taking a closer at the epigraph that began this paper, Makarios did not refer to himself as religious. For him religion signified 'ideology' and 'morality' in a depersonalized sense that revolved more around subservience to rules than devotion to God. "Never be religious," he told me during my first week there. "Don't get stuck in ideology. Just try, if you have the wish, to give your life up to God." Religion seemed to be a superficial outerform that coated the real purpose of his monastic life which is not, as he says, *legalism*. Christianity, by his terms, is a revolution of erotic sacrifice, of manic love, of continual movement. As defined by Makarios, it is the process by which the individual seeks through humble and devoted love to unify themselves with the lover they seek, as God Himself sought to do so through His erotic sacrifice aimed at the unification of humanity with Him.

Both religion and belief seem like incorrect formulations, based upon the above reasons. But understanding the lifeworld of Marouda requires both an attention to the external materialization of liturgy and daily practice, and an acknowledgement of a potential internal component to these things, which seem to, by Makarios terms, defy intellectual analysis . So, in the lifeworld of Marouda, intentions revolve around the project of giving one's heart up to God. Material forms and physical or verbal expressions have the potential to correspond to this project and to be understood within its context. In other words, by focusing on the

relationship with the divine. Keane undertakes a similar project through his concept of *ethical saturation*, which also offers up a potential solution to the conflation of the terms 'religion' and 'belief' (Keane 2014).

In looking at the dynamics of icon veneration, Keane posits that a view of icons as miraculous and affecting materials creates a world that is ethically saturated. Ethics in this case refers to an individual's ability "to evaluate acts as good or evil, people as virtuous or vicious, lives as worthy or worthless, and to their awareness of being themselves evaluated in turn. Typically these evaluations arise in interactions with other people, but they may involve any entity at all (such as divine beings) whose actions can be judged in these terms and so can be held responsible for purposeful harm or benefit" (2014, S316). As agentive materials and unions of the material and spiritual, icons offer a particularly revealing instance of semiotic ideology and ethical affordances. Icons "manifest the active stance of divinity toward each ordinary person. By treating relics or icons as having agency in themselves, [individuals] are insisting on the saturation of life with ethical implications. That is, the possibility of social interaction with divine actors is everywhere, and social interaction can always be construed as having ethical import" (Keane 2014, S319). Icons blend the material and spiritual, providing a potential site for interacting with the divine, and thereby requiring that devotees are ethically prepared for this potential interaction. In other words, depending upon the ethics of the individual, such materials may be able to support the individual pursuit of union with God.

This leads us to the central question of this paper. How is the immaterial quality of Orthodox 'religion' (the pursuit of the divine, or giving one's heart up to God) located within the material, place-based, and specific lifeworld of this hermitage? More simply, how is God sought in Marouda? Implicit in the formulation of the immaterial and material is also a question of the relationship between the external form of religion and the possible internal form of belief, of public liturgy and private prayer. In

answering these questions I hope to help the reader enter into the lifeworld of Marouda, suggesting that the quick gesture of a cross above a bowl of soup, a prayer read before baking bread, an utterance of glory to God after a joke, an icon above the doorway, the quiet blessing of a priest, a kiss of the hand, *position and compose the interplay of material and immaterial, and the erotic and the ethical.* Simply then, I am seeking to understand how the sacred manifests itself in everyday life, or how hierophany is lived, relying on Eliade's definition of hierophanies as both manifestations of and participants in the divine (Eliade 1952). In section one, I take a deeper look at ethical saturation in relation to the ritual of divine liturgy which began our everyday, expanding Keane's term past icons to suggest that life at Marouda is saturated with ethical implications. After this, I explore the meaning behind Makarios' definition of Christianity as opposed to religion, focusing on his emphasis of the erotic, specifically examining how God's love for humanity is mirrored in the elder-disciple dynamic of Makarios and Pavlos. For the purposes of this paper, I am relying on Makarios' utilization and definition of the erotic: namely, the devotional love for the divine through which divine union is sought, manifesting in an omnipresent sensuality.

On Methods: Form, Context, and Reconciliation

My access to Mount Athos and Marouda was provided through a family friend who became close to Makarios in the early 90s. Through this connection I was able to attain the required entry visa to the Autonomous Monastic State of the Holy Mountain, as it is formally called.[2] My arrival to and my initial few days at Marouda were mainly guided by the uncertainty of my position and the insecurity in being able to conduct fieldwork.

On the evening of my first day Makarios, in front of the many other visitors, massaged my feet with oil in a sort of modern adaptation of the ancient monastic custom of anointing a visitor's feet with oil. This action was accompanied with laughter from the other visitors and Makarios' expressions of "I love how bright

your eyes are. I have a good feeling about you!" and asking of the larger group "doesn't he have bright eyes?" Makarios' physical and loving reception, taking various forms throughout my stay, has largely guided my prioritization of t*he material, the sensual,* and *the erotic* qualities of life at Marouda.

A few days later, when I spoke to Makarios about my studies as an anthropology student and my interest in writing about Marouda, he listened, nodded and then proceeded to comment again on the brightness of my eyes. While after a few weeks Makarios allowed for me to proceed with my research, he always seems to treat my role as researcher as an aside to my being there, and my research role did not seem to receive focus or even raise concern. Prior to interviews, I always asked for consent and after specific, important ethnographic moments, I always confirmed with the relevant informants.

Although by his own admission I became close to Makarios, our relationship never involved detailed verbal communication and conversation. While Makarios would often spend hours speaking with other visitors, in regards to our relationship, Makarios felt that words were not necessary for our communication. He would often say that he felt like we understood one another perfectly without words. In fact, I often thought it was because he was constantly asked questions by other visitors that he took some solace in our relationship in which words and conversation were of little importance, to Makarios at least. While I tried to appreciate the sentiment, it made fieldwork and interviews quite difficult. For instance, I once asked him why he decided to become a monk. He took a while to respond and then began to chuckle: "so I wouldn't have children like you asking me questions like that!" Makarios never spoke to me in the manner in which I have quoted him in the epigraph that begins this paper, an excerpt taken from a lecture at which I was not present. This is important to note, because when he did speak to me, it was in simple expression and the brief moments of advice that I have quoted above. To

me, Makarios continually emphasized the physicality, simplicity, emotionality of both our relationship and the larger practice of seeking God. Again, it is for these reasons that I prioritize such themes.

In other words, such qualities of participation, acceptance, and intimacy born of necessary method have guided the formation of my research questions and understanding of the workings of the community. In the ways that I am able, I try to follow Makarios as both ethnographic and theoretical guide, at times mirroring his mode of thought and description within my own writing, as best I am able. This is similar to Susan Harding's research with Evangelical Christians. She writes about how reverends took rhetorical control of interviews, shifting them into opportunities to 'witness' and convert (1987, 170). In my case, my academic questions were not met with verbal attempts at 'witnessing', but with physical responses – a hug, a kiss of the hand, a pat on the head, a flare of the eyes. Similarly, Harding privileges the rhetorical, mimicking the style of her informants within her own writing:

> The membrane between disbelief and belief is much thinner than we think. All I had to do was to listen to my witness and to struggle to understand him. Just doing so did not make me a fundamental Baptist born-again believer, but it drew me across that membrane in tiny ways so that I began to acquire the knowledge and vision and sensibilities, to share the experience, of a believer... this space between belief and disbelief, or rather the paradoxical space of overlap, is also the space of ethnography. We must enter it to do our work (Harding 1987, 178).

Following Harding, I contend that the space between belief and disbelief is thinner than we think. While the process of giving one's heart up to God is, as Makarios suggests, a complex and laborious process, it is also unclear and indistinct, bleeding into the way he interacted with me and others. Just as speech ushered in a session of 'witnessing,' Makarios' touch, anointings, comments and wishes, ushered in an erotic relationship, blending the ethics of social relationships with the ethics of pursuing the divine. In attempting to understand this, I also try to do my work from within the thin, porous membrane that separates between belief and disbelief. At this point, it is important to state that I am not an Orthodox Christian, nor am I affiliated with any denomination. This said, I do attempt to blend the so-called etic and emic sections of analysis, allowing for the capitalization of God, the absolutes, and the faiths of my informants to spill out through the style, voice, and analysis of this paper. This mildly 'unorthodox' method of anthropological voice is part of my attempt to write from 'the space of ethnography,' hopefully allowing the eros, the sensuality, the faith, and the seeking of my informants to breathe within these pages of academic analysis, which, again, informants contend is counter to understanding the truths of their monastic practice.

Lastly, while Makarios, Pavlos, and many visitors spoke English with near fluency, Church services and the majority of conversations in Marouda happened in Greek (with occasional ones in Russian). My basic Greek in no way provided me with the tools to understand the post-liturgical discussions over coffee or the scriptures read at meal times, which unfortunately excluded me from some of the richest ethnographic material. Through filming and later translating the footage with the help of a long-term visitor, I was able to document some of these conversations which now compose a large part of my ethnographic material.

Makarios spent seventeen years in a cenobitic monastery. Makarios and Pavlos are currently the only permanent monks at Maroduа, which is classified as an idiorrhythmic killey, a cloister in which monks follow their own rhythms and wishes, as opposed to the disciplined schedule of a large monastery. The anthropological scholarship on Mount Athos predominantly focuses on its cenobitic monasteries. While that means my study is unique, it is also of an extremely specific micro-culture that does not necessarily reflect the larger peninsula, let alone Orthodoxy in general. (This is mirrored in the fact that Makarios and Marouda were continually heralded by visitors as unique manifestations, and the authentic form of Orthodoxy.) Thus my claims and findings here are limited to the context in which I found them. Hopefully, I am able to remedy this through grounding the liturgies and physical place within their historical contexts, and through connections to scholarship on the same topics.

I. Divine Liturgy

At 5:30 I can hear the footsteps of Makarios coming down the hall. Since my third day here, Makarios has taken to waking me up before the 6:00 AM service begins. Opening the door, he enters with a Kalimera paidimoo (good morning my child) before he touches my forehead with a smile. He asks, *my boy, did you sleep well?* And receives my answer with some excitement before asking me, as he continued to do for the duration of my stay, *bells? Bells? Will you ring the bells?* He says *good, good,* when I respond—as I always do— in the affirmative. He leaves quickly, lingering in the hallway to knock on the doors of other visitors.

At 5:50 I ring the bells. Soon after my acceptance into the community here, another visitor, Seraphim, under direction from Makarios, passed on this bell duty to me, speaking out the rhythm before doing so: *toná dam, toná dam, toná dama dama dam. Dam. Dam. Dam.*[3] It's an ancient monastic rhythm played upon the cast iron bells or on the simple wooden semantron, meant to signal the joyful celebration of the coming of

divine liturgy. The sounds, toná dam, Makarios says, reminds us of Adam, the wood of the semantron reminds us of Noah and his ark of salvation, and the bells and their ringing symbolize the sound of the Apostles. "Everything has its meaning, it's not just done," he tells me.

So at 5:50, the bells ring. Three or four visitors make their way to the church. They pause in the entrance to light a candle. They bend before and kiss the icon of *Panagea* (the Virgin Mary), before joining the one or two early risers who already stand in the dimly lit church. At six o'clock Father Pavlos, Makarios' disciple of seventeen years and the only other permanent resident of Marouda, will begin his soft chanting as he reads from the pulpit the morning prayers, thanking God for the coming day, praising Him to permit this service, and oh Lord *now having arisen from sleep, we fall down before Thee, O Blessed One, and sing to Thee, O Mighty One… Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.*[4]

At 6:30 the Divine Liturgy itself begins, and the small church and its pews are now occupied with all those who will attend. Elder Makarios and his disciple Pavlos remain in the cloistered room for priests only, joined to the main room by two curtain-covered doorways that punctuate the carved and slotted wooden wall. There, white-robed, they will serve the liturgy, taking the small round of wheat bread and ushering in the body of their Lord in its stead. In the main room, the rest of us stand when we are supposed to stand, and sit when we are permitted. Some nod with closed eyes—perhaps in deep prayer or perhaps returning to the sleep they recently left— others bow over their prayer ropes (*kimbuskinis*), while those who were asked stand before the pulpit chant and read from the liturgical script, alternating between each other, Makarios, and Pavlos. Now, the doorway that separates the preparation of the Mystery with the faithful attendees opens and Makarios enters, his gold-cuffed hands swinging the burning incense, letting us know—letting us sense— that the divine is now present. He swings the thurible towards the icon of

Christ, he swings it toward John the Baptist, before incensing the congregation, moving counterclockwise around the church as our bowing heads precede his coming, and crosses pattern devotion on chests and torsos.

Now, Makarios and Pavlos enter through the side door of their barrier, holding before the congregation the covered chalice and basket of now divine Blood and Body. We bow again before the second most holy moment of the service. As the chanters continue at the pulpit in the fore, the prayers of Makarios and Pavlos pause as they themselves give one another communion behind the closed curtain door. As they commune we continue to prepare, as one by one the congregation prostrates before each icon, kissing the relics of holy bones, and painting their bodies with the three fingered movement of the holy trinity. With the last icon kissed, the doors open, and those baptized Orthodox proceed to the cup that contains their God. Open-eyed and wide-mouthed they approach Makarios, as Pavlos, by his side, holds the candle and chants: *Loving Master, Lord Jesus Christ, my God, let not these holy Gifts be to my condemnation because of my unworthiness, but for the cleansing and sanctification of soul and body and the pledge of the future life and kingdom. And With the fear of God, with faith and with love, draw near. Christ is in our midst!* Makarios, dipping silver spoon into golden cup, feeds each entreating member.

Wiping mouths, crossing, bowing: the rest of the bread from which the Body has come is passed around. No longer crust, it is now the Mother of God, *Panagea*, and is given freely to all, baptized or not, in order that all may taste Orthodoxy and lift themselves towards the heavens. As the sun approaches its 8:30 height, we cross, leave, and take our Greek coffee in the courtyard. *Let us depart in peace. Let us pray to the Lord. Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Holy Father, give the blessing!*

I begin here because all our days did. Repeated every day (unusually, given that most monasteries serve liturgy two to

four times a week), liturgy temporally framed life at Marouda as its main calendrical referent: days began here and ended in evening vespers which served to prepare for the following morning's liturgy. But more than just dividing the day's time, liturgy also seemed to provide a coherence, a temporal union, connecting the small Church and its inhabitants to the long and valorized continuance of Christian prayer and Orthodox liturgy. Perhaps this is a simple point, a recollection of the the distinct space of the sacred and its function of returning its occupants to the primordial time, a time out of time. However, it helps us in our project by highlighting, as Eliade tells us, that the temporal and the sacred within Christianity is historically concrete and actualizable: "Christianity affirms the historicity of the person of Christ. The Christian liturgy unfolds in a historical time sanctified by the incarnation of the Son of God. The sacred time periodically reactualized in pre-Christian religions is a mythical time, that is, a primordial time, not to be found in the historical past" (Eliade 1952, 72). But in the case of Christianity, specifically with the material incarnation of its God, its sanctity is historical, concrete, and material (1952:111.

As a recollection of the historical event of the crucifixion and resurrection, the Divine Liturgy reenacts "the bloodless sacrifice wherein the sacrifice of Christ on the cross is repeated in mystical fashion" (Benz 1963, 34). It is the celebration of Christ's historical narrative, and as one theologian writes, "the entire complex of mysteries of the Orthodox Church revolves around the prime mystery [of Divine Liturgy]: the death and resurrection of Christ" (McGuckin 2008, 288). Participants in anthropologist Sonja Luehrmann's fieldwork described the liturgy of Orthodoxy as distinct from other denominations, in that other denominations merely "'remembered' [biblical events] whereas in Orthodoxy they actually 'happen' or 'unfold'" (Keane 2014, S316). Orthodoxy is "conceived to be a living tradition (paradosis), a continuous hermeneutic interaction in which individuals are guided by the Holy Spirit toward consistent interpretation of both Scripture and the existing body of tradition" (Hann and Goltz 2010, 2). As one

Father said, quoted in a 60 Minutes television program about Athos: "You have to understand, the words that we're saying in today's liturgy are the same words that Christ was saying, are the same words that saints from the first century, the second century, the third century, the fourth century [were saying]" (60 Minutes).

Paul Connerton (1989, 5) makes a useful distinction between what he calls inscribing practices (long-term storage, written text) and incorporating practice (embodiment, physical habit). As Mitchell, who uses Connerton's concept in relation to Catholic Liturgy, puts it, incorporation "involves the human body internalizing knowledge so that social memory is 'sedimented in the body'" (Mitchell 1997, 89). In Connerton's understanding, commemorative ceremonies are rituals of re-presentations and re-enactments of the past: "our bodies, which in commemorations stylistically re-enact an image of the past, keep the past also in an entirely effective form in their continuing ability to perform certain skilled actions" (1989, 72). In applying this to the social etiquette of 19th century European aristocrats, Connerton says that social memory requires a "presence of living models, the presence, that is, of men and women actually sitting 'correctly', [which] is essential to the communication in question" (1989, 73). The moral order the proper behavior of the elite, and the distinction of such behavior from lower classes, are all contained and maintained in the body, its postures and habits. In our case, the small church in Marouda exceeds its 30-foot by 20-foot dimensions because it is enmeshed in extended historical and social networks of Christian lineage which are inhabited and re-inhabited by the physical gestures of the rituals' inhabitants. The body becomes a site of interplay between historical lineage and social memory that is at once personal, impersonal, collective and individual. This interplay of collective and personal memory is similar to Rappaport's idea that in practicing the liturgy, a person is not simply transmitting the message of the liturgy but rather "is participating in—that is, *becoming part of—* the order to which his own body and breath give life" (Rappaport 1999, 118). Looking at this becoming part of more deeply:

To say that performers participate in or become parts of the orders they are realizing is to say that transmitter-receivers become fused with the messages they are transmitting and receiving. In conforming to the orders that their performances bring into being, and that come alive in their performance, performers become indistinguishable from those orders, parts of them, for the time being. (Rappaport 1999, 119, emphasis removed).

The conjunction of collective and personal, the temporal and out-of-time, has the corporeal body as its working site. Participants blend with the orders, morals, histories of the ritual at hand, a melding of identity, or memory, of the body. In Makarios' understanding, when he serves liturgy, his hands became melded with God's own, a channeling of divine presence that changes the bread to the Body, connecting him to the long tradition of the Orthodox priesthood and the thousand liturgies which are served on Athos, at the same time of day, every day.

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Let's return to what Makarios told me as we sat beneath the bells: we have symbols for everything. Nothing just is. As you enter the church you bow before the Virgin Mary, Christ, John the Baptist, Saint Seraphim, Saint John of Damascus. You kiss their feet, you kiss their hands, and you kiss the small relic of bone from a previous Father of Marouda. You inscribe upon your body the sign of the cross, you articulate the correspondence of the Holy Trinity within your own body, your three fingers composing the Mystery of omnipresence: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The symbol of the cross is present in the multitudes of carvings and crucifixes (on pews, walls, necks, wrists), painted around the colorful and layered interior of the church. For Makarios the cross is also present in the way the pews position their inhabitant to stand, physically forming the cross with the body:

You see, we don't have seats. We have pews where you can stand and have your hands, like that [resting at your sides]. This represents in a way, the cross. From the times of Moses...there was a quarrel among the Jews and the Amalekites. As far as [Moses'] hands were in the sign of the cross, the Jews were winning [against the Amalekites]. And when [Moses'] arms collapsed, Aaron and somebody else were holding them [up in order to maintain the sign of the cross], and the Jews [continued to win]. That's why when we stay in this kind of pews, our body makes the sign of the cross. And it helps. You don't just sit down and sleep. You are standing, like that, not stiff, but the pews help you to stand, you have your arms here. And you can more easily pray and concentrate. Because if you sit, after a while you [go] to sleep.[5]

Here, Makarios directs our attention to the way in which the position of the body corresponds to the central symbol of the cross. The sign of the cross, physically manifesting in the position of the body, serves to ground the participant both within the lineage of the symbol, its historical and religious meanings, and within the present moment, so as to maintain concentration and attention rather than losing oneself in sleep. It helps. The ritual, which extends into daily life beyond the service, focuses attention on the relation to and pursuit of the divine. Through icons, incense, candles, chanting and the actual text of liturgy, the participant is potentially guided, centered and recentered around the preparation for consuming the divine.
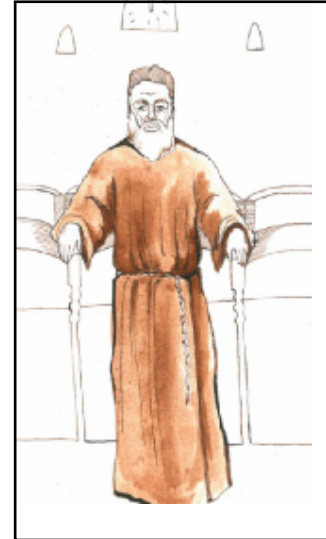

Figure 2, *Makarios in the pews.* Lilly Kizer-Taylor, ink on paper, 2015]

Makarios continued to say that "the body is present everywhere, and we don't cut it into two or three parts. The human being is one. Mind, soul, body. We don't cut it in pieces. And you pray with your body, you pray with your mind, you pray with you soul. The whole thing is praying. You have the singing, you have to stand in the pews there in the church. You smell the incense, you see the lights, you see the icons, everything works. All the senses." The use of the senses, like the embodiment of the cross, serves a practical and tangible process of developing and maintaining a working presence that allows for personal prayer in and through the union of the body. The burning incense, swinging in the silver thurible (which Makarios says corresponds to the moment in divine liturgy when the divine becomes present) serves to attune one's sense of smell to the service at hand. Icons and the burning candles engage the sight and touch. Here the senses and the corporeal body become both the location and the tools through which the individual is connected to the communal, the historical and the divine, again re-circling one's focus towards the divine and individual prayer.

In Makarios' terms, the senses and the body are preparatory tools that ground the individual in the present. And through such a presence, the individual is able to potentially better extend the ethics required for meeting the icon, or the Eucharist. The cross hanging round the neck, also manifesting in the position of the body, the hundreds of icons and engravings–the story of Isaac, Noah's Ark, the founders of Hilandar monastery— have the potential to ground participants within the present ritual, facilitating prayer, the means of an individual's communication with God. As theologian Coniaris says, "we must realize that Christianity is a personal encounter with the living Christ and not merely with the symbols of the Church. Symbols are a means toward this goal … The Bible and the Church have shaped symbols for us and then they in turn shape us" (Coniaris 1985, 10-11, emphasis added). In turn, we must keep in mind what these symbols, histories, commemorations revolve around: "to the mind of the Orthodox believer, the real significance of the Eucharist lies not much in the repetition of the sacrifice … but in the encounter with the living, resurrected Lord" (Benz 1963, 38).

One morning while working in the garden after liturgy, Makarios cut a piece of cucumber with his knife. Beckoning me to him, he fed it to me, informally mimicking the act of communion. As I came forward to receive his gift, he said that "eating, consuming, is the most loving and erotic act man can do." Returning to Makarios' understanding of Christianity, 'true Christianity' is manic love, and the *erotic sacrifice* of God to an estranged humanity. As the most erotic act, eating the Eucharist is the moment when the individual is physically united with the living God. Through the Eucharist, then, the sacrifice is repeated, and the individual consumes the erotic offering, physically ingesting it in an undoing of divine estrangement.

But it is subtle, said many monks and visitors I spoke to. One visitor said, it is like spiritual food, and its divinatory strength builds over time in a quiet growth of connection. "We feel" said Dimitrius, a long-term visitor, "God himself gave us the best way to connect with him. It is like a mother's milk." "For me it is a moment of love. I just feel joy," said Seraphim. "It is my whole purpose when I stay in Marouda," said Father Rafael, a visiting monk. Continuing, he clarified that "we believe it is the literal consumption of God." "It is not a metaphor," said another visitor.

As the center of liturgy, all instances of embodied symbol, of embodied tradition, lead to the moment of consuming the Eucharist. Such consumption is the also the central erotic act in Marouda, again life here revolves around divine liturgy. And, again, the purpose of liturgy is the consumption of the Eucharist; it is the physical union of congregant to God. In the eucharistic case then, we again have a window into this relationship of how the erotic pursuit of God, as well as God's erotic love for humanity, are grounded within the material day to day life, and how the erotic is the process and the tool through which this union in navigated. Further, as the voices above suggest, the Eucharist, at the point of consumption, is God's Blood and Body. It is not symbolic of anything. It is not a metaphor for God. While many anthropologists contend that everything is symbolic, in the case of the eucharist, understanding its sanctity, its efficacy, and its importance in the lives of my informants, requires recognizing its a-symbolic quality. The eucharist, perhaps the most emphasized example of hierophany, is not only an example of how God is given form, but also how such form is ingested in an erotic and intimate act. Further, the ethics that guide the behavior of the participants in the ritual lead to this moment of interaction. Makarios' ethics of presence of prayer lead to his preparation for receiving the Eucharist. The sensual practice of his eroticism is the medium through which he seeks to 'give his heart to God'. I will explore the role of eros in greater depth in the following section on Makarios' understanding of social interactions, and specifically his relationship to his disciple Pavlos.

II. Elder and Disciple

Makarios and Pavlos share a separate house in the killey. While they once lived in the main house with all their guests, six years ago they were getting too many visitors to comfortably house them and felt that they needed a separate place for rest and prayer. In their house, they share all the rooms. They sleep in adjoining beds which meet at the head, so the tops of their heads meet when they rest. As Makarios says, they share all they have, money, robes, everything (except their hats, because, Makarios laughs, Pavlos' head is too small). In the mornings before liturgy, they rise together, and sitting opposite one another, recite the Jesus prayer together—*Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.* They serve liturgy together, giving one another communion behind the slotted wall of the church. As Pavlos described it, "it's not just that he's my older brother. He is my father, my uncle, my mother, except *Panagea* (the Mother of God) of course. My friend. [He is] my best friend...it is all together in one thing." He also emphasized that it was also like they were husband and husband, sharing in their union with Panagea and Christ. Many times, usually when Makarios had a glass of wine (which Pavlos poured for him), Makarios would tell me, "yes, we have struggled for seventeen years. But oh Lucas, now it is so nice. Everyday Pavlos and I get closer and closer. Of course we fight, but every day it is better," and, pausing as he looked out from the porch, "He is my greatest gift in life. Oh, I thank him. *Doxa tou Theou.*" Glory to God.

It might be helpful to look at spiritual discipleship as a skill to be learned through apprenticeship. Taking a phenomenological approach, Gieser (2008) looks at how apprenticeship is a combination of embodied emotions and empathetic learning, and not simply a mode of skill transfer through mimicry. By treating bodies and emotions as 'in-the-world', relational and environmentally intertwined, Gieser argues that the apprentice seeks to *enter* the emotional and physical realm of their teacher, which means "entering the private perceptual world of the other

and becoming thoroughly at home in it. It involves being sensitive ... to the changing felt meanings which flow in this other person ... [I]t means temporarily living in his/her life" (Gieser 2008, 308). In this ideal state "both teacher and learner try to synchronize their actions through an increase in intersubjective communication, continually fine-tuning their movements and checking their intentions. When we are usually with our body here we are with both our own and the other's body simultaneously. Two individual *I's* become one *Us* that is experienced as the center of subjective life" (Gieser 2008, 313).

Treating Makarios and Pavlos's relationship in this light, we see again a blending of individual identity, perceptions, bodies, sensitivities. *Two individual I's become one Us.* As a disciple, Pavlos seek to enter the world of Makarios. For this reason, we can also better understand why lineage is so important to the Athonite elder-disciple relations. Makarios sought to shed his individuality and inhabit the world of his elder, as his elder did before him, with the ultimate goal being that the individual personality and will is blended with that of God's own. With the divine as our organizing principle in this monastic community, human relationships are not viewed as distinct from divine relations, understanding, embodied slowly through master-disciple empathetic learning, these relationships are saturated with a divine ethics they lead us to the state of freedom which Makarios valued, and used to describe the feeling of interconnection with God.
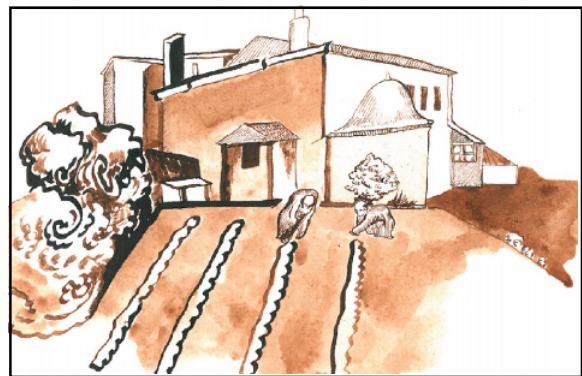

Figure 3, *Makarios and Pavlos in the garden*, Ink on paper. Lilly Kizer-Taylor, 2015.

In explaining one of the ways this empathetic blending took place, Makarios said his initial hesitation and even dislike of Pavlos wore off as Pavlos became close to the visitors Makarios himself was closest too. They began to share similar feelings about others and thereby became closer themselves. Makarios seemed to value this quality of empathetic feeling as the greatest confirmation of his relationships. He would often check in to see how I related to certain people, gauging my interpretations in relation to his own, nodding joyfully if our feelings overlapped. In a similar sense, he once told me of a friend who came to Marouda in order to do some photography. Makarios described how his close friend described in detail how he took photos, cut the rolls film, made a darkroom and developed them; "it was so nice." Makarios' eyes now wide with excitement. "We were so close to one another, I felt as if I was doing it, [as] if I were a photographer." In the case of Pavlos and Makarios' closest friends, it seemed that he validated their closeness through these vicarious, empathetic moments, which led to the blending of identity, of sensation, of bodily experience. These little comments reveal the monastic process of empathetic blending. The empathetic melding of the two separate selves of Makarios and Pavlos comes close to the type of relationality that Foucault (1994) celebrated in his exploration of Socratic love and the reciprocity of erotic love, through which he relates ethics and freedom.

Foucault uses the Socratic dialogue of Alcibiades as a starting point. An aging youth whose suitors are disappearing, Alcibiades wishes to become a politician in order to have power over others: "He refused to let himself be dominated in youth, but now he wants to dominate others. This is the moment Socrates appears, and he succeeds where the others have failed: he will make Alcibiades submit, but in a different sense. They make a pact—Alcibiades will submit to his lover, Socrates, not in a physical but in a spiritual sense. The intersection of political ambition and philosophical love is the 'care of the self'" (Foucault 1994, 229). Foucault writes again, "You have to worry about your soul—that is the principle of caring of yourself. The care of the self is the care of the activity and not the care of the soul-as-

substance" (Foucault 1994: 230-231). Leo Bersani's essay (2008) on the power of love and evil examines this dialogue, via Foucault, looking at how this erotic form of the care of the self relies on a notion similar to our discussion of the empathetical apprenticeship (Bersani 2008; Foucault 1994, 229).

Bersani writes: "in the generous narcissism of the exchange between Socratic lovers, each partner demands of the other (as we see Socrates demanding of Alcibiades in the dialogue *Alcibiades*) that he reflect the lover's type of being, his universal singularity (and not his psychological particularities, his personal difference), by recognizing and cultivating that singularity as his own most pervasive, most pressing potentiality" (Bersani 2008, 84). The lover seeks to shape his lover into himself. This is not based in the individual narcissism of personality; instead, it is making "every possible effort to draw [the beloved boy] into being totally like themselves and the god to whom they are devoted." Thus, a lover is at the same time attempting to make the boy *more like himself.* The lover narcissistically loves the image of his own universal individuation that he implants in the boy he loves, but he is implanting more of what his beloved is, more of the type of being they already share. Far from suppressing the other, the Socratic lover's narcissism suppresses accidents of personality so that the loved may more adequately mirror the universal singularity mythified in the figure of the god they both served" (Bersani, 82).

The shared telos of God, this universal singularity, allows for this type of shaping eroticism to skillfully take place in the monastic relationship of elder-disciple. Makarios and Pavlos are involved in an erotic relationship—as Makarios was with his elder Ephraim, and as Ephraim was with his elder Saint Joseph the Hesychast— in which elder and disciple work in order to shape Pavlos into the ideal they both seek. This is not simply based upon personality or the likes and dislikes of Makarios; it is based upon the seeking of God and his perfection. Thus, the monk, as a lover of God, seeks to submit his will to that of God's own: "to live his life on earth in the spirit enjoined by Christ" (Sophrony 1977, 69). As Pavlos articulated nicely, "The point is to be with God. So for

me, the way is living with Gerunda now, and to go [to heaven] together. This is [it] for me. This is my life. The purpose…That's why we pray to God to take us together when our time comes."

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Looking back again to Makarios' definition of religion, it is erotic love that guides God's relationship to human, and in turn informs how humanity might love God; the "beloved becomes the lover as a result of being loved" (Das 2010, 397). The beloved conjoins with Christ through erotic love to Him. In the elder-disciple case, eroticism is an attempt for the lover to shape the beloved into himself, into the ideal, the God they both serve and seek. It is not based in personality, or narcissism, of the lover, but rather is based upon their shared *telos*, the achievement of paradise, the union with God. The eroticism of the elder-disciple relationship is paralleled in God's love of humanity. And like the ethics that guide the consumption of the Eucharist, here, eroticism is the medium through which the physical is connected to the immaterial; through eroticism and the ethical, the immaterial is brought into the physical materials of everyday life—be it the kiss of an icon, or the feeding of an anthropologist in the garden.

The sense-based prayer of the Liturgy and the consumption of the Eucharist, and the empathetic love of elder and disciple, are just two examples of how Makarios' understanding of Christianity (the individual seeking union with Christ) seemed to manifest in the day to day life of Marouda. Again, the individual's relationship to, their seeking of, God was the purpose of monastic life in Marouda. This paper has attempted to make sense of such an internal and unknowable pursuit, which, for my informants, defies intellectual reasoning. In turn, I have sought, first, to question the value and role of anthropological thought in making sense of lifeworlds that extend far past the confines of material, social relationships (which we as anthropologists often linger in) and stretch into the difficult realms of absolute truths and everlasting life; and second, to make sense, as best as I can, of how Makarios' definition of religion manifests

in his, and his disciples, daily monastic practice. While I have by no means laid out such absolutes as 'true' or 'false,' I have allowed space for them to exist, thereby making room for the many dimensions of Makarios' erotic monasticism to come into play. In opening up my inquiry in this way, I have offered a deeper understanding of why the social relationship of elder-disciple, or the liturgy of the Eucharist, exists as it does in the killey of Marouda.

Acknowledgements

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ENDNOTES

1. Taken from http://www.johnsanidopoulos.com/2014/04/the-erotic-story-of-salva-tion-and-manic.html (accessed 24 June 2016).

2. Mount Athos has a had a continued Greek Orthodox presence since, legend has it, the Virgin Mary herself was ship-wrecked on its shores. Since then Christian practice has evolved from isolated hermits to a mix of small and large monasteries. It currently is home to nearly 1,000 monks and an equal number of laborers. (Della Dora 2011: 63, Norwhich et al 1966: 19; UNESCO).

3. A visitor from Russia, Seraphim has been at Marouda for two years, staying with the hope of becoming a novice monk to Elder Makarios.

4. An excerpt from the Morning Prayers read before liturgy, translated from Greek.

5. "As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning, but whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites were winning" (New international Bible, http://biblehub.com/exodus/17-11.htm. Accessed 24 June 2016.)

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Retention in Kindergarten: A Case Study of Teacher Perceptions and Practices

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ABSTRACT

The educational practice of retention – holding a student back to repeat a year – is a strategy used in many schools in the USA to improve outcomes for students, even at the kindergarten level. Research findings on retention in kindergarten are inconsistent with regards to reasons for and benefits of retaining students. Examining the issue using a case study can provide valuable insight into how retention decisions are made and what the perceived benefits are. This study draws on data from a survey, an interview and 40 hours of classroom observations to explore one teacher's views of kindergarten retention and the interventions she used to help students at risk of retention, as well as the type of feedback she gave at-risk students in the classroom. It was found that the teacher emphasized motivating and involving at-risk students and working with them one-on-one. Overall, though, she felt that parents working with their children at home could make the difference in whether a student was retained or not. Since three of the five students the teacher identified as being at risk for retention were Hispanic, and research indicates that the expectations for this type of parental involvement may not be familiar to Hispanic families, I conclude that teachers should explicitly communicate and explain these expectations to all parents.

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Historically, retention – holding a student back to repeat a year – has been used in some education systems as a form of remediation for students who fail to achieve specific academic targets (Frey 2005). A teacher's perception of retention shapes their concept of what academic accomplishment is (and vice versa). If a teacher does not believe that retention is good for students, he or she will implement many interventions to try and prevent students from being retained. If a teacher believes that retention is good for students, he or she may not implement any interventions that will help students in their development and academic achievement. Perceptions of retention can differ widely, as can retention policies, which in the USA may be based on the views of the principal, the school district, and sometimes the state (Range et al. 2012). Retention policies and teachers' perceptions of retention can affect students' likelihood of being retained and can influence students' academic future (Goldstein, Eastwood, and Behuniak 2013; Okpala 2007).

Retention can be used in the very first year of elementary school, kindergarten, during which children are taught such skills as letter-sound recognition sight words, concepts of print, basic reading strategies, as well as number recognition and 1-digit addition. Such academic achievements and various other developmental levels are evaluated when determining whether a kindergarten student is ready to be promoted to first grade. Kindergarten students are typically assessed on cognitive, social, and emotional developmental levels (Ray and Smith 2010). These levels are used as predictors of the student's knowledge and development, and assessments in these domains play a role in decision about whether to retain a student or not. Researchers have found that many teachers and principals support the use of retention, especially in lower grades such as kindergarten (Guanglei and Raudenbush 2006; Range et al. 2012). However, research findings on the effectiveness of retention are contradictory, some indicating that retention has no effect on academic success and other findings indicating that it does (Frey 2005; Guanglei and Radenbush

2006). The individual teacher's views on retention can shape the interventions he or she uses. They can also play a role in how students' academic success is perceived in the classroom (Okpala 2007). Even though there is little agreement on the effects of retention on students, studies have found that certain students are more likely to be retained than others. For example, Goldstein et al. (2013) found that teachers' perceptions of students based upon their ethnic and social background were predictors of kindergarten retention.

The purpose of this study was to gain a deeper understanding about one teacher's perceptions of retention in kindergarten, the feedback she gave students she felt were at risk of being retained, and the interventions she used with these students (to whom I refer for the remainder of this paper as "at-risk" students). I administered a survey and conducted an interview with the teacher, and performed classroom observations to collect data to answer the three questions guiding my research: (a) What are the teacher's views on retention? (b) What type of feedback is given to at-risk students? and (c) What additional supports and interventions does the teacher provide for at-risk students?

Literature Review: Retention and its predictors

Much research on retention in kindergarten and its effects has been conducted throughout the years. Researchers have studied the perceptions of teachers on retention, whether retention is used as a form of intervention, and the long-term effects of retention on students who were retained. Although some research has indicated an association between lack of parental involvement and students' increased risk of being retained, these studies have typically focused on retention in later grades (e.g., LaRocque, Kleiman, and Darling 2011; Machen, Wilson, and Notar 2005).

Teachers' Perceptions of Retention

One important component of whether students will be retained is teachers' and principals' attitudes toward retention. If educators feel that retention is beneficial, they are likely to recommend retention as intervention for struggling students. Range et al. (2012) administered a survey to identify the attitudes toward retention of 206 primary grade teachers and 39 elementary principals across the USA. They found that 64% teachers and 68% of principals said that they would use retention as an intervention for students who were struggling academically. This research indicates that the majority of teachers and principals in the USA favor the use of retention for young children. Similarly, Okpala (2007) surveyed randomly selected kindergarten teachers in public elementary schools in one school district in North Carolina about the use of retention. She found that the majority of teachers believed that retention was a necessary intervention for struggling students. These findings may not be generalizable to other states given that all participants were teachers in North Carolina. Overall, though, these studies suggest that when students are struggling academically, most educators favor retaining students in early grades such as kindergarten.

Predictors of Retention

Other research reveals that certain student characteristics increase the probability of students being retained. Even though retention is used for struggling students, some types of students still have a higher chance of being retained than others.

Goldstein et al. (2013) examined results of the Kindergarten Entrance Inventory (KEI) for 40 713 kindergarten students in Connecticut to identify predictors of retention. The researchers found that teachers' perceptions of low literacy and numeracy skills were predictors of kindergarten retention. In addition, students who were male, had disabilities, and received free or reduced-price lunch were at increased risk of being retained.

Byrd and Weitzman (1994) also studied predictors of kindergarten retention, with a focus on health and social factors. The sample was 17 110 children ranging in age from 7 to 17 who were included in two national surveys, the Child Health Supplement and the National Health Interview Survey. The researchers analyzed data from these surveys and compared demographic characteristics and health-related problems to percentages of grade repetition. It was found that being from low socioeconomic status (SES), single-parent or teen-parent homes, and being male were all predictors of being retained. Students who had hearing or speech impairments, low birth weight, and high cigarette smoke exposure were also more likely than other students to be retained.

In another study on the relationship between students who were retained and their demographic characteristics, Winsler et al. (2012) analyzed 14 813 students' academic success throughout their first two years of school and compared it to their test scores, teacher evaluations, SES, gender, and ethnicity. They found that 500 of the students had been retained and completed a second year of kindergarten. Children who were White and children with lower language and social skills than other children were more likely to be retained.

Common findings in these studies indicate that being from a low SES family and being male increase students' chances of being retained. Students with disabilities are also at increased risk of being retained in kindergarten. In other words, children of different genders, abilities, and poverty levels do not have the same likelihood of being retained.

Retention vs. Social Promotion

The most common alternative to retention is social promotion. This happens when a struggling student is promoted to the next grade level in order to maintain his or her social development in relation to the peer group (Frey 2005; Range et al. 2012). This option is typically chosen for students who interact appropriately with their peers but have slight academic struggles, in the hopes that they will soon catch up after being promoted.

In the 1990s, Peel (1997) conducted research to find out how widespread kindergarten retention was in North Carolina and what the effects of being promoted were on students deemed not ready for first grade. Surveys were distributed to kindergarten teachers in 555 North Carolina schools. The researcher found that there were an equal number of students who were retained and students who were promoted but the teacher felt were not ready. Overall, developmental delays and immaturity were the most common reasons teachers gave for retaining students.

Mantizicopoulas (1997) focused on the extent to which children with significant attention problems benefit from early retention. She examined outcomes for a total of 40 students, 25 of whom were retained and 15 of whom were promoted. The researcher administered SEARCH, a screening tool that is used to predict kindergarten retention and also provides a behavioral check-up list each year after kindergarten. The researcher concluded that there were no academic differences between students who were promoted and students who were retained.

Hong and Raudenbush (2006) studied schools with high retention rates to examine the effects of retention on students who were retained with many peers or few peers, and also the effect that a high school retention rate had on students who were not at risk of being retained. The researchers followed 471 retained students and 10 255 promoted students, and compared the school's retention rate with the number of kindergarteners

retained. They concluded that children who were retained in high retention rate schools would have performed better if promoted. However, high retention rates had no effect on students who were not at-risk. This finding indicates that even though most teachers and principals believe retention is beneficial for struggling students, this may not always be the case.

Findings from this review of research on retention indicate that in most cases, teachers and principals view retention as a necessary intervention for struggling students in the early grades. However, there is little consensus regarding criteria used in making retention decisions. Overall, students who are male, have a disability, and come from low SES homes are more likely than other students to be retained. In addition, there is also no clear evidence for how successful retention is (Hong and Raudenbush 2006; Mantizicopoulas 1997).

Methods

Setting

This study was conducted at Lincoln Elementary School in a kindergarten class for 5-year-olds. There was one teacher, Mrs. Jones, and one teacher aide in the classroom. Lincoln is located in an urban part of rural Wilkins County, South Carolina, population 66 533. There are six elementary schools, two middle schools, one high school, and one alternative school in the school district. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 20.6% of the Wilkins County population lives below the poverty level. The county also has a high Latino/a population. Pseudonyms for the school district, the school, the teacher, and the students are used throughout this paper to protect the privacy of participants.

I chose this setting because I spent one semester in Mrs. Jones' classroom for a practicum teaching experience as part of my undergraduate education program. I spent 30 hours in her classroom, during which time I conducted observations, did small group instruction with struggling students, and taught several

lessons. Since Mrs. Jones had previously retained students in kindergarten, I realized that this setting would provide me with suitable data for my study. I therefore returned the following semester to do 10 more hours of focused observations.

Participants

Of the 518 students at the school, 36.5% were White, 37.8% were Hispanic, 24.9% were Black, and 0.7% were Asian. The majority of students who attended Lincoln came from low SES families. Every student in the school received lunch at no cost to the family. There were 20 students in Mrs. Jones' kindergarten classroom: nine were Hispanic, six were White, three were African American, one was Asian, and one was mixed-race. Mrs. Jones identified five of the 20 students in the classroom as being at risk of retention. One of these students was a White boy, one was a White girl, one was a Hispanic boy, and two were Hispanic girls. In other words, three of the five at-risk students were Hispanic. These three students came from homes where English was not the primary language spoken, and therefore received English language learner (ELL) services in school. Table 1 summarizes information about the students the teacher identified as being at risk of being retained in kindergarten.

Table 1: Student Demographic and Background Information

Student	Race/Ethnicity	Gender	Background
Holly	White	Female	Holly was new to the school and lived with her grandparents because her mother was "in and out" of the home. She was currently repeating kindergarten.
Eric	White	Male	Eric had severe behavior problems and possible ADHD. After 11 weeks of school, he could not recognize four letters (m, t, s, a) they had been working on.
Philippe	Hispanic	Male	Philippe was new to the school. His family moved from Guatemala and no English was spoken at home. His neighbor, a child in 3rd grade, worked with him based on directions given by the teacher.
Martha	Hispanic	Female	Martha's father worked with her on all work sent home. No English was spoken at home.
Isabella	Hispanic	Female	Isabella did not attend school often. She may have moved and transferred to another school.

Data Collection

I obtained approval for my study from Presbyterian College's Institutional Review Board (IRB). I then obtained consent from the principal of the school and the teacher of the class in which I was conducting my study. The teacher sent home parental/guardian consent forms to be signed, which I obtained for all students involved in the study.

In my junior year, I conducted my practicum experience – a required part of my Bachelor of Science curriculum – in Mrs. Jones' class, spending 30 hours in her classroom throughout one semester. During this time, I conducted classroom observations in order to learn about her teaching strategies, the way she grouped students for instruction, and how she managed behaviors in the classroom. I observed her administer formal reading assessments to gather information on students' reading levels. I was also able to observe students working independently at learning centers and receiving one-on-one assistance from the classroom aide.

During my practicum, I had many conversations with Mrs. Jones about students she thought she would be retaining at the end of the year. I was then able to do more focused observations on the ways she and the classroom aide interacted with these students and the types of supports they gave students, as well as the comments they made to them regarding their work. In this phase of the study, I created a behavior chart with the categories: "positive prompt," which referred to academic feedback the teacher gave to let students know they were on the right track; "encouraging comment," such as "that looks good," typically made in reference to academic work; "individual work," during which time the teacher or aide worked with the student on an individual basis, and "use of intervention," such as leveled reading books or providing an alternate way for the student to complete the task. These four categories represented the most common behaviors I saw the teacher and aide engaging in when interacting with

students the teacher considered at risk of retention. The positive prompts and encouraging comments served as verbal reinforcement for the at-risk students, whereas the individual work and use of intervention involved the teacher providing a more intense level of instructional support for the students.

The following semester, I returned to the classroom to gain further information on Mrs. Jones' views of retention and to conduct additional observations based on the categories of behaviors and classroom interventions I had seen her implement. In order to achieve the first aim, I designed a survey containing nine statements about retention, with agreement indicated on a 4-point Likert scale. There were also two open-ended questions and one list of interventions asking the teacher to check those she considered most effective at keeping struggling students from being retained. I used Mrs. Jones' survey responses to guide me in writing 12 open-ended questions for the interview I later conducted with her, which I recorded and transcribed verbatim. I then began my focused classroom observations.

For this phase of my study, I conducted classroom observations in 120-minute periods, once a week for five weeks. I used the classroom observation chart I had created based on my analysis of previous classroom observations. I recorded the interactions between the teacher and at-risk students as well as the interventions the teacher used with these students. I noted each time the teacher gave a positive prompt, made an encouraging comment, or worked with at-risk students individually or used another type of academic intervention. I took notes when each of these things occurred in the classroom and how the student responded. I did not identify any new teacher behaviors during this phase, which meant I was able to reach the point of data saturation.

Data Analysis

The three sources of my data were classroom observations, a teacher survey, and a teacher interview. The teacher survey gave straightforward indications of the teacher's views on the purposes and consequences of retention, the factors she considered in retaining students and the grade level she felt was most appropriate for retention. It also listed which interventions she felt were most effective at preventing students from being retained. I transcribed the interview verbatim and read over the transcript to identify overarching themes. First I coded statements with terms such as "reasons" and "parental responsibilities." I then grouped comments based on these codes into common themes.

I used the observation chart during each class observation visit to help me categorize the teacher's feedback to and interventions with the at-risk students. Interestingly, I was only able to observe two of the interventions the teacher indicated as effective in the survey: additional reading programs and direct instruction. I also made notes on the chart about the teacher's actions that I observed, which I used to interpret and see broader patterns in her behavior.

I analyzed each type of data both individually and together. I read through my observation notes in conjunction with the survey results and coded interview transcript, and analyzed the data inductively by identifying patterns in teacher behaviors and beliefs.

Results

Analyzing the three types of data helped answer my guiding research questions: (a) What are the teacher's views on retention? (b) What type of feedback is given to at-risk students? and (c) What additional supports and interventions does the teacher provide for at-risk students? The survey data and teacher interview served to answer my first question about the teacher's views on retention. I analyzed my classroom observation notes to answer my second question about the type of feedback given to at-risk students. Data from the teacher interview and my classroom observations were combined to answer the third question about additional supports and interventions. Overall, I found that Mrs. Jones felt it was better to provide additional support for students in kindergarten rather than sending students to first grade without the necessary skills. She made an extra effort to encourage the at-risk students by ensuring that they were fully involved in the class. Although the teacher and teacher aide gave the at-risk students additional support in the classroom, Mrs. Jones believed that parental involvement was the best resolution for these students. I discuss these themes in more detail in the following sections.

General Views on Retention

Mrs. Jones' responses to the survey questions indicated that she agreed with the idea that retention in kindergarten prevents future failure and provides support for non-supported students. She agreed that retention in kindergarten helped maintain school and state standards. Although she felt that retention increased parent motivation to work with their child, she did state that this was a "depends" situation, meaning that it was dependent on the parents' follow-through. However, she disagreed that retention supported communication between the teacher and student or that it motivated students to attend school. The interventions she selected as those that best prevented retention were smaller class sizes, reading programs, direct instruction, and summer school. In fact, she recommended that all English language learners (ELLs) attend summer school to improve their English. Overall, Mrs. Jones was in favor of the use of retention in kindergarten in certain situations. She believed that the effectiveness of retention depended on students' unique circumstances and their level of parental support. The interview data allowed for further probing of why students were retained, how decisions were made about retention, and how parents were involved in the process.

Reasons for Retaining Students

Mrs. Jones believed it was important for students to get basic skills while they were in kindergarten, so that the first grade teacher did not have to reteach kindergarten skills. She explained that:

> It is very important for children to get the fundamental skills that are taught in kindergarten; if they don't get those skills, they don't have anything to build on. It is very hard because I have taught first and second grade also, it is very difficult to teach first and second grade skills and have to teach kindergarten skills also. You just can't do it.

Retention was thus one option to prepare children for first grade and avoid a higher-grade level teacher having to teach not only their specific content, but also the previous grade level's skills and content.

Factors Considered in Retention Decisions

Mrs. Jones indicated that students who were not making the expected level of progress in kindergarten may need to be retained. However, she specified that retention was only effective for students who had shown some progress and just needed another year to mature, not those who were not severely struggling. When students were severely struggling, she felt that getting "more of the same" was not helpful. However, she did not offer an alternative solution to retaining these students. Although Mrs. Jones used assessments such as DRA scores (reading), MAP scores (language arts and math), and writing samples in making retention decisions, she emphasized that she looked at the student as a whole and the progress they had made throughout the year. When clarifying her basis for retaining children, she divulged: "I don't really base it on a test; I base it more on what I see with the child." She also considered whether or not parents spent time

working with the student at home, as she felt that having this personal attention was very beneficial to the child. She reflected on the situation by saying: "I think our greatest strength is teaching the parents how to help their children…if I can get the parent in and I can teach them, a lot of times that does make a huge difference."

In addition to students with parents who did not work with them on school work, the teacher shared that students in families where English was not the first language or was not spoken at all were at risk of being retained. It is important to note that three of the five students the teacher identified as being at risk for retention came from Hispanic families where parents may have different experiences and expectations of their role vis-à-vis school. Specifically, they may not be aware of the expectation to work with their children on school subjects. In research by Valdés (1996), it was found that parents from Mexico saw American schools as unfamiliar places, little like the schools they had experienced in Mexico. These parents experienced a mismatch between what they thought schools and parents did and the reality of American schools.

Parental Responses and Interventions

The teacher thought that retention sometimes motivated parents to work more with their child, but many times the promises parents made were not carried out. She declared: "I think the majority of children get exactly the same thing that they got before, which is why retention does not work for a child that is severely struggling." In other words, if the student did not previously receive help at home from their family, being retained would not change this situation. However, the teacher recalled that in a few cases, the thought of their child being retained became a "wake-up call" to the parents. Because of these instances, the teacher remained hopeful that parents' motivation to work with their child would increase if they knew their child was at risk of being retained.

When talking about the five at-risk students currently in her class, the teacher reflected: "The third child, I was hoping that it would motivate mom and dad a little more, but mom just moved him to a different district and told them that he was supposed to be in first grade and he is failing miserably in first grade. It is just a really bad situation." When discussing the other at-risk students, the teacher spoke highly of one student's father by saying: "One of them, her father works with her, she has made great strides but there is no English spoken at home. He does work with her – anything I send home he works with her." In speaking so highly of this father, she was reiterating the importance she placed on parental involvement. However, with regards to another at-risk student, Mrs. Jones remarked that the student was "tribal Guatemalan; the mother speaks no language that we can reach." In this instance, language clearly posed a barrier to the parent working with their child on school work.

Feedback Given to At-Risk Students

Drawing on my observation chart and the notes I made on it, I identified two broad patterns of teacher behavior: motivating at-risk students, and requesting involvement of at-risk students.

Throughout my observations, I recorded a large number of motivating comments from both the teacher and the teacher aide directed toward the at-risk students. For example, on one occasion, the teacher aide prompted Holly to begin her writing assignment by saying: "I can't wait to read yours, why don't you go ahead and get started?" In another instance, Martha was erasing her sentences over and over again and when the teacher aide noticed what she was doing, she motivated her with the following comment: "I don't know why you are erasing your work, you are a good writer." When the teacher circulated the room or worked with the at-risk students individually, she often praised them with comments such as: "Good job!" and "Great work!" One time when Eric refused to begin his work, the teacher encouraged him by talking about how much fun it would be

to write about things they just learned. The teacher and teacher aide tended to focus most of their encouraging statements on the at-risk students.

During whole group instruction, both the teacher and the teacher aide often requested involvement from the at-risk students, calling on them to participate in class discussions or to help with an activity during the morning meeting. For example, the teacher aide called on Holly to be the calendar helper, which required her to place the day of the week and the number in the correct grid in front of the whole class. Another example occurred when the teacher called on Eric to help begin the class in counting. This activity involved Eric counting alone for numbers one through ten and then the rest of the class joining in. During a class discussion, the teacher called on Martha to tell the rest of the class about something she was thankful for, which spurred her to participate in the discussion. The teacher and the teacher aide asked the at-risk students to lead or participate in class activities more often than the other students.

Additional Supports and Interventions for At-Risk Students

I answered my third guiding question about additional supports and interventions provided by the teacher for at-risk students by combining my three sources of data. My analysis allowed me to group various forms of support and intervention into two broader thematic categories: teaching parents, and working one-on-one with students.

Teaching Parents

When I asked the teacher during the interview what she felt was the best intervention to use with at-risk students, she said she liked to meet with the parents and teach them how to help their child at home. In some instances, the teacher was able to persuade older siblings to help teach their younger siblings. In the case of Philippe, the teacher went over the work with a third-grade

The teacher explained that it was helpful when the parent could work with their child on a one-on-one basis, stating: "I have found the greatest intervention that works the most is when I can sit down with the parent and I can teach the parent how to help the child at home....we start off with our ABC book, we teach their parents how to use the ABC book." The school had recently hosted a particularly successful parenting night:

> "[Parents] received a package with an ABC book, things to count, they received several games to play, they also received a cookie tin that had magnetic letters on it and showed them things to do with it. So that night went really well and we hope to do that every year."

Mrs. Jones reported that everything that was done in the classroom was also taught to any parents who were willing to get involved by coming to the school, and it was expected that parents would teach the material to their child. The teacher understood that she needed to teach the parents literacy concepts so they would know how to help their child with early literacy skills. She did this by not only sending items home but by asking the parents to come in to school so she could show them how to use books and other materials. Mrs. Jones seemed aware of the need to teach parents learning activities that were not strictly academic but involved games. This was particularly important for the at-risk students for whom English was not the primary language spoken at home.

Working One-on-One with Students

The teacher aide often pulled students aside one by one and asked them to recite the ABC book to her. During one of my observations, she pulled the at-risk students aside and had them play games with math flashcards; however, during most of my observations the class worked on literacy activities. Small group and one-on-one work with the teacher and teacher aide were the only types of academic interventions I observed in the classroom. At the beginning of each class, the teacher would read aloud a story to the whole class. After reading the story, the teacher led a discussion around the theme of the story. Following the discussion, the teacher would work with each of the at-risk students while the rest of the class engaged in independent writing based on a writing prompt. The at-risk students were given the same assignments as the other students in the class, but received more scaffolded instruction from the teacher, including support in the form of positive prompts and encouraging comments. The other students in the classroom worked on their own and were instructed to go to the teacher aide for help if they had questions. I did not observe the teacher spending much time with the other students during independent work time; her main focus during these literacy activities was working with the at-risk students.

Discussion and conclusion

Through the 40 hours I spent in Mrs. Jones' classroom, I learned that retention in kindergarten was a common practice she used to address the needs of students and classroom teachers. Mrs. Jones thought retention was necessary to prevent teachers in first grade from having to reteach kindergarten skills. She was aware of who the at-risk students in the classroom were and focused extra attention on them. Both she and the teacher aide made a conscious effort to involve these students in whole class activities. They also made many encouraging comments to motivate these students to persevere with their work. During literacy activities, Mrs. Jones focused exclusively on the at-risk students, working with them individually while the other students worked

on independent work. Although the teacher devoted extra attention to the at-risk students, she felt that this would not be enough to prevent these students from being retained.

The most significant finding from my research was the emphasis the teacher placed on parental involvement with academic goals. Regardless of the extra time spent working with the at-risk students on an individual basis, Mrs. Jones believed the most effective intervention involved meeting with parents and teaching them skills to work on with their children at home. She did not see this as the only intervention to prevent retention, but certainly as the best intervention. Throughout the interview, Mrs. Jones voiced her opinion that the greatest intervention for at-risk students was parents' willingness and ability to teach their children at home.

That said, this emphasis on parents teaching their children at home may be unfamiliar to many parents, particularly those from cultures where this is not the practice or expectation, perhaps because parents think their children should be learning these things at school. In some Hispanic cultures, families see the classroom teacher as the person who is qualified to teach their children correctly. They focus their in-home education on other knowledge and skills rather than school-based subjects. For example, Valdés (1996) found that when children arrived in kindergarten, the skills their mothers had taught them "did not prepare them for the world of school" (p. 141). Mothers had taught their children to be respectful and how to behave. They did not know that in the USA it was expected that they also would have taught their children colors, letters, and numbers before they reached kindergarten. The mothers thought that these were things their children would learn in school. Valdés (1996) also found that students' lack of academic preparation for kindergarten was misinterpreted by teachers as reflecting parents' lack of interest in education.

Mrs. Jones' expectations of parental involvement are not unusual. Most teachers in the USA, particularly in the early grades, expect a high level of involvement from family members. However, in many schools in the USA, the only schoolwork that is sent home with the students is in English; if the parents do not read English fluently, they can hardly be expected to teach the material to their children. Three of the five students identified as being at risk of retention in this study were Hispanic and little to no English was spoken in the home. In addition, given that most children in the school came from low-SES families, there may also have been parents whose first language was English who struggled in the area of literacy. Therefore, any written instructions that the teacher sent home would have posed a barrier to parents' ability to help their children.

My findings correspond with previous research showing that teachers support the use of retention and feel that it is necessary for struggling students in early grades (Guanglei and Raudenbush 2006; Range et al. 2012). Echoing research findings by Goldstein, Eastwood, and Behuniak (2013), my results also indicated that children from ethnic minority backgrounds may face particular challenges with regards to making the expected level of progress in kindergarten.

In line with previous research findings (e.g., Okpala 2007; Range et al. 2012), my findings indicated that Mrs. Jones believed retention was beneficial to students and she was therefore likely to recommend it as an intervention for struggling students. However, she was less focused on students' academic achievement than the overall development of the child. Previous research is inconclusive regarding the effectiveness of retention (Hong and Raudenbush 2006; Mantizicopoulas 1997) and Mrs. Jones shared these mixed sentiments. On the one hand, she felt that retention was an effective intervention for struggling students, but on the other hand, she did not feel that it was effective if the parents did not provide additional help for their children at home. An

implication that arises from the findings of this study is that teachers to should make expectations for parental involvement clear to families and to help parents realize that if their child is struggling with language and academic goals, or even just with academic goals, their child will likely not be successful in school if they do not receive additional instructional support in the home.

Acknowledgements

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Untangling the Web of Food, Class, and Culture: An Ethnographic Analysis of the Farmers' Market in Lexington, Kentucky

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the concept of class, the role power plays in defining class structures, and the implications of this process of construction within the context of food consumption. Both power and class are embedded in historical frameworks that this paper explores through an ethnographic analysis of the Farmers' Market in Lexington, Kentucky. The research raises questions on the definitions of nature and organic food, the role of the economy within this process of defining, how these definitions come to serve as an embodiment of power, and the consequences for those who can afford neither organic food, nor the lifestyle that has come to accompany it. In addressing these questions, this paper seeks to historicize the construction of the organic food industry by exploring a more fluid, rather than essentialist, approach to the subjectivities that emerge within the industry while providing a context for exploring the otherwise limited perceptions of class and organic food. Through an anthropological lens, this paper attempts to deconstruct the Farmer's Market, organic food, culture, and class-driven inequalities.

The exchange of people, materials, ideas, and more seems to increase with every passing moment. As knowledge travels from place to place or from person to person—particularly through the development of technology—the world appears more intertwined and complex than ever. Yet the people, materials, and ideas that were once apparently imbued with static, intrinsic qualities now constantly shift and take on new connotations within this complex system of interaction. Although anthropologists seek to search for and unveil meaning within this complexity, others choose to mask such chaos and unpredictability by attempting to revert to simpler, more "natural" lifestyles. The organic food industry serves such lifestyle choices. In communities where one can find fast food restaurants or stores, such as Wal-Mart, at every corner, a Whole Foods or Trader Joe's appears to represent a haven away from the mainstream industrialized food industry.

The Farmers' Market in Lexington, Kentucky reflects an image of this idyllic return to nature in a city where the population, commerce, and fast-paced lifestyle have been growing significantly. Yet beneath the simplicity and romanticism of locally grown food exist some not-so-natural intentions and consequences. In seeking to demonstrate a more "natural" way of living and eating, the Farmers' Market entangles itself within limiting perceptions of food consumption, economic disparities, the creation of an upper-class and an exclusive culture associated with organic food, and class and race-based inequalities. Using ethnographic data gathered in interviews with vendors, organic food consumers, and college students and staff members during fifteen weeks of research at the Farmers' Market and a local university in Lexington, Kentucky, I demonstrate that there is a politics of class and ethical consumption beneath the surface of the Farmers' Market and its consumers, resulting in an exclusive community segregated by class.

Effects of Power and Class on Perceptions of Food

Having grown up in Lexington, Kentucky, I often re-flect on the city's transformation. From the thriving art and mu-sic scene to the ever-increasing amount of microbreweries, what once appeared as a small town in the heart of the horse capital of the world has now made its way onto lists including *Forbes'* 2015 "Best Place for Business and Careers" and *Wallet Hub's* 2016 "Best Large City to Live In" (Commerce Lexington 2016). In its 2008 development plan, the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Govern-ment partnered with the Lexington Distillery District Foundation to write, "The Development Area seeks to cohesively establish the identity of Lexington's former bourbon corridor, thematically creating a dynamic Bluegrass asset that leverages history to drive tourism and conventions, attract the creative class, and serve as a local destination" (Lexington Distillery District Development Plan 2008). Downtown, in particular, represents a space for the development of food, art, commerce, socialization, and culture. Walking downtown one Saturday afternoon, I turn the corner and stumble upon a space that Lexington has come to claim as one of its staples—a distinct environment within this booming com-munity. Amidst hundreds of tall buildings, offices and businesses, restaurants, and busy streets, lies a large grey pavilion, home to the Farmers' Market. This pavilion and the numerous white tents beneath it are enough to portray an atmosphere of intentional ex-clusion from the chaos of the surrounding community, as vendors and consumers craft an image of a culture that values community, family, and simplicity.

With consumers sharing conversations in between their purchas-es, carrying fruits and vegetables in one hand while steering stroll-ers in the other, and leisurely walking around with their dogs, it appears as if the Farmers' Market fosters the opportunity to escape from the chaos of daily life and has been doing so since its instal-lation in 1975 (Lexington Farmers' Market 2012). Following the market's inauguration, the Farm and Garden Market Cooperative Association expanded its outreach through the creation of an

additional satellite market at another location in Lexington (Lexington Farmers' Market 2012). Yet the downtown site remains the more popular of the two in terms of food, but more importantly, in terms of socializing. A deeper interpretation of what constitutes this particular environment reveals why Lexington residents both frequent, as well as identify with the *culture* of the downtown location. Geertz (1973, 5) defines culture as follows: "Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning". In applying Geertz's operational perspective of culture to the Farmers' Market after my visit on a Saturday afternoon, I began to situate this seemingly simplistic and wholesome community as part of a larger structure.

Figure 1. The Farmers' Market pavilion in downtown Lexington, KY. All photographs by the author.

During my visits to the Farmers' Market, I observed a concrete example of the romanticism that accompanies nature, wilderness, and organic food. The displays of fruits and vegetables, friendly vendors, and family-oriented environment presented consumers with the opportunity to momentarily escape the strictures of modern everyday life. For an hour or two, Farmers' Market consumers could return to a time when farming meant subsistence, livelihood, and wholesomeness. This idyllic scene and longing to return to simplicity and nature inevitably suggests a concern with current food practices. Akram-Lodhi (2014)) attributes this concern to capitalist market

demands: "Many are particularly concerned with the nineteenth century origins of the global food regime, during which time predominantly subsistence-based peasant farmers were incorporated, often through imperialist force, into the world trading system and dependence on capitalist market imperatives" (153). Following this incorporation, the interest in new methods of conceptualizing and consuming food originally began as a counterculture to the food industry as a whole. As this occurred, the food distributors who once ignored the idea of "organic" or "natural" food eventually began promoting it upon realizing the newfound popularity among consumers (Belasco 2007).

Yet the story of the Farmers' Market and the organic food industry seems to be incomplete, due to its presentation, which masks the class structures involved at the consumption level. In speaking with people from different socioeconomic backgrounds, a consistently superficial and ahistorical representation of organic and natural food continued to arise, despite the diversity of the people discussing it. One of the first people whom I approached one Saturday afternoon was Abigail, a granola vendor who characterized nature and natural food as evoking "nice images of woods and water" (personal interview, October 10). With Lexington ranking as #19 on *Best College Reviews'* "Best College Town in America" list (Commerce Lexington 2016), I also found it important to approach the large young-adult population at the Farmers' Market. I later asked Sarah, a student, to provide her definition of nature, in which she described "going for a hike and enjoying all the trees, streams, and wildlife I may find along the way" as the first thing that came to her mind (personal interview, October 21, 2015). These complementary approaches to naturalness reinforce what Cronon (1996) describes as the "frontier experience" that has played a role in the formation of American identity and shapes views towards nature:

If wild land had been so crucial in the making of the nation, then surely one must save its last remnants as monuments to the American past…The curious result was that frontier nostalgia became an important vehicle for expressing a peculiarly bourgeois form of antimodernism. For the wild land was not a site for productive labor and not a permanent home; rather, it was a place of recreation. Wilderness suddenly emerged as the landscape of choice for elite tourists. The irony, of course, was that in the process wilderness came to reflect the very civilization its devotees sought to escape. (13)

In other words, the untouched and romantic images associated with natural food originate from a longing to maintain the American ideals of freedom, primitivism, and discovery. Yet the "bourgeois form of antimodernism" that Cronon discusses, alludes to the irony of such a mentality—for those who can afford to appreciate wilderness, or in this case the Farmers' Market and organic food, are often the very people who contribute to the perpetuation of the inequalities they wish to escape.

While Cronon (1996) applies the majority of his argument to wilderness, national parks, and tourism, his ideas also find applicability to food, particularly in the context of the organic food industry. Just as he describes nature as something both constructed and enjoyed by those who can afford it, organic food often represents this same methodical and exclusive way of living and eating. Although food is a basic component of life and survival, the decisions employed in deciding what to eat, in a context of relative abundance, speak to larger cultural norms and meanings at work. Bourdieu's (1989) habitus theory describes this very relationship through the concepts of structure and agency. For Bourdieu, those with power do not simply dictate the actions of individuals situated lower down the structure, but also work to reproduce the structure: "Each agent is a producer and reproducer of objective meaning," (p. 78). Structure is not separate from the

agency and experiences of individuals—meaning that structures transfer power between agents, rather than onto agents. It is the agents themselves who maintain social control, for the symbolic elements—or cultural capital—one acquires by existing within a particular social class inevitably affect one's habitus (or embodied position within a culture), and therefore one's level of agency and power (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 17). In relation to the Farmers' Market, Bourdieu's concepts help to illustrate how the privilege of shopping at the Farmers' Market comes at both a monetary and cultural capital cost that is not afforded to all and is often beyond the reach of those from a more working-class background.

Sushi provides an example of how power and structure can turn seemingly "natural" food into a sign of social standing, as Bestor (2000) shows. Japan's transformation into a global economic hub in the 1970s paired with an American shift in favor of healthier food led to the emergence of the sushi fad in North America. What once represented an exotic, ethnic, and even unthinkable thing to eat (raw fish) now became popular, sophisticated, and in high demand. Sushi's global popularity as a manifestation of an upper-class lifestyle eventually began to transform the international fishing industry. With such a high demand for sushi across the globe, Japanese trading companies began buying their tuna from places outside of Japan, such as New England or Spain. Yet even with tuna originating from an outside location, it still maintains the façade of being a direct link to Japanese culture and to a higher-class identity (Bestor 2000). This global commodification of something that appears so natural to a particular culture is similar to the Farmers' Market in Lexington. Although growers and sellers of local food promote it as raw, pure, or untouched, its consumers may in fact be seeking to purchase this link to the upper class, in addition to the food itself.

Food prices at the Farmers' Market, which are higher than in regular grocery stores, serve as the most direct example of this power and exclusion. However, a less visible layer of exclusion also exists in the form of the social and cultural capital, as Bourdieu would put it, required to even enter the market. Within the context of the Farmers' Market, cultural capital would include having the knowledge-base to understand and speak about organic food with vendors and fellow consumers, which often comes as a result of one's socioeconomic background, or habitus. Anthropologists often define these "sociocultural" barriers as examples of structural violence, in which structure helps to promote order, but also exclusion: "Structural violence is violence exerted systematically—that is, indirectly—by everyone who belongs to a certain social order" (Farmer 2004, 307). Although the outdoor location of the Farmers' Market constructs an image of openness and inclusion, the race, socioeconomic status, and age of consumers of organic food and shoppers at the Farmers' Market consumers suggest a different story.

Economic Structures as Determinants of Food Consumption

The Lexington Farmers' Market seems to take a simple approach to food: visiting and purchasing its food appear to be choices available to all. The food industry, however, represents an intricate weaving of power and agency that affects choices made at multiple levels in the production and consumption processes. The exclu-sivity associated with organic food stems from practices that take place within a capitalist economy and result in unjust farming conditions and the labeling of organic food as an ethical counter-culture to the industrialized food industry.For Farmers' Market customers, directly purchasing from farmers allows them to place a face and a story to their food while participating in a "political ecology" (West 2012).

Although organic and local consumers may believe that their purchasing habits are not in the realm of capitalism, they very often follow narratives creat-ed by marketers seeking to attach morality, and therefore identity, to food:

> Those who always buy fair-trade coffee may be trying to send the message that they care about the plight of rural farmers in the tropics, and those who buy coffee certi-fied by the Rainforest Alliance may be trying to make a statement about their commitment to environment conservation…Today, people often attempt to derive and express identity and politics through the coffee and other commodities that they buy and serve. (West 2012, 18)

Similarly, for the Farmers' Market, consumers represent an iron-ic dynamic in which their attempt to escape the manipulation of capitalism by associating with a particular counterculture only reproduces class positions due to the demographic to which the Farmers' Market caters:

> I think it makes great contributions to Lexington and the Bluegrass in terms of engagement with local busi-ness, but I do have guilt that it is a place for upper-class people to bask in their vanity. The socioeconomic divi-sion is evident when there. I think that, like the organ-ic food business, the Farmer's Market caters to people with more money. It is sad that everyone can't enjoy the same experience. Most of the goods there are a luxury. (Sarah, personal interview, October 21, 2015)

Those who shop at the Farmers' Market inevitably make a state-ment about their identity and class association when choosing to participate in such an exclusive activity. As noted by many Lexing-ton natives, such as Sarah, organic food and the Farmers' Market are in fact a luxury hidden beneath a "natural" presentation.

As I left the Farmers' Market one morning, I began to wonder what the shift from supermarkets to organic food meant for those who could not afford to make the transition. When I sat down to interview Rhonda, a university staff member who works as a dining hall greeter and cleaner and who seemed to personify a contrast to the socioeconomic background of the majority of Farmers' Market consumers, I expected to hear a limited perspective. What unfolded however, was a conversation rich in Rhonda's observation of a lifestyle in which she could not participate:

> When I think about organic I think about expensive. I've been to a farmers' market, but not the one downtown. It used to be the one over here off of Limestone. I guess it was more like a vegetable stand at that time. I'm forty-four years old so at that time we called it the vegetable stands. Farmers' Market is just like the vegetable stand. Back then we called it the vegetable stand and now they done upgraded it to the Farmers' Market. (personal interview, October 14, 2015)

Rhonda's juxtaposition of the term "vegetable stands" to "farmers' market" symbolizes the self-consciousness of the rise in organic food in the context of an industrial food system. While it appears that the Farmers' Market provides a haven from modern industrial life—going "back to the land"—its primarily affluent consumers suggest that the wealthy simply found their next demand: organic food. Hébert uses salmon as an example of how societies come to craft their demands and perceptions of nature:

> In order for wild salmon to be made distinctive, it must be remade to meet aesthetic and technical norms largely established by the farmed salmon industry… In critical respects, singular salmon replicates the very economic forms to which it is positioned as an alternative, and materializes novel social distinctions in sites of production. (2010, 553)

In the same way, the various actors of the Farmers' Market position organic and local food as more thoughtful alternatives to current food practices while simultaneously replicating conventional structures of class.

The college students whom I interviewed exhibited a much different perspective than those from working-class backgrounds, like Rhonda, who could not afford to buy their food from the Farmers' Market. One student said:

> I think a lot of people think of organic food in terms of produce, as well as seeing it as a trendy thing to do… farmers' markets are a great way to see a sense of community and happiness within a town. I hope the trend keeps rising, and there will be more farmers' markets that continue to grow in the upcoming years. (personal interview, October 14, 2015)

The Farmer's Market certainly does create a sense of community and has contributed to a new and thriving downtown Lexington, Kentucky. However, this perhaps only comes with the happiness of a select few. Economic exclusion directly contributes to the popularity of the Farmers' Market, as people come to value the cultural capital of these products. While the Farmers' Market environment seems community-oriented, so long as its customers assign its produce such high symbolic value, many members of the Lexington community will continue to feel morally devalued as a result of their inability to purchase more "humane" food, thus creating a hierarchy both between food types and among people.

Forming Identity through Food

The creation of a hierarchy based on where one buys one's food affects the consumer's identity. Identity-making occurs within many types of spaces, and has many facets; however, it frequently results in moments that define notions of culture and one's position within a particular system, such as a class system. Ogden highlights this very idea as part of a spatial philosophy: "Deleuze and Guattari insist that the world's properties (material, semiotic, human, and nonhuman) come into being only through their relations" (2011, 29). Food practices are one such arena in which these relations form. Whether at the dinner table, the checkout line of a supermarket, or—in this case—the Farmers' Market, food brings together species in assemblages that "dissolve and displace the boundaries of nature and culture" (ibid., 29). The relations that take place within the Farmers' Market both contribute to identity formation and speak to what this might then mean for the community as a whole, including the reproduction of class-based inequalities. The market acts not so much as a simple source of food, but as a very particular and often exclusive social setting.

As a native of Lexington, I visited the Farmers' Market with my family almost every weekend. Throughout my visits, I remember feeling the mysticism of talking to farmers and vendors or picking out fruits and vegetables. Yet returning to the Farmers' Market from an anthropological perspective complicated this original idyllic scene. Along the way, I met Anthony, the owner of a local olive oil company. What initially intrigued me about Anthony and his table at the Farmers' Market was the very product he sold. Although Anthony claimed to produce the oils himself, olive oil certainly did not coincide with the typical products that one associates with a farmers' market. Yet the more I listened to Anthony speak about his fellow vendors, the more I began to realize that the majority of the products at the Farmers' Market were neither "natural" nor directly from a farm.

It's kind of like a family in a lot of ways and you get to know people. At the [Farmers' Market] on Sundays we're across from the bubble tea guy and a local pasta booth is right by us. Whereas here, we set up right here and get to know some other vendors. The lady right across from us sells lamb and I sometimes get her stuff. Like these flowers right here came from this lady right here. I'm gonna give these to my girlfriend. (personal interview, October 17, 2015)

Items such as bubble tea, lamb, flowers, wine, and olive oil all cater towards a certain consumer. While the Farmers' Market might attempt to reach the Lexington community as a whole, the vendors and their products point to a particular, class-specific presentation and aesthetic. In her discussion of trends and authenticity within consumerism, Michael deconstructs individual agency within identity formation and instead places supposed personal authenticity within a larger framework of social relations: "While differences in taste and lifestyles are often perceived as inherent characteristics of one's personality, Bourdieu has shown how these originate from differences in social positions" (2015, 164). Despite its unique, "pure", and "authentic" appeal, the popularity of the Farmers' Market and its products continues so long as its accessibility remains confined to those who hold a specific social position.

Figure 2. Shoppers stopping to look at a wine booth.

The interactions among species at the Farmers' Market point to factors that help to deconstruct this façade. Although organic food attempts to keep food in its "natural" state, in propping up a certain counterculture, the Farmers' Market defines itself not only by its food but also by the socializing and identity-making that occur within its boundaries. Each time I return to the Farmers' Market I see a similar demographic: young couples with dogs or young couples with children. Although the dogs remain leashed and tame, they serve a particular and significant role as refrains, or repeated figures of entanglement, that contribute to the interspecies interactions and socialization within the Farmers' Market (Ogden 2011). During one of my trips to the Farmers' Market I met Jackie, a sales representative for an artisan cheese company. Looking to get involved with local businesses and non-profits, Jackie landed her position as a vendor after approaching the owner of the company about the possibility of helping him with sales and marketing. What began as a way to support her local economy eventually evolved into an enjoyment of the atmosphere of the Farmers' Market:

> That's actually been a fun part of this job for me. I like dogs and there are usually as many dogs as there are people and that ends up causing people to interact with one another because of their dogs. I also think there's a nice community among the vendors. There's a lot of camaraderie. There's a good mood—we're outside. It's a very positive vibe. (personal interview, October 17, 2015)

These moments of interaction speak to the role the Farmers' Market plays within the Lexington community in bringing together members of a specific class and socioeconomic background for what can be thought of as an exclusive day of shopping, relaxation, and socializing. With the downtown location only being open on Saturdays, consumers undoubtedly rely on other food sources to sustain themselves throughout the week. The Farmers' Market must therefore serve a purpose beyond simply providing food.

Figure 3. A Farmers' Market visitor and her dogs.

This purpose seems to suggest a tourist atmosphere in which consumers enjoy passing through and interacting with others as much as—if not more than—actually purchasing food. Oddly enough, "farmers' market guides" constitute their own literary genre and possess striking similarities to a typical travel or vacation guide. MacLachlan shares the story of her seasonal markets and farmstands tour throughout the Midwest: "This was the moment I fell in love with real strawberries, and with my farmers' market. To this day I have yet to be convinced that any supermarket, even those rare ones that favor organic and local growers, come anywhere close to the open-air experience of discovering a new love" (2012, 2). The romance MacLachlan attaches to visiting her farmers' market relates to the intimacy within spaces of interspecies contact: "Yet multispecies zones of contact are both intimate, as the tactile immediacy these ethnographies of companionship and domestication evoke, and bound up in global multispecies diasporas and processes of change" (Ogden, Hall, and Tanika 2013, 11). The Farmers' Market serves as such a contact zone in which interactions between species appear both simple, yet entangled within the larger context of a politics of consumption driven by class exclusivity.

As an example, despite its wholesome appeal, the natural products of the Farmers' Market often follow the same marketing strategies that organic food consumers seem to think they are escaping. Belasco deconstructs these marketing strategies by analyzing how mainstream businesses turn granola, herbal tea, and other once-"revolutionary" food items into profitable products: "In the countercuisine, 'natural' had three dimensions: content (more nutrients, no chemicals), time (older), and a state of mind (nonrational, romantic, improvisational)" (2007, 220). Ben's thoughts resonated with Belasco's last dimension especially, as he answered my questions about the Farmers' Market from a student's perspective:

> I love the Farmers' Market because it brings together all kinds of local people through their passions. It's a fun atmosphere that's close by. They have already made food, produce, art, wine. Everyone seems to care about what they make and can give their story behind it. Knowing where these things come from makes you feel more comfortable and makes you care about what you buy. (personal interview, October 13, 2015)

In discussing his second dimension—time—Belasco elaborates on how antimodernism grew as a counterculture and how organic food marketers cater to this trend. As antimodernism increased in popularity, processors began to limit nature to words like "valley," "country," "farm," grandma," "hearth," and "old-fashioned" (2007, 221). One shopper with whom I spoke used strikingly similar words to describe the atmosphere of the Lexington Farmers' Market: "It's pleasant, quaint, friendly, homey" (personal interview, October 17, 2015). This limited view of nature provides context to Pollan's discussion of the aesthetics and presentation of supermarkets:

> Spritzed with morning dew every few minutes, produce is the only corner of the supermarket where we're apt to think "Ah, yes, the bounty of Nature!" Which probably explains why such a garden of fruits and vegetables (sometime flowers, too) is what usually greets the shopper coming through the automatic doors. (Pollan 2006, 15)

The organic food industry follows this same tendency to manipulate its presentation for the upper-class consumer who believes they are making an individual and intentional economic decision when choosing to shop at the Farmers' Market.

Indeed, consumers come to view their actions as autonomous, rather than structured. This directly reflects West's (2012) discussion of political ecology, in which individuals seek to demonstrate their agency by making "conscious" purchasing decisions. Yet even organic food deeply embeds itself in a system of "signs, symbols, representations, images, and fantasies that exist interlaced with the money economy" (West 2012, 24). Through the ethical dimension assigned to organic food, purchasing from the Farmers' Market allows consumers to maintain their social and moral ties while forgetting that their consumption constitutes a luxury for others:

> Rather than acknowledge that high cost makes farmers market patronage an impossibility for many low-income people, market participants tend to cast food purchasing decisions as a matter of individual choice… The market's high prices make it more likely that whites, who tend to be more affluent, will shop there. By positing farmers market shopping as an ethical imperative, yet not acknowledging the class exclusivity of this practice, farmers market participants reinforce what Wacquant calls the "moral inferiority of the poor" and by extension, the moral superiority of affluent whites. (Alkon and McCullen 2011, 950)

In that sense, organic food is not just a market established by agentive individuals, but is reproduced by structured groups that directly contribute to identity-making and reproduction.

Power, Class, and Exclusion

The class structures that characterize consumers of the Farmers' Market inevitably leave out certain members within the Lexington community—particularly those who can neither afford the food, nor the lifestyle of the typical shopper. The racial and socioeconomic distribution of the consumers provides enough of a context to suggest that the accessibility of the Farmers' Market is perhaps deeply embedded in the historical race and class-driven exclusion of certain members within the United States and Lexington. In a case study conducted at a community-supported agriculture (CSA) market in New Orleans, researchers found a similar trend of objectified marginalization:

> Interview and ethnographic observation data indicate a general consensus on the economic constraints, but some non-resident supporters of the organization attributed the issue to lack of knowledge about the food system or the benefits of local food consumption. The residents, on the other hand, pointed to spatial and sociocultural barriers that made the market and its location less accessible to them, including the produce selection and purchase options, convenience of access to the market, and the race-related historical and spatial context of the market's location. (Kato 2013, 369)

In the process of formulating knowledge, certain histories are often left out. The association of nature, organic food, and the Farmers' Market with a singular, upper-class image, serves as an example of how crafting "ideal" knowledge often involves the removal of a culture's history and an escape from responsibility:

> It is as if ecological fame-making is a process that effaces all other landscape visions from our popular consciousness, turning the landscape into what Bruno Latour called a "smooth object." Smooth objects, Latour explained, are materialities containing clearly defined boundaries and essences, "matters of fact," belonging "without any possible question to the world of things, a world made up of persistent, stubborn, non-mental entities defined by strict laws of causality, efficacy, profitability, and truth. (Ogden 2011, 118)

The Farmers' Market manifests itself as a smooth object with words like "pleasant, quaint, friendly, and homey" being used to describe it in a "matter of fact" manner. Yet these words ignore the historical reality of a space whose accessibility is limited by class. As a result of ignoring the complexity of the knowledge on organic food, the Farmers' Market overlooks inequality within food systems and promotes an exclusivity that indirectly results in poor nutrition for others.

When Rhonda first mentioned "vegetable stands" as the terminology she used to describe the farmers' market she visited, I began to wonder what the words "organic food" meant to consumers, as well as people like Rhonda who did not frequent the downtown location. Rhonda's friend, Tiffany, represented a similar farmers' market experience at her location that conflicted with the pristine white tents, display tables, and pavilion at the downtown location:

> I ain't been to the one downtown in years, but I go to that one on Maxwell. People set things up in their trucks and you walk around and see what you want, see who's the best price, see who looks the best. This summer I stayed up there because they had watermelons. They were like $6. They were the best. (personal interview, October 14, 2015)

Both Rhonda and Tiffany suggest that there is something unique about the downtown location that sets it apart from their own farmers' markets or vegetable stands. This difference perhaps originates from a particular presentation that the downtown location continually promotes. Hughner, McDonagh, Prothero, Shultz, and Stanton identify high price as an ambiguous, yet key factor that both deters and encourages the purchasing of organic food: "While consumers indicate the high price of organic food to be prohibitive in their purchasing behaviors, they use price to form opinions about the quality and taste of organic food items…high price meant better quality" (2007, 103). As the price of organic food limits people like Rhonda and Tiffany to working-class vegetable stands, it encourages others to buy into the upper-class lifestlye of organic food consumption. The downtown Farmers' Market operates within this same zone of cultural significance.

With issues of class insinuating into the Farmers' Market, additional structural barriers also permeate through the organic food culture—specifically race. The tents were certainly not the only overwhelmingly white component of the Farmers' Market. During one of my visits, I noticed a mere three African Americans among a sea of white people. In assuming an upper-class connotation, the Farmers' Market reflects and perpetuates racialized perceptions of organic food: "many of the discourses of alternative food hail a white subject and thereby code the practices and spaces of alternative food as white" (Akon and Agyeman 2011, 264).The majority of the university food staffers with whom I spoke, and who had not visited the downtown Farmers' Market, were African American, despite Lexington as a whole being approximately 81 percent white (US Census). What appears as such a "natural" weekend activity for white members of the Lexington population may be a foreign activity for others, as demonstrated by Tiffany's limited knowledge of organic food as a whole:

I was looking at a program on TV—I think it was Dr. Oz—and he had a man on the show who said that even though it says, "natural," it's not. He said it's organic; you have to get the organic stuff because the natural still has stuff in it that's not right or something that we shouldn't eat. They're still throwing something off guard in it. So natural, when you see that word it ain't so. It's best to go with the organic. (personal interview, October 14, 2015)

The racial demographic of the Farmers' Market reflects the historical context of accessibility. As the affluent continue to associate high price with quality, organic food will maintain a predominantly white consumer base at the exclusion of others.

Many of the vendors and shoppers at the Farmers' Market were attuned to the discrepancies in both race and class within the demographic of organic food consumers. Yet despite the awareness of the situation, there remained a matter-of-factness and sense of complacency in their overall attitude toward the Farmers' Market and its accessibility: "I think it's more of a dollars and cents issue. I mean this isn't Wal-Mart and when something is less money that's a decision you have to make" (personal interview, October 17, 2015) said Jackie, who, along with many other vendors, recognized the class and racial distribution of the Farmers' Market, but suggested no urgency for change. In other words, it seemed as though they enjoyed the quaint atmosphere that exclusion allowed. Jackie did, however, shed light onto an important component of the Farmers' Market: that exclusion is in fact a "dollars and cents issue." In describing where she purchases her own food from, Rhonda embodied this reality:

I go to three different stores. I go to Kroger's. I go to Aldi's. I go to Save-A-Lot. A gallon of milk over at Aldi's is a $1.69, honey, but the difference with Aldi's is they do not bag. You have to bag your own. So a lot of people bring in boxes. And they sell bags too. The brown ones

the time people bring their own boxes in. The economy is so rough right now. That's the reason why I go to all those stores. Like Kroger's their milk is probably $2.29, Save-A-Lots is probably $2.09. And you can probably get a whole gallon from Aldi's for $1.69. So that's why I go to all the different stores. Like Kroger's, they have my bread for like $0.99 and everybody else wants a $1.25 for a loaf of bread. So that's why. Nowadays you gotta take your money and split it up. That's the reason why I do typically different stores. (personal interview, October 14, 2015)

Farmers' Market consumers apparently have a sense of agency in deciding where to purchase food and how to utilize this act of purchasing as a means for socializing. In contrast, Rhonda's internalization of the price of food embodies the racial, economic, and societal barriers preventing her from shopping at the Farmers' Market and from buying into the organic food lifestyle.

With Rhonda and Tiffany remaining marginalized from the Farmers' Market, this raises the question of what they, as well as others, can and do in fact consume. With organic food remaining exclusive to those who can afford its high price, many are left with not only cheaper, but also unhealthy options. In a sense, the Farmers' Market represents a space in which identity and politics merge. In crafting an exclusive counterculture, the Farmers' Market prevents outsiders from accessing what some constitute as a basic human right: healthy and nourishing food. The discrepancy in food justice does not appear to be slowing down: "The number of people going hungry has grown dramatically in the U.S., increasing to 48 million by 2012—a fivefold jump since the late 1960s, including an increase of 57 percent since the late 1990s. One in six [people] reports running out of food at least once a year" (McMillan 2015). Yet what it means to be "healthy" or to be "hungry" intermingles within a complex system of identity formation. Just as symbols govern the aesthetic of the Farmers'

Market, so too do they permeate other aspects of the food industry, including the relation between food and body image. In *National Geographic*, McMillan (2015) reports on the connection between aesthetic and the willingness of a society to accept something—in this case malnutrition—as a true phenomenon:

> The answer is "this paradox that hunger and obesity are two sides of the same coin," says Melissa Boteach, vice president of the Poverty and Prosperity Program of the Center for American Progress, "people making trade-offs between food that's filling but not nutritious and may actually contribute to obesity." For many of the hungry in America, the extra pounds that result from a poor diet are collateral damage—an unintended side effect of hunger itself. (McMillan 2015, para. 9)

With many of America's "hungriest" deviating from symbols of the "gaunt-faced unemployed scavenging for food on urban streets" (ibid., para. 6) a deceitful food reality seems to have emerged, allowing the other end of the spectrum—Farmers' Market consumers—to continue living through their romanticized depictions of nature.

Conclusion

This depiction of the Farmers' Market speaks to a larger structure at play comprised of a simplistic view of food, class, and inequality. Living in Lexington my entire life, visits to the Farmers' Market on Saturday mornings became commonplace for my family and me—a sort of ritual. As a result of the frequency of these visits, questioning my position, as well as the position of others at the Farmer's Market, never entered my mind as something worth considering. Yet returning with an anthropological lens provided the tools for reinterpreting the familiarity of this environment. The Farmers' Market may be a counterculture, but it still presents a culture nonetheless, meaning that its consumers both create and suspend themselves in its webs of significance (Geertz 1973).

The Farmers' Market finds its value through the meaningful acts of exchanges that can be enacted within it (West 2012). Yet the process of meaning-making extends beyond the boundaries of the grey pavilion, of downtown, or even of Lexington, as it moves through a class system that associates consumption with morality, politics, and identity.

Figure 4. Farmer's Market tents outside of the pavilion.

Acknowledgements

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