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Rice, Risk and Ritual: What Agriculture and Religion Tell Us about State-Minority Relations among the Khmu of Northern Laos

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ABSTRACT

In examining state-minority relations in Southeast Asia, Scott (2009) argues that the attributes of 'hill tribes' are acts of political strategy designed to evade state capture. Cautioning against a binary between freedom and oppression, Jonsson (2012) calls for a historically and socially contextualized approach to state-minority relationships. This research contributes to this debate by focusing on religion and agriculture, which have been closely linked in highland societies. Swidden rice cultivation has traditionally been sacred, featuring religious rituals. However, state influences have driven a shift from swidden subsistence farming to sedentary commercial farming. This article investigates the effects of this transition on religion and agriculture amongst the Khmu in the Vieng Phouka district of Northern Laos. Ethnographic methods reveal significant secularisation in agriculture, with increasing economic rationalisation of decisions pertaining not only to agriculture but also to religious rituals. At the same time, selected state-introduced cash crops are being sacralised, particularly in scenarios with high risk. These observations indicate an amalgamation of religion and modern rationalisation. Such amalgamations can be understood as adaptations of the Khmu to maximise benefits, illustrating strategic agency suggested by Scott (2009). However, the agency is applied to engage with the state instead of resisting it, falling, as Jonsson (2012) suggests, outside the freedom-oppression dichotomy.

in the modern day have resulted in major agricultural change from swidden-based subsistence farming to sedentary commercial farming. This article investigates the effects of such state-driven agricultural transition on religious beliefs amongst the Khmu in the Vieng Phouka district of Northern Laos.

The Khmu are traditionally shifting agriculturalists who practice subsistence swidden farming, clearing forest lands in the hills by fire on a rotational basis to grow crops for consumption. However, the Lao state has been discouraging swidden farming for the past few decades as it considers the burning of forest land to be environmentally unfriendly. As such, development policies have been tailored to reduce swiddening in favour of lowland farming. With the formalisation of land tenure that took place after resettlement in the 1970s, villagers faced more restrictions on owning swidden plots as opposed to the informal system when they were in the hills. This reduction in access to swidden land means shorter fallow cycles, which then lowers fertility of the soil, making it less productive. Meanwhile, a growing regional market has made cash-crop farming more lucrative, and roads have improved the market access of the Khmu greatly, facilitating their move towards commercial farming (Thongmanivong and Fujita2006). Paddy-field farming of rice and cash crops is therefore becoming prevalent in Khmu villages. The restriction of shifting agriculture has also resulted in sedentary farming of mono-crops such as rubber and corn on hills previously used for swiddening (Thongmanivong and Fujita 2006). However, swiddening has not stopped completely and many Khmu continue to plant hill rice as a strategy for food security. Nonetheless, changes in agriculture are evident as the majority of Khmu households in the district now practice commercial agriculture (ibid).

While effects of these agricultural changes may be most evident in economic and political domains, their repercussions extend to Khmu religious beliefs as well. As Sprenger (2006) illustrates, the practice of swiddening amongst the Lameet (a highland minority ethnic group similar to the

Introduction

Religion and agriculture have been closely linked in highland societies of Southeast Asia, especially in contexts where economic, political, and religious domains are well integrated (Kirsch 1973). In such societies, sacred and secular acts are not differentiated, and agriculture, amongst other technical practices, has a religious significance and motivation (Kirsch 1973, 12). In particular, swidden rice cultivation has traditionally been considered sacred, with regular rituals performed during the agricultural process (Sprenger 2006). However, growing state influences on highlanders

Khmu) is not only one of physical survival but rather the centre of a system that holds together kinships and religious beliefs. Therefore, this article considers how the decline in swidden farming coupled with the advent of cash crop agriculture has impacted the connection between agriculture and religion among the Khmu in Laos. It also analyses the extent to which sacredness prevails as a macro-concept in the Khmu society and how it has evolved in relation to modernity.

Background

The relationship of highland minorities with the state is a complex one, with different schools of thought trying to decipher the dynamics of this relationship. On one hand, Scott (2009) argues that the characteristic attributes of south-east Asian 'hill tribes' such as the Khmu are actually adaptations designed to evade both state capture and formation - Acts of political strategy that runs counter to the conventional notions that they are 'primitive'. The strategies he analyses include adaptations of agriculture, where he specifies shifting agriculture as a form of 'escape' agriculture, in that shifting agriculture has a high degree of mobility which helps the minorities evade the state (Scott 2009, 190-1). However, Scott's argument is based on a confrontational stance between the state and minorities that involves a high degree of generalisation by the author. Jonsson (2012) warns against the moral binary set up by Scott between freedom and oppression, and instead urges for an approach that contextualises the relationship historically and socially. In arguing for greater fluidity in charactering state-minority relations, Jonsson also opens up the possibility that the relationship may not be completely antagonistic.

In the past few decades, as Scott acknowledges, the development of state technologies with the advent of modernity (post World War II) has made it near impossible for highlanders to both evade and resist the state (Scott 2009, 11). Negotiations of minorities with the state in modern day revolve very much

around security and development – two of the state's primary concerns (Phosena 2005, 91). One of the main ways in which the state 'develops' highland societies is via modernising agriculture. Given the two contrasting arguments between Scott and Jonsson, this paper focuses on agriculture among the Khmu society in an attempt to characterise state-minority relations. Although Scott disclaims the applicability of his argument to modern day (Scott 2009, 11), residuals of past relations may well extend into the present, at least in the attitudes of highland minorities towards the state, making such a study relevant. Furthermore, pursuing this research allows us to identify where the current state-minority relations in Lao stand in the wide spectrum between the successfully evasive and strategic minorities whom Scott describes, and minorities who are subjected to the complete penetration of the state, as commonly perceived.

While Scott (2009) perceives agriculture to be a key adaptive strategy, agriculture is at present also one of the main modes of state intervention as mentioned earlier. Thongmanivong and Fujita (2006) analyse how developmental policies have led to rapid agro-ecological landscape changes in a study area comprising four villages in North Laos. The article shows that subsistence and swidden agriculture has decreased rapidly, with an increasing move towards a commercial and multifunctional use of the land, which includes planting cash crops such as rubber, sugarcane and non-timber forest products.

Such changes are quantified using data obtained on land usage, which indicate a decrease of 80% in upland (i.e. swidden) agricultural land from 1993 to 2000 (Thongmanivongand Fujita, 2006, 240). These changes are largely attributed to government policies on land and forest usage, which restrict traditional swiddening practices, a growing regional market for cash crops, which makes the agricultural transitions more lucrative and attractive, and development of roads, which greatly improve access to markets (Thongmanivong and Fujita 2006, 243). These are all

evidence of how much more pervasive the state is at present, in line with Scott's argument that it is near impossible for minorities to avoid interacting with the state in the modern day.

While Thongmanivong and Fujita (2006) provide a geographical perspective to the landscape changes that are occurring, La-orngplew (2010) provides a more ethnographic understanding of a similar phenomenon, focusing on rubber planting in the highlands and analysing the roles of the various stakeholders in this phenomenon. Referring back to Scott's argument of hill tribes strategically adapting to negotiate their position vis-a-vis the state, she puts forth the argument that perhaps this ideology may still be applicable in the modern day by highlighting the active role that the villagers themselves play in adopting such commercial agriculture. In other words, she claims that commercial agriculture is not simply forced by the state on the highlanders in its pursuit of economic development, but rather is actively adopted by and adapted to by the agriculturalists (La-orngplew 2010). It should be noted that while most of Scott's work is embedded in the context of strategies to evade and resist the state, La-orngplew describes a case where minorities strategise to engage with the state. Thus, her argument also simultaneously supports Jonsson's claim that certain minority groups might possibly engage with the state under the appropriate conditions (Jonsson 2012). However, this concept of active engagement by minorities may need further investigation as to what their motivation is, for they may not necessarily have economic goals similar to the state's.

All the articles on agriculture mentioned above take a very functional approach focusing on the tangible, material and quantitative impacts of these changes. However, in order to fully characterize state-minority relations, it is helpful to focus on a less explored aspect of the Khmu society. As opposed to analysing structural changes at the societal scale, it is useful to investigate the intangible yet salient changes that take place at an individual scale due to interactions with the state. One of the few authors to

have adopted this methodology is Evrard (2011), who analyses the contrasting resettlement experiences of Khmu groups who fought on opposing sides of the Indo-China war, by using the individual as his subject of study. Such an analysis then brings out intangible aspects of such state-minorities relationships, such as the emotions, beliefs and attitudes of the person who is experiencing resettlement, rather than focusing on a highland society that is resettled.

One way to apply such an approach to agriculture would be to focus on religious beliefs in highland society in relation to agriculture. To do this, it is necessary to get an understanding of how the system of agriculture works from the highlanders' perspectives, which requires an understanding of their worldview and religious beliefs.

In his classic work of anthropology, Kirsch (1973, 4) argues that the highland society functions as a single holistic unit, in which the divides between religious, political and economic dimensions are not well defined. He highlights the 'absence of radical distinction' between 'secular' acts and 'sacred' acts, where technical acts that are performed for survival have a religious aspect to them, which contributes to their validation (Kirsch 1973, 12). Thus, according to Kirsch (1973), there are no purely secular or purely sacred acts in highland societies. Kirsch argues that tribal religions fundamentally aim to maximise 'potency' and illustrates how ritual feasting and affinal relations (matrilineal cross cousin marriages in particular) are structured to reflect this end (Kirsch 1973, 18). In ritual feasting, the feast giver is elevated in social status and endowed with prestige as a 'reward', since the provision of feasts is evidence of innate 'potency' (ibid.). Similarly, greatest importance is placed on one's mother's brother amongst all relations gained through marriage since his enmity is believed to cause sterility - a grave threat to 'potency' (Kirsch 1973, 22). Thus, both feasting and managing affinal relations become religious acts in addition to being social ones (Kirsch 1973).

Applying Kirsch's 'integrated' model to agriculture, it can be seen that the technical act of farming may contain a religious aspect to it as well, especially given that agriculture, being a primary mode of sustenance, is one the main source of 'potency' in a highland society. This religious dimension emerges clearly in Sprenger's study of swiddening practices amongst the Lameet, a Southeast Asian highland minority similar to the Khmu. Sprenger (2006) argues that the practice of swiddening by the Lameet is not only one of physical survival but rather the centre of a system that holds together kinship and religious beliefs. He illustrates this by taking the readers through the entire process of a swidden cycle, explaining how every stage is tied to affinal relationships with specific rituals performed for each of them (Sprenger 2006). Adopting both Kirsch's general lens and Sprenger's specific case study, it can be seen that agriculture, kinship and religion are tightly woven together, and to the Lameet themselves is a single act with three sets of meanings, all of which co-exist. At the end of his article, Sprenger hints that these religious beliefs will be reinvented with changes in political circumstances (2006, 13). This is an interesting topic to pursue and it may be worthwhile to examine how religious beliefs are being reinvented with agricultural transitions, especially given the integrated and holistic nature of highlander beliefs that Kirsch and Sprenger demonstrate. My paper attempts to answer precisely this question of how religious beliefs in response to changes in agricultural techniques. Such a study will not only enhance the general understanding of highland societies, but will also allow us to gain a better understanding of how tribes negotiate with the state, and correspondingly characterise state-minority relations.

Methods

Based on the theoretical frameworks identified in the literature discussed above, the following research questions were formulated:

- What is the connection between agriculture and the religious beliefs of the Khmu?
- How have the Khmu reinvented their religious beliefs in response to changes in agriculture?
- What can be understood from this reinvention about how minorities negotiate with the state?

The research design was divided into the segments shown in the diagram below. Ethnographic data were collected in order to be able to specify the relationship between religion and agriculture and to understand how religion is being reinvented. Both of these were then used to characterise state-minority relations.
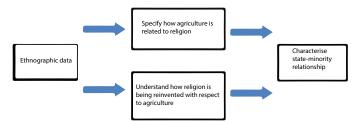

Figure 1: Schematic representation of research design

To conduct this qualitative research, I carried out ethnographic fieldwork carried out over three weeks in June 2013 among highland minorities in Laos and Thailand. Fieldwork involved using ethnographic methods in the form of interviews and observations.

I conducted interviews with various types of villagers such as the village headmen, elders and farmers. Initially, I sought to obtain information on how agricultural rituals were performed traditionally (before state driven agricultural transitions) from the older generation of villagers. During subsequent interviews with farmers, I obtained similar data for current practices, and then compared the religious practices involved in (or absent from) subsistence and commercial farming. I then explored the reasoning

behind differential religious practices between swiddening and lowland agriculture. Further, I investigated the farmers' motivations for choosing the type of agriculture that they engaged in. Lastly, I interviewed female household heads in order to explore dimensions of sanctity in household consumption of farmed crops (from both swidden and lowland farming). Interviews were conducted with the assistance of translators who were competent in Lao and English.

Data was also collected through observations of farming practices and religious rituals whenever possible. Procedures I observed include the burning of vegetation on upland farming plots, the planting of the first rice at the start of season for lowland paddy farming and soul-calling rituals to cure sick individuals.

Village Profiles

Three Khmu Villages in the Vieng Phouka district (VPK) of the Laung Namtha province in Northern Laos served as the primary sites of data collection. A single Khmu Village in the Nan Province of Thailand was chosen to be the secondary field site for comparative purposes. While I was unable to draw any conclusions regarding the differential experience of the Khmu in the two states, data collected from both sites were useful in elucidating the connection between religion and agriculture in the Khmu society. Table 1 summarises the profiles of the four villages where fieldwork was conducted.

Table 1: Village Profiles

Villages	Location	Population (households)
Village A	VPK, Laos	87
Village B	VPK, Laos	108
Village C	VPK, Laos	140
Village D	Nan, Thailand	101

Table 2: Percentage of Villagers engaging in type of farming

Villages	Only Swidden farming	Swidden and Paddy Farming	Only paddy farming
Village A	31%	67%	2%
Village B	23%	74%	3%
Village C	41%	45%	14%
Village D	-	-	-

*Village D consisted mainly of upland farming of mono crops as its land is located at higher altitudes with limited access to lowland fields.

Photo Credit: Anjana Ramkumar

Figure 2: A plot of swidden land that had been cleared with fire.

Research Findings

Sanctity and Secularity in Agriculture

In all three Khmu villages of Laos, upland rice produced from swidden farming is sacred. This sacredness is manifested in rituals that are conducted annually as part of the farming cycle. Known as 'hep-pi' in Khmu, three of these rituals are carried out during the farming process: the first before the sowing of seeds, the second before harvesting rice and the third when the rice is brought back to the village. The first two rituals are performed for the farm spirit in the fields, to whom villagers pray for good quantity and quality of rice – 'beautiful rice' as described by the Khmu. This process is known as 'Hae Kwan' or 'soul making' in the local language, as rice is traditionally believed to have a soul. The last ritual takes place in the village, where villagers pray to the village spirit for economical consumption of rice, such that it lasts for the longest time possible. Important steps in the farming cycle such as clearing forest lands and planting the rice are done on auspicious days. When asked the reason behind the sanctity of rice, an elder from Village A replies 'It is just like that – Rice is sacred because it is important to us.' Rituals are then explained by the presence of spirits in the hills and that their help is necessary for good yields of such important crops.

The label of sanctity however, is exclusive to upland rice. As a contrast, paddy rice, grown on lowland plots, is not considered sacred. While villagers acknowledged that paddy rice has a soul as well, questions on whether spirits will help paddy rice grow were usually met with strange stares or slight laughter. While swidden farming ties in closely with the spirits, paddy field farming is purely procedural to the Khmu, with no rituals being performed. When asked about it, a farmer from Village A replies 'Wetland rice has a much simpler process of using tractors and I just start to plant whenever there is water'. Similarly, another farmer from Village C states 'If I follow the procedure and give the rice enough water, I will get 'beautiful rice on the paddy fields'. Thus, responses indicate a guaranteed yield of rice as long as

procedures are followed, as opposed to swidden which is dependent on the blessing of spirits. Additionally, automation is also used to explain secularity of paddy rice, whereby a Khmu teenager from Village A reasons that manual labour makes hill rice sacred whereas automation makes paddy rice secular.

Vegetables fall into the same category of secularity as paddy rice, although they are believed not to have souls. While some vegetables, especially cash crops, were introduced recently to the Khmu, a few varieties such as tubers and bamboo have been traditionally part of Khmu societies, but at no point were they sacred. Rubber trees are planted by approximately 80% of the households in the three villages and rubber cultivation is completely secular. As a 27-year old farmer from Village A explains, '[He] will plant the rubber seeds whenever he gets it from the Chinese investor (as opposed to choosing the auspicious time). [He] just has to make sure that there is enough water for the seeds'. Perhaps what is most indicative of secularisation in agriculture is the rationalisation of yields by the Khmu. If paddy crops don't grow well, lack of water resources or pests are used to reason it as opposed to hill rice where low yield is connected with the anger of spirits. Correspondingly, to rectify the situation, while other crops require fertilisers and pesticides, hill rice demands rituals asking for the blessings of the spirits. Considering that the majority of Khmu households practiced lowland farming, a significant portion of agriculture is thus now secular.

In identifying the criteria that determine the sanctity of crops, the circumstances of such religious labelling have to be considered in the right temporal context. In this case, the question is to understand why swidden rice was sacred to the Khmu in the past when they were living in higher altitudes. Recollections of life in the hills by the elders suggest that the sacredness of an entity stems from the risk that mode of living carries. When a farming system carries a substantial amount of risk, this risk is mitigated by spirit worship, whereby the Khmu 'control' the risk by praying

to the spirit. The idea of risk consists of two aspects – the fragility of the system and the stakes invested in the harvest. Fragility of the system refers to how susceptible it is to environmental variations, while stakes refer to the consequences of low yield. Swidden rice classifies as risky under both these aspects. Most villagers describe their swidden yields as being more variable, whereas paddy yields are approximately the same amount of rice annually. Moreover, soil quality is extremely important for swidden fields, but farmers can do little to control it as fertilisers are not used in the production of upland rice. Weeding has to be done manually as herbicides are ineffective on highlands, making it tedious as well as more susceptible to human error. While such conditions contribute to the fragility of the swidden system, there were also high stakes in upland farming in the past. Being the staple food for the Khmu, rice was absolutely essential to survival. A failing harvest could then mean dire consequences for the household. Thus, upland rice was revered to be sacred, as a form of negotiating these uncertainties through spirit worship. To a large extent, farming conditions in the hills remain the same, and though the stakes are lower now due to the addition of paddy farming, the sanctity of upland rice is largely maintained as a form of tradition.

The same concept of risk can then also be used to explain secularity. Tubers and bamboo shoots, which were part of the traditional Khmu diet, were obtained easily. According to a Khmu elder in Village B, 'tubers grew naturally' and took less effort than rice. Bamboo shoots meanwhile were abundant in the forests to be foraged. Paddy farming is stable due to automation, use of fertilisers and easy weeding, all of which ensure consistency in yield. The use of tractors in particular not only stabilises yield but also makes the farming process much easier than swidden, reducing the need to pray for the spirits' help. This also explains why many Khmu cited automation as the reason for paddy rice's secularity. Vegetables are grown with fertilisers as well, in smaller quantities and with lower stakes such that they remain secular.

However, when the stakes of cash crops increase, the greater risk that is then entailed pushes them towards sanctity. While recent cash crop introductions are conceptualised as secular by the Khmu in Laos, animal feed corn has attained a status of sanctity amongst the Khmu in Thailand. In Village D, farmers grow corn as a monocrop, which serves as their primary source of income. While they use herbicides to combat weeds, the corn remains susceptible to pests such as field mice which can destroy the entire field. Corn farmers obtain loans to support their farming and many are stuck in debt cycles for years as their yearly revenue is not sufficient to settle their loans. One year of crop failing can thus have dire consequences, potentially depleting their financial resources. Given the high stakes and the vulnerability of the corn to pests, Khmu conduct rituals to pray for its protection. As such, Khmu continue to use religion to mitigate risk as exemplified by the modern reinvention of this traditional reasoning.

Conversely, a reverse process is taking place among the Khmu of Vieng Phouka, whereby swiddening is becoming more secular.The main rationale behind this is the fact that villagers are no longer dependent only on swiddening for rice, following the introduction of paddy farming. As such, the importance and correspondingly the stakes invested in swiddening drop, such that many villagers have a choice to stop or to limit their swiddening activities. Fieldwork reveals that practicality and convenience are the main deciding factors as to how much swidden the villagers do, as opposed to religious rationalisation which might be expected given that hill rice is a sacred entity. A middle-aged farmer from Village B, for instance, owns fiveplots of swidden land but did not do swidden farming for the past three years as the land was too far away. He resumed again this year as the plot of land happened to be near the village according to the swidden rotation. In addition to the long distance, other villagers cite the difficulty of farming in the hills and the lack of labour as reasons for stopping or decreasing swidden. These factors coupled with the fact that they now have an easier alternative make swiddening a burden that they are no longer forced to carry.

Economic Rationalisation

Regardless of the sanctity or secularity of farming, transition to the commercial economy has resulted in one major change – the Khmu are no longer farming for food alone but also for money. As a result, agriculture is linked to commercial value such that the Khmu now rationalise economically when it comes to farming. This is exemplified by a young farmer in Village C who does not do any swidden farming as according to him, paddy fields have more value for time as opposed to swidden land – a reasoning based on efficiency. Because of the low value that swidden plots yield, many of the younger generation prefer to earn wages as opposed to swidden farms, especially in the poorer households. An 80 year old farmer from Village B who farms on his swidden land alone complained of its many difficulties during an interview. When asked why his grandchildren are doing wage labour instead of helping him farm, he replies 'Money is more important in the end, rice is just for consumption and is not enough to buy other things'. A Khmu teenager in Village A also expresses views that the main purpose of paddy rice is to be sold, such that the money can be used for other commodities. These responses show that acquiring money is seen as an important goal of farming, although consumption remains an important factor. The Khmu are thus basing choices in agriculture on the monetary value of farming as opposed to purely on consumption needs. Economic rationalisation is an important change of mindset that is taking place along with secularisation, both of which are partly replacing the idea of sacredness.

Mindset changes are not necessarily confined to specific domains of a society, and the Khmu are now mobilising economic rationalisations in other aspects as well. Such rationalisation is also applied to religious beliefs, as manifested in the conduct of rituals. Ritual sacrifices are commonplace in Khmu society when a villager falls sick. Sickness is reasoned as a result of offending the spirits, and animals are sacrificed to seek forgiveness from them. However, while rituals in the past involved sacrifices of animals of all sizes, depending on the nature and severity of sickness, present day Khmu sacrifice only smaller animals like chickens and pigs, which have lesser economic value. This is partly due to the discourses of government campaigns to discourage sacrifices. As one Khmu farmer describes the government's advice, 'Even if you kill a cow, the sick don't recover. Instead of wasting the cow, you can sell the animal and use the money elsewhere'. Information obtained from a few interviewees shows a decline in sacrifices, especially of cows or buffalos, indicating that villagers are accepting the economic rationalisation presented by the state. One villager from Village C said that when he was younger they used to kill ten to fifteen buffalos a year, but now for the past five years there have hardly been any sacrifices. In the event that cows need to be sacrificed, villagers buy one to two kilograms of beef from the market, as opposed to sacrificing cows from their own herds.

A second instance of such rationalisation is seen in soul-calling rituals. The Khmu believe that when a person falls sick, they can be cured by 'calling their soul' back. In these rituals, it is now commonplace to tie Laotian currency to sacred threads, which are then tied around the hands of the sick person by family and friends. The addition of currency to what was previously a plain thread is a gesture to help the sick one's family financially, to cope with expenses that they may incur. Illness is no longer an issue of only bodily ailment but also carries with it an aspect of monetary cost.

In perhaps what can be seen as an extension of this religious economic rationalisation, Khmu in Thailand negotiate with the spirits using Thai currency. When a villager is ill, the shaman of Village D will go to the forest to pick out herbs to treat the patient. In this process, he leaves 25 baht in the forest for the forest spirit as an exchange for the herbs. Such financial transactions with the spirits are evidence that economic rationalisation is not mutually exclusive from religion, but rather is applicable even to negotiations with the spirits.

While the scope of this research is not broad enough to understand the worldview of the Khmu completely, it does provide insight into the interaction between the traditional and the modern that is shaping this worldview. The application of economic rationalisation to religious beliefs and evolving notions of sanctity and secularity within agriculture reveal an amalgamation of religion and modern rationalisation. Not only do the two co-exist in the same society, but also they combine in many instances, such that modern thoughts are applied onto religious beliefs and vice-versa. Examples of this include the economic rationalisation of religious rituals and the spirit worship of a cash crop.

However, such amalgamations do not mean that there are no contradictions between religion and modernity. Rather, they illustrate how these contradictions are negotiated. In the case of the Khmu, this is done by adaptations which combine religion and modernity to maximise benefits. For instance, the economic rationalisation of religious rituals allows one to save money, and interestingly spirit-belief allows it as the Khmu believe the spirits would not be offended by receiving a smaller animal in sacrifice. (Such religious notions are also observed in secularisation, whereby the corresponding lack of spirit worship does not offend the spirits; prayer is deemed necessary only when you need the spirits' help). On the other end of the spectrum, sanctity of corn provides a religious outlet to manage risk, and spirits are believed to help the corn regardless of the fact that it is a non-traditional cash crop. Such maximising adaptations are therefore facilitated by religious conceptions that do not consider spirits as being opposite to modernity, but instead allow the two to combine.

It should be noted that adaptations are variable between households, as each has its own variation of a more or less shared belief system. For example, a unique adaptation was exhibited by a farmer-cum-businessman in Village C, who serves as the middle-man between Chinese investors and farmers in the village. While presumably well integrated into the market economy, which requires economic rationalisation, he was the only one amongst all interviewees who performed spiritual rituals for his paddy fields. In his words, 'I am afraid that my paddy rice will not grow well if I fail to 'hep-pi'. Thus, he uses religion as a way to ensure success in his economic endeavour. Adaptations may therefore occur in different ways but the combination of modern and 'Khmu' elements to benefit oneself is the common ideology that strings them together.

Conclusion: State-Minority Relations as Strategic Engagement to Maximise Benefits

The development of distance-demolishing technologies (roads in the case of the Khmu) has made it impossible for highland minorities to remain untouched by the state and the corresponding modernisation that is brought along with it (Scott 2009, 11). This paper investigated how lines between the sacred and the secular are drawn and redrawn in agriculture in relation to changes driven by the state. In contrast to the past, when every aspect of the society was sacred, there is now a significant extent of secularisation in agriculture amongst the Khmu of Northern Laos. Further, religious rituals and their corresponding 'sanctity', which were traditionally used in high risk scenarios as a way of dealing with uncertainty, continue to be applied under certain circumstances in commercial agriculture as well. Economic rationalisation has also been adapted into the society, which was previously rationalized in religious terms. Modern elements have influenced and at the same time have been influenced by religious beliefs, which can be understood as a way of negotiating the contradictions between the two.

What do these developments tell us about state-minority relations? The amalgamation of the modern and traditional, and the way such amalgamations are carried out in ways that are adaptive for the Khmu individual and society, reflect a strategic agency displayed by the Khmu in their negotiations with the state,

partly echoing Scott's argument (2009). In this strategic agency, however, they are also embracing the state's intervention on some level, as seen from their acceptance of commercial agriculture, the inclusion of economic rationalisation in religious practices and their voluntary rejection of swiddening due to its tedious nature whenever possible, in conjunction with the land reforms led by the state. In the context of the Khmu then, minorities seem to be strategising actively to reap the most benefits that they can from the state, as observed by La-orngplew (2010), and falling outside the freedom-oppression dichotomy, as Jonsson (2012) suggests.

Going beyond transactions between the state and the Khmu society, however, such modernisation and the Khmu's response to it is shaping the very identity of this minority group, especially in this particular domain of religion which underpins its people's worldview. As one villager puts it 'we Khmu are not the same, we live our lives according to change.' Change may therefore be part of the Khmu identity, or rather one that is actively being adopted by them in the face of inevitable modernisation.

Photo Credit: Anjana Ramkumar

Figure 3: A Khmu family traveling to their paddy field on newly constructed roads.

ACKNOWLDEGEMENTS

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"Protect and Serve Each Other": Contentious Politics and Collective Action in a Police Accountability Organization

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ABSTRACT

This rticle examines the tactics employed by the Peaceful Streets Project (PSP), a police accountability organization in Austin, Texas. Specifically, it explores the activists' reasons for addressing police accountability and why the majority of the members are men. Drawing on analysis of in-depth interviews, participant observation, and organizational materials, the findings suggest that collective action and contentious politics play roles in the activists' decisions to address police accountability and their measures for doing so. This study adds to the social movement literature by examining how collective action and contentious politics aid in the tactics for addressing police accountability and the racialized, classed, and gendered dynamics of member participation.

Introduction

On a chilly night in Austin, Texas, I walk up and down Sixth Street, a popular bar district in downtown Austin, Texas with two white men who are equipped with video cameras and walkie-talkies. We hear sirens and see a police car pull over a driver. We run toward the direction of the police car and I watch as the two men pull out their video cameras and begin filming the police encounter (fieldnotes, October 5, 2013).

This scene is part of a larger set of events organized and tactics employed by members of a police accountability group called the Peaceful Streets Project (PSP) in Austin, Texas. This group is a direct action grassroots organization that uses various tactics including cop watching and protests to address police accountability and inform the community of instances of police misconduct. The purpose of this research is to examine why PSP activists address police accountability and why they choose the tactics they use. In addition, I explore why this group, the majority of whom are white, middle class men themselves risk arrest and police abuse to focus on a social issue that typically affects people of color and people from lower socioeconomic statuses.

Literature Review

This paper draws on two bodies of literature including high-risk collective action and contentious politics (McAdam 1986; McAdam, Tarrow, Tilly 1996; Tarrow 1994; Tilly and Tarrow 2007) and police misconduct (Feagin 1991; Goffman 2009; Huey 2006; Stuart 2011; Weitzer and Tuch 2005, 2006). Taken together, collective action, contentious politics and police misconduct literature help to lay the empirical and theoretical groundwork for examining activists in a police accountability organization.

High-Risk Collective Action and Contentious Politics

The concept of collective action has been widely researched in the social sciences, particularly in studies of social movements, generating various theories and definitions (Beckwith 2000; Ellemers and Baretto 2009; Jasper 2004; Klandersman 2002; Leenders 2012; Loveman 1998; Lyer and Ryan 2009; Oliver 1984; Russell 2011; Snow, Cress, and Jones, 1998; Tarrow 1994; Tilly and Tarrow 2007). Literature on collective action typically focuses on the importance of identity, resource mobilization, and social ties in understanding the emergence and timing of collective efforts (Beckwith 2000; Ellemers and Baretto 2009; Jasper 2004; Klandersman 2002; Leenders 2012; Loveman 1998; Snow, Cress, and Jones, 1998; Tarrow 1994; Tilly and Tarrow 2007).

I rely on the definition by Tilly and Tarrow (2007, 5), who describe collective action as "coordinating efforts on behalf of shared interests or programs." Sidney Tarrow (1994) and Charles Tilly (2007) are frequently cited for their exhaustive explanations of the various episodic, social, and spatial conditions under which collective action emerges. Their definitions and examples of collective action revolve around the notion that collective action 1) takes many forms, and claim-making by actors can become contentious, 2) social actors join forces in contentious confrontations, 3) political opportunities draw social actors into collective action through forms of contention, and 4) common interests, or solidarity among social actors, can be a defining feature for the emergence of collective action. For instance, solidarity, especially in regards to ethnicity and nationalism, are important factors in mobilizing instances of collective action (Tarrow 1994; Tilly and Tarrow 2007).

Contentious politics plays an important role in defining collective action and understanding the conditions under which collective action occurs (McAdam, Tarrow, Tilly 1996; Tarrow 1994; Tilly and Tarrow 2007;) Contentious politics refers to "interactions in which actors make claims bearing on someone else's interests, leading to coordinated efforts on behalf of shared interests or programs, in which governments are involved as targets, initiators of claims, or third parties" (Tilly and Tarrow 2007, 4). Scholars of contentious politics argue that political contention depends upon mobilization and collective interaction among group members and that political contention is at the center of a series of collective, political, and contentious interactions (McAdam, Tarrow, Tilly 1996; Tarrow 1994; Tilly and Tarrow 2007).

A defining characteristic of contentious politics is the desire to disrupt a government institution or practice (McAdam, Tarrow, Tilly 1996; Tarrow 1994; Tilly and Tarrow 2007; Walgrave 2011; Vasi 2011). Studies of contentious politics typically feature comparative and historical sociological research on the use of strikes, protests, rallies, and revolutions as specific tactics used by social actors to disrupt and make claims against the state. According to these studies, the contentious collective action utilized by social actors is often high-risk (McAdam, Tarrow, Tilly 1996; Tarrow 1994; Tilly and Tarrow 2007).

The concept of high-risk collective action, or activism, illustrates the various dynamics that are part of the mobilization of social actors into a high-risk movement or episode of collective action. The work of Doug McAdam (1986) is a foundational and frequently cited piece of scholarship that shows the processes that play into recruiting activists into high-risk contexts. McAdam (1986) analyzes the concept of high-risk or high-cost activism and suggests that it is important to distinguish the recruitment process between high and low-risk or -cost activism. He defines high-risk activism as "the anticipated dangers…of engaging in a particular activity" (67).

McAdam's (1986) study on the process of recruitment into activism for the Freedom Summer campaign of 1964, which was aimed at registering black voters in Mississippi who had been historically prevented from voting, finds that participants in the movement were more likely than people who withdrew from the movement to be involved with political organizations and have strong social ties to other participants. Additional scholarship on high-risk collective action also finds that social networks, face-to-face interaction, sociopolitical timing and space, and affiliation with political parties are important to collective action participation in high-risk contexts (Loveman 1998).

Shared beliefs and identity are important in understanding activist participation in collective efforts. Studies show that gender and race are salient factors in determining who participates in high-risk activism, and in what contexts (Gordon 2008; Irons 1998; Robnett 1996). Irons' (1998) study on black and white women activists during the civil rights movement shows that black women and white women participated in activism in different ways, and that black women's participation was more high-risk. Moreover, black women participated in the movement because of personal experiences with oppression. In contrast, white women participated out of sympathy and were involved in low-risk activism (Irons 1998). Additionally, scholars assert that women activists are often involved in organizing activism rather than being leaders, and men are more likely to participate in high-risk activism. In other words, there is often gender exclusion and sexism in high-risk activist contexts (Gordon 2008; Irons 1998; Robnett 1996).

Research on collective action and activism has also highlighted the importance of group solidarity in creating collective action (Jasper 2004; Leenders 2012; Tarrow 1994), and recent studies illustrate the dynamics of collective action and group membership. Specifically, researchers have begun to look at why privileged groups participate in collective action on behalf of marginalized groups that does not benefit them. Studies suggest that they often do so out of sympathy (Russell 2011).

While there is a substantial amount of scholarship on high-risk collective action and contentious politics, it does not frame high-risk activism as a form of contentious collective action aimed at the state and does not address why privileged social actors are involved in a form of high-risk collective action that does not necessarily benefit them (McAdam 1986; McAdam, Tarrow, Tilly 1996; Tarrow 1994; Tilly and Tarrow 2007). This article fills this gap by drawing on high-risk contentious collective action (McAdam 1986; McAdam, Tarrow, Tilly 1996; Tarrow 1994; Tilly and Tarrow 2007) to explore how privileged activists in a police accountability organization use high-risk, contentious collective action to try to disrupt the state, specifically the Austin Police Department, and to understand the dynamics and reasoning behind their participation and tactics.

Police Misconduct and Accountability

In addition to high-risk collective action and contentious politics, I rely on the literature on police misconduct and accountability. There has been a large amount of research on the racialized and classed dimensions of police misconduct (Dottolo and Stewart 2008; Elicker 2008; Feagin 1991; Goffman 2009; Howerton 2006; King, Messner, and Baller 2009; Mbuba 2010; Nier et al. 2012; Romero 2006; Sadler et al. 2012; Weitzer and Tuch 2005, 2006). Many studies have illustrated the prevalence of police misconduct among people of color and people from lower socioeconomic statuses (Dottolo and Stewart 2008; Feigin 1991; Goffman 2009), as or are more likely than white people to hold negative perceptions of the police (Dottolo and Stewart 2008; Feagin 1991; Goffman 2009; Mbuba 2010; Sadler et al. 2012; Weitzer and Tuch 2005, 2006). Research has shown that police officers typically harass, abuse, and arrest people of color more than white people because of racial stereotypes that equate people of color with criminality (Alexander 2011; Feagin 1991; Goffman 2009; Sadler et al. 2012). In addition to police abuse, the police are more likely to treat white victims of crime with respect and put more effort into solving their cases than those of black victims of crime

(Howerton 2006; King, Messner, and Baller 2009).

People of color, especially black men and Latinos, are more likely to be targets of racial profiling and police abuse (Alexander 2011; Feagin 1991; Goffman 2009; Sadler et al. 2012). Alice Goffman's (2009) ethnographic study of a poor, urban area in Philadelphia finds that black men avoid the police in their everyday lives because of the risk of arrest and abuse. Goffman suggests that police officers create fear in the community, which causes lower class black men to avoid not only the police, but also dangerous places and interactions because of fear of arrest and police misconduct. Feagin's (1991) study on race and public discrimination also highlights fear of the police because black men, including middle class black men, are often perceived by the police and the public to be criminals. Feagin finds that black men attempt to use their middle class resources to avoid police mistreatment, or try to avoid the police altogether.

Because of the prevalence of police abuse, there have been recent instances of police accountability organizations addressing issues of police misconduct. There are two pieces of empirical research known to the author that focus on police accountability organizations (Huey 2006; Stuart 2011). These studies explore citizens who address police accountability and the tactics they employ (Huey 2006; Stuart 2011). Their findings suggest that counter-surveillance is being used by activists as a way to address police accountability and provide evidence of police misconduct. Recent advances in technology such as camera phones and the internet give citizens a modern resource to hold the police accountable (Huey 2006; Stuart 2011).

While there are a few studies on police accountability activism, they only address "cop watching" as a tactic (Huey 2006; Stuart 2011) and do not use a collective action or contentious politics framework to analyze the organizations and the nuanced ways in which membership participation is racialized, gendered,

and classed. This article fills the gap by examining the various tactics a police accountability organization uses as well as the racialized, classed, and gendered aspects of member participation.

Organizational History

The Peaceful Streets Project began on New Year's Eve 2012. Antonio Beuhler, a local activist, was a designated driver for his friends and pulled into a gas station in downtown Austin. At the gas station, Antonio saw that the police pulled a woman over for a sobriety test. According to Antonio and eyewitnesses, the police were physically harming the woman, so Antonio pulled out his phone and began filming the incident. A police officer noticed what Antonio was doing and began questioning why he was filming, which led to his arrest. The local media covered the story extensively, leading people to approach Antonio and tell him their own stories of police abuse (Peaceful Streets Project 2015).

Antonio teamed up with local activists to help start the Peaceful Streets Project and they worked to develop the first Police Accountability Summit. This is an annual conference where police accountability activists from around the country speak about police abuse and rights. Today, PSP holds "know your rights" trainings for the citizens of Austin, protests aimed at the Austin police department, and cop watches where activists film police encounters throughout Austin (Peaceful Streets Project 2015).

Methods

My analysis of PSP involves using data collected from participant observation, in-depth interviews, and an analysis of the organization's documents such as the group's website, Facebook page, and YouTube videos posted by PSP members. Between August and November 2013, I conducted over 20 hours of participant observation. I attended various events held by the group including their annual Police Accountability Summit, two community organizing meetings, protests aimed at the Austin Police Department and Leander Police Department, a "mail to jail party" in which letters

were written to political prisoners, and two cop watches (see Table 1 for the specific events, dates, and times of my observations). During these events, I acted as an observer and as a participant. I participated in the meetings, cop watches, and protests. While participating in these events, I took notes in a notebook on the surroundings, conversations, and interactions that took place. Once I returned home, I typed and elaborated on my notes. My typed field notes include an analysis that I wrote after each event and reflections on my own experiences in the field, including ways my own positionality may have shaped various encounters. My positionality as white and middle class allowed me to build rapport with members of PSP because we have similar backgrounds. In addition, my positionality as a woman permitted some of the men in the organization to take me under their wing and educate me on what they perceived to be my lack of knowledge of the government and my overall rights as a citizen. My similar background with the participants, as well as their attempts to educate me, shed light on their views of the government as well as the gendered and racialized dynamics of the organization. In other words, our similar racial and class backgrounds allowed the members to be more comfortable expressing their opinions with me and their willingness to educate me helped give me a better understanding of their political beliefs.

In addition to participant observation, I conducted seven in-depth, semi-structured interviews with current and former members of the organization. Before each interview was conducted, I informed interviewees that their participation was completely voluntary and that questions could be skipped and the interview stopped at any time. Six respondents chose to use their real names and one chose to use a pseudonym. Three interviews were face-to-face, three were over the phone, and one was over Skype. The face-to-face interviews were conducted in agreed-upon public locations. I interviewed people who I met while in the field to create a sample of participants who are active with the organization. I also interviewed one person who is no longer active

in the group to gain an additional perspective of the organization's dynamics. The interview questions focused on the participants' knowledge of the history of PSP, the tactics PSP utilizes, their reasons for addressing police accountability, and the demographics of the organization (see Appendix for a list of interview questions).

Six respondents are men and one is a woman. Five of the respondents are white, one identifies as racially mixed, and one as white Latino. The respondents range in age from 27 to 62 with a median age of 37. In terms of political orientation, two of the respondents identify as libertarian, one as a conservative republican, one as a voluntaryist, one as a communist, one as non-partisan, and one as an advocate for direct democracy. In addition, four respondents identify as middle class, one as working class, one as a worker, and one as lower class (See Table 2 for a list of demographic characteristics of the respondents). Interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed by the author.

My final method of analysis was examining organizational materials including PSP's website, Facebook page, and YouTube videos filmed by PSP members. My analysis of organizational materials allowed me to have a better understanding of PSP's history as well as how they may be perceived by the public. Specifically, my analysis of YouTube videos shed light on PSP's tactics because the majority of their YouTube videos consist of their filming of police encounters.

Findings

High-Risk Collective Action and Contentious Politics

The Peaceful Streets Project (PSP) is comprised of members who predominantly identify with conservative political beliefs, which contributes to the development of contentious collective action by establishing solidarity, common interests, and similar goals among group members (McAdam, Tarrow, Tilly 1996; Tarrow 1994; Tilly and Tarrow 2007; Walgrave 2011). In fact, four out of seven respondents identify with conservative political beliefs

(interviews with Jack, Antonio, Richard, and Catherine). The conservative political beliefs are illustrated at various events held by PSP and through PSP's organizational materials. For example, during a community organizing meeting, PSP activists discussed their distrust of the government for holding police accountable and state that PSP seeks to work outside of the current political system. The members also discussed the group's goal of creating a shift in which "communities protect and serve each other" by purchasing police rovers and patrolling marginalized neighborhoods. A PSP member claimed that they would let the police know that the police would no longer be welcome in these neighborhoods. Another PSP member responded by stating he thinks the group should look into raising money to "hire private security companies to protect communities" (fieldnotes, September 12, 2013).

The mission of the organization, which is to provide a cultural shift whereby "communities protect and serve each other" and do not rely on the police for protection, is also voiced on the group's website and in all seven interviews. This notion of not relying on the police for protection acts as a form of political contention in which members of PSP make claims against the government and try to disrupt its activities (McAdam, Tarrow, Tilly 1996; Tarrow 1994; Tilly and Tarrow 2007). While not all conservative individuals are against the government, the participants in PSP make claims and hold practices against the state that highlight their distrust of the government and their conservative political leanings. For instance, Brave New Books, an underground bookstore in Austin is a partner of PSP and holds many PSP events. The Southern Poverty Law Center labeled the bookstore as an active "Patriot group" in 2012 and characterizes Patriot groups as groups that advocate for antigovernment doctrines (Southern Poverty Law Center 2013). Brave New Books' conservative leaning and antigovernment ideologies can be seen in the items sold at the store. I went to the bookstore for a PSP event and arrived early so I could have the opportunity to examine what items the bookstore

sold. The majority of items sold at Brave New Books were books, T-Shirts, and bumper stickers that voiced anti-government, pro-capitalism, pro-anarchy, and anti-liberal sentiments. Moreover, the bookstore sold many PSP items about counter-surveillance and the importance of filming police activity (fieldnotes, September 12, 2013).

The items sold at Brave New Books do align with conservative ideologies, especially in regards to the books and bumper stickers that are anti-government and anti-liberal. In addition, Brave New Books serves as the headquarters for the Texas Libertarian Party (fieldnotes, September 12, 2013). The bookstore sells PSP items and endorses and holds their events, which creates a space for contentious collective
action and solidarity among PSP members who may hold certain conservative beliefs (McAdam, Tarrow, Tilly 1996; Tarrow 1994; Tilly and Tarrow 2007). These shared political beliefs are important in creating collective action, as demonstrated by research into how political parties influence the mobilization of collective behavior (McAdam, Tarrow, Tilly 1996; Tarrow 1994; Tilly and Tarrow 2007).

In addition, Joshua, a former active member of PSP and a white man who identifies as a communist and as a worker, elaborated on the role of political orientation in PSP by stating in interview that "the typical Peaceful Streets activist is either libertarian or anarcho-capitalist and anti-state control. In that, comes spite for the police because they try to enact that [state control]." Joshua's response suggests that some PSP members are anti-state, which informs their contentious claims aimed at the police (McAdam, Tarrow, Tilly 1996; Tarrow 1994; Tilly and Tarrow 2007). According to McAdam, Tilly, and Tarrow, these shared political beliefs are important in creating collective action because political parties influence the mobilization of collective behavior by organizing on behalf of shared beliefs and interests (McAdam, Tarrow, Tilly 1996; Tarrow 1994; Tilly and Tarrow 2007). PSP's

contentious collective action then informs the tactics the activists employ, as well as the high-risk facets of their activism. Joshua also identifies the libertarian and anarcho-capitalist affiliations among the group that are seen in the items sold at Brave New Books, which reaffirms the group's shared interests.

I have argued that the conservative political orientations and ideologies of some PSP activists help to establish their contentious collective action and reasons for addressing police accountability. In other words, some PSP activists hold anti government views, which is their reason for addressing police accountability and creating contentious political claims (McAdam, Tarrow, Tilly 1996; Tarrow 1994; Tilly and Tarrow 2007). I will now discuss how PSP's contentious collective action informs the tactics the activists employ, as well as the high-risk aspects of their tactics.

I use McAdam's (1986, 67) distinction between low and high-risk activism where risk refers to "as the anticipated dangers…of participating in a particular activity." McAdam explains that some forms and contexts of activism have more dangerous risks than others. For example, signing a petition might not have any risks, while participating in a campaign such as Freedom Summer might have risks involved that include legal trouble or even death (McAdam 1986). The main tactic that PSP uses is cop watching, which consists of PSP members going to areas of Austin where police abuse is prevalent and filming the police as they interact with citizens. Cop watching is a tactic that is employed by other police accountability activist groups (Huey 2006; Stuart 2011). I argue that cop watching is a high-risk tactic because PSP members are often arrested while filming and some members try to disrupt police encounters and act aggressively toward the police, which increases the likelihood of arrest. In this context, being arrested is a potential danger associated with participation in PSP (McAdam 1986).

While cop watching is high-risk, all seven respondents state that their collective action of filming the police is the most useful tactic for holding the police accountable and protecting other citizens. For instance, when asked about the effectiveness of cop watching, Richard, a white, middle-class man states,

"I've seen a very visible change in police behavior on Sixth Street since we've started this…If you've ever been on Sixth Street about 2:30 a.m. after the bars are closed, they clear the street with horses and they will run you over. They will hurt you. I've seen them less often running people over…I'm seeing the police use a little bit of restraint."

Richard believes that PSP's counter-surveillance of the police has indeed changed the behavior of police officers. All seven respondents assert that police behavior has especially changed on Sixth Street. Their argument that police behavior has changed suggests that members of PSP believe that their filming and disruption of police encounters protects citizens of Austin who would normally experience police misconduct. PSP's filming the police mirrors the findings of previous research on cop watch organizations where group members believe that counter-surveillance is the most effective way to hold police officers accountable and to provide the public with evidence if police misconduct occurs, which then protects citizens (Huey 2006; Stuart 2011).

Another police accountability tactic that PSP uses is protests against the Austin Police Department. Protests are typically aimed at what PSP refers to as "corrupt cops of the month" (Peaceful Streets Project 2015). However, the two protests I attended were aimed at the Austin Police Department and the Leander, Texas Police Department for the shooting and killing of two citizens' dogs (fieldnotes, September 21, 2013 and November 9, 2013). The shooting and killing of dogs is an issue that has been addressed at the protest and at PSP's annual police accountability summit (fieldnotes, August 17, 2013). The protest allowed me

not only to gain insight into an additional reason for holding the police accountable, but also to have a conversation with Julian, a male white Latino PSP member about the risks associated with PSP activism. He told me, "they [the police] can arrest you for anything if you don't know your rights. That's why you have to film them. They could arrest us right now if they wanted to because they could say that we are illegally protesting or that we are doing something wrong" (fieldnotes, September 21, 2013). Julian's argument suggests that cop watching is not the only form of high-risk activism in which PSP members participate; protests also become a site for risk. Indeed, protests are cited in the literature as a common example of a form of contentious collective action (Tarrow 1994; Tilly and Tarrow 2007).

All seven respondents state that the group typically cop watches in east Austin and on Sixth Street, because these areas are where police activity and abuse are high due to the demographic characteristics of people who live and socialize there (Dottolo and Stewart 2008; Feagin 1991; Goffman 2009; Mbuba 2010; Sadler et al. 2012; Weitzer and Tuch 2005, 2006). Jack, a middle-class white man who identifies as a conservative Republican elaborated in interview:

"Well there's a lot [police abuse] on Sixth Street. Or there used to be a lot on Sixth Street. There's a lot in east Austin I would say. Well I'd say it's because more people are out on the streets and out late at night in that area. That's one reason at least. Another reason might be that they [the police] can get away with it."

I asked Jack why he thinks the police can "get away" with misconduct on Sixth Street and in East Austin. He replied, "Those people don't have enough political power to prevent it." Jack's statement implies that people of color and people from lower socioeconomic statuses do not have enough political power to address or prevent police abuse. While studies have shown that

people of color and people from lower socioeconomic statuses are targeted by the police (Dottolo and Stewart 2008; Feagin 1991; Goffman 2009; Mbuba 2010; Sadler et al. 2012; Weitzer and Tuch 2005, 2006), suggesting that certain communities do not have enough political power to address police accountability shows the privilege in the ideologies associated with PSP members. That is, PSP members are participating in a form of collective action where their privilege allows them to act collectively on the behalf of groups that they do not think have enough power (Russell 2011).

High-risk collective action is often racialized and gendered (Gordon 2008; Irons 1998; Robnett 1996) and the police do systemically abuse people of color and people from lower socioeconomic statuses (Dottolo and Stewart 2008; Feagin 1991; Goffman 2009; Mbuba 2010; Sadler et al. 2012; Weitzer and Tuch 2005, 2006). However, the assumption that certain communities do not have power is problematic because there are other factors that play into activist participation (Gordon 2008; Irons 1998; Loveman 1998; McAdam 1986; Robnett 1996). In the next section, I address the factors that go into activist participation with PSP and how PSP's high-risk collective action creates a context for racialized, gendered, and classed participation.

Racialized, Classed, and Gendered Police Accountability Activism Participation

The use of high-risk collective action and contentious politics to address police accountability allows for membership participation in PSP to be racialized, classed, and gendered. Numerous studies show that people of color are more likely than white people to be systemically abused by the police and that black men are far more likely than white men to be incarcerated (Alexander 2011; Feagin 1991; Goffman 2009; Sadler et al. 2012). In addition, research on high-risk activism discusses the factors that play into gender exclusion in activist work (Gordon 2008; Irons 1998; Robnett 1996).

During interviews and community meetings, PSP activists explain the problems associated with racial profiling and police misconduct and recognize that people of color and people from lower socioeconomic statuses are more likely than white people and middle-class people to be abused by the police (fieldnotes, September 12, 2013). In fact, all seven respondents state that people of color and people from lower socioeconomic statuses are more likely to be victims of police abuse. So why are the members of PSP white, middle class woman, why PSP members are predominately white, middle-class men during her interview she stated, "Well, because they care. I think that a lot of people of lower socioeconomic statuses and people of color do believe that it's just the way it is and learn to tolerate it within their communities."

Catherine's response resonates with previous research on privileged group members participating in collective action on behalf of marginalized groups out of sympathy (Russell 2011). I argue that her response is also problematic because she suggests that people of color and people from lower socioeconomic statuses are monolithic groups that do not recognize their oppression. Research suggests that people of color and people from lower socioeconomic statuses do recognize the injustices committed by the police toward communities of color and lower social classes, but there might be other factors that play into the lack of activist participation (Mbuba 2010; Weitzer and Tuch 2005, 2006).

For instance, during the annual police accountability summit, a panel discussed the prevalence of police shooting and killing dogs. Julian, a white Latino man (and also one of the activists I later interviewed), was one of the members of the panel and told his story:

"Another victim of dog shootings was Julian, a Latino man whose dog was shot three times because the police thought his dog was aggressive. He tried to work with the police department and went to the media, but nothing was done and he was

given no answers as to why his dog was shot…After the speakers shared their stories, the audience asked questions…The last question an audience member asked was directed to the first speaker, a white woman, on dog shootings. A man in the audience asked her if the reason the police helped her and not Julian had anything to do with her skin color. She agreed and said that the police were probably more willing to work with her because she was white."

During the panel and at a protest I attended with with Julian, he told me and other members about how the police and the media are not helping him with his case because he is classified as a person of color (fieldnotes, August 17, 2013 and September 21, 2013). It is not that Julian does not recognize the injustices committed by the police toward communities of color like Catherine previously asserted. He does recognize his mistreatment by the police, but the police often stereotype people of color as criminals and are more likely to help white victims of crime, which makes it harder for him to get justice from law enforcement (Howerton 2006; King, Messner, and Baller 2009).

In addition to one member of PSP arguing that PSP's lack of diversity is because some communities do not recognize their oppression, another member suggests that people of color have given up on police accountability. When I interviewed Antonio, the founder of PSP and a racially mixed, middle-class man who identifies as libertarian, I asked him why PSP lacks diversity. He explained:

"I think that minorities, in general, have given up on police accountability… I personally believe it can be different because we are engaging the specific demographic that you pointed out because quite frankly the establishment doesn't care what poor black people think or poor Hispanic people think. But they do tend to care about what middle-income white people think, so I think that's powerful."

While the establishment might value the opinions of white, middle-class people more than people of color and lower socioeconomic statuses, other factors play into the lack of diversity among PSP members. For instance, previous literature has shown that police officers are more likely to target and shoot black and Latino people than they are white people and that black men are fearful of the police because of racial profiling and try to avoid police encounters.

Given the empirical evidence, it is understandable that people of color would not engage in high-risk activism such as filming the police with PSP because many members are arrested while filming. For instance, Alice Goffman (2009) found in her ethnographic study of an urban area in Philadelphia that black men avoid the police in their everyday lives because of the risk of arrest and abuse. Specifically, police officers create what Goffman (2009, 353) refers to as a "climate of fear and suspicion" in the community. That is, lower-class black men are afraid of the police because of the risk of arrest and avoid not only the police, but also dangerous places and interactions.

Feagin's (1991) research on race and public discrimination also highlights the fear of the police because the police and the public often equate black men with criminality. To avoid the dangerous implications of being viewed as criminals, black men use their middle-class resources to avoid police mistreatment, or try to avoid the police altogether (Feagin 1991). These two studies highlight the potential consequences of people of color filming the police. Because PSP members are often arrested, people of color who film the police could be put at a higher risk for arrest, which would continue to perpetuate the perceived criminality of people of color and higher incarceration rates among people of color, especially black men (Alexander 2011, Feagin 1991; Goffman 2009). Additionally, a PSP member posted a video of an Austin Police Association member publicly threatening PSP members with violence. So not only would people of color be put at a higher

risk for arrest, they could also even be victims of violence since research shows that police officers use unnecessary force and often shoot and kill people of color at higher rates (Sadler et al. 2012).

In addition to participation in PSP being racialized and classed, it is also gendered. No women attended the two cop watches I observed and there were very few women at the two protests, which are PSP's riskier tactics. In fact, the only occasions when women were actively participating in PSP events were during the summit, community meetings, and the mail to jail event. Catherine, a middle-class white woman, addressed the absence of women from some PSP tactics by explaining in interview that cop watching is a male-dominated tactic and many women left PSP because they were offended by Antonio's use of language: "When Antonio is calling cops pigs and cowards, it does turn off the female population… I'm working with the women who are offended by the Peaceful Streets and we're going to put on an anti-oppression training at Brave New Books." Joshua also elaborated on the gender dynamics in PSP by stating during interview that "there were some internal conflicts and accusations of sexism committed by Antonio from some of the female members." Both Catherine and Joshua explain that sexism and gender exclusion in PSP impacts activist participation. That is, some women experienced sexism behind the scenes of PSP and no longer wanted to participate with the group.

Research on gender in high-risk activist contexts has shown that women activists experience sexism and are often not in leadership roles. Instead, many women work behind the scenes and are less likely than men to participate in high-risk activism (Gordon 2008; Irons 1998; Robnett 1996). The empirical data on gender and activism thus mirror some of the gendered patterns in PSP such as women not participating in cop watches and working behind the scenes by helping with organizing instead of participating in direct action.

In sum, the high-risk contentious collective action in PSP allows for participation to be racialized, classed, and gendered. The high-risk context of the activism and the racialized, classed, and gendered assumptions impact group membership and the roles the members take. White, middle-class men are able to collectively act in riskier forms of activism, while women, people of color and people from lower socioeconomic classes may be excluded from participation or participate behind the scenes.

Discussion and Conclusion

Using participant observation, interviews, and organizational materials, this research analyzed the collective action, contentious politics, and racialized, gendered, and classed participation of a police accountability organization. My findings suggest that PSP uses high-risk collective action and contentious politics as a way to address police accountability. The group is associated with conservative ideologies, which contribute to their contentious politics. PSP's claims of contention against the Austin Police Department then inform their collective action, which utilizes high-risk tactics such as cop watching and protests in order to disrupt a form of government. In addition, my findings indicate that the white, male, middle-class characteristics of PSP members stem from the fact that people of color may be fearful of being involved with police accountability activism because of racial profiling and police abuse, which allows for white, middle-class PSP members to use their privilege to address police accountability.

My findings are in line with previous scholarship showing that solidarity and social ties are important in collective action (McAdam 1986; McAdam, Tarrow, Tilly 1996; Tarrow 1994; Tilly and Tarrow 2007). Similar political beliefs create social ties that help bring PSP members together to try to achieve a common goal of disrupting the police and not relying on the police for protection. This study also adds to the literature on high-risk collective action by expanding on what is characterized as high-risk, as well as on the racialized, classed, and gendered dimensions of

high-risk Collecective action. Drawing on ethnographic data, this article has added to the scant literature on police accountability organizations and activists by exploring the various experiences and tactics of police accountability activists and the ways race, class, and gender impact member participation. A limitation of this study is that I was only able to focus on one police account-ability group. Future research should attempt to examine multiple police accountability groups in order to have a better grasp on the experiences, goals, and tactics of police accountability activists. Another limitation is that I only focused on PSP members and not on members of the Austin community who might experience police abuse. Additional research should focus on communities of color and their attitudes toward police accountability activism, instead of police accountability activists' ideas and assumptions about people of color's involvement.

PSP is a complicated organization because its group dynamics are both conservative and progressive. These nuances are important because they shed light on understandings of po-lice accountability and police abuse. While many members of PSP express sincere empathy with communities that experience police misconduct, they are not necessarily in solidarity with these com-munities and often make troubling racialized assumptions. Mem-bers of PSP hope to see the organization grow and believe it is on the verge of becoming a social movement. New chapters of PSP and other police accountability organizations have recently been established throughout the country and the members of these new chapters are also predominately white, middle-class men. If PSP wants to continue to successfully mobilize as an organiza-tion, whether with high-risk or milder tactics, they will need to build coalitions with diverse groups in Austin and throughout the country to create a way for all communities to protect and serve each other.

TABLE 1: Participant Observation

Date	Time	Event	Duration
8/17/13	10:30am-12:30pm	Summit	2 hours
9/12/13	6:35pm-8:45pm	Meeting	2 hours, 10 minutes
9/21/13	12:00pm-2:00pm	Protest	2 hours
9/26/13	6:15pm-8:35pm	Mail to Jail	2 hours 20 minutes
10/5/13	10:00pm-12:40am	Cop Watch	2 hours, 40 minutes
11/9/13	12:00pm-2:00pm	Protest	2 hours
11/14/13	7:00pm-9:15pm	Meeting	2 hours, 15 minutes
11/15/13	10:00pm-3:00am	Cop Watch	5 hours

Total hours of participant observation = 20 hours, 15 minutes

TABLE 2: Interviewee Demographics

Respondent	Gender	Race Ethnicity	Age	Political Orientation	Social Class
Jack (Pseudonym)	Man	White	62	Conservative Republican	Working
Antonio	Man	Mixed	37	Libertarian	Middle
Richard	Man	White	52	Liberatarian	Middle
Catherine	Woman	White	29	Voluntaryist	Middle
Joshua	Man	White	27	Communist	Worker
Julian	Man	White Latino	45	Non-Partisan	Lower
Ben	Man	White	37	Direct Democracy	Middle

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How Welcoming Space is Created, Maintained, and Always Evolving in Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House

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ABSTRACT

This paper uses the theoretical approach of Dorothy Smith's institutional ethnography to analyze the creation, maintenance, and evolving space of Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House. There is a strong focus on how the entrance, users, staff, and funding of the Neighbourhood House affect the welcoming space of Frog Hollow, with theoretical analysis drawn from Les Back, S.R. Lauer, and Liisa Malkki. This paper concludes that while grant tensions influence the atmosphere of Frog Hollow, it is the users who fundamentally impact the creation, maintenance, and evolution of the overall welcoming space, which is essential to the very existence of the Neighbourhood House.

"What was your first impression of Frog Hollow when you entered the building?" I asked Jamie, a coordinator of Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House, during our interview. Without a moment's hesitation, Jamie said, "I loved it!" She described seeing a homeless man sitting in the lobby with all of his belongings next to him in a plastic bag. He was having a cup of coffee and she decided to sit down next to him while waiting for her interview. The homeless man told Jamie how much he loved Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House because he was always welcome to enter and have a free cup of coffee. Jamie went on to elaborate:

"I thought 'Wow! --I wanna work here.' It was so great. He just felt so comfortable... Nobody questioned the fact that he had his stuff there, nobody questioned the fact that he came in for the coffee and that's all he wanted. It was just, 'Okay well we have coffee, we have a place for you to sit,' um, and... and that has stayed with me, that sense of welcoming, that... That anybody coming to our front door should feel welcomed and safe in this place... And when he told me that, I thought, 'Wow I really wanna work here.' So, I was really glad I got the job."

Upon hearing this experience that Jamie had over twelve years ago, I began to question, what is it that makes Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House such an inviting environment? I acknowledge that Jamie's encounter with Frog Hollow is not a complete reflection of reality; rather, it involves reflexivity, whereby reality is constructed in dialogue with previous experiences and future expectations, otherwise known as textual implications (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw 1995, 245). In this sense, Jamie's recollection allows her to construct a reality whereby Frog Hollow endorses a warm atmosphere based on her previous and ongoing experiences at the Neighbourhood House. Her construction of this reality is then passed down to those with whom she exchanges this information, including me. At the same time, this kind of description of Frog Hollow's welcoming and warm atmosphere has been told to me many times over by other users of the Neighbourhood

House, which contributes to the constructed reality of Frog Hollow's impact on its users. Perhaps this is a collective narrative of Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House, whereby the experience is co-created through dialogue. Jamie's impression of Frog Hollowi s not isolated to that moment twelve years ago; rather, that welcoming quality seems to have evolved over time to match the feelings and needs of the current and new users (such as me) and staff members of the Neighbourhood House.

This phenomenon is what I will be exploring in my ethnographic paper. How does Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House create, maintain, and develop such a welcoming atmosphere for its users? In order to explore this phenomenon more deeply, I will be guiding the reader through the different processes Frog Hollow employs to develop a welcoming atmosphere -- as an institution and as a space for its collective group of users, staff and funders. I will begin with the entrance at Frog Hollow, then navigate towards the people who use the Neighbourhood House, the staff members, and the grants needed to fund the programs at Frog Hollow. Moreover, to stay true to the idea of welcoming, I aim to write this paper in a style and with a narrative that is accessible to not only scholars and academics, but also to general members of the public.

Dorothy Smith (2005) describes ethnography as "sociology for people" because it is a sociology that starts with our everyday lives and "explores social relations and organizations in which our everyday doings participate but which are not fully visible to us" (1). The process of discovery involves technical and conceptual research that may be outside of the "everyday language experience," but becomes a means of "expanding people's own knowledge rather than substituting the expert's knowledge for our own" (ibid). This intention is parallel with Frog Hollow's deliberate objective of welcoming members of the public, no matter what their background.

The Importance of Space in Neighbourhood Houses

The reason I chose to focus on space, more specifically, welcoming space, is because of its significance in the existence of Neighbourhood Houses, which are a kind of place-based community centre (like the settlement house movement in the USA). Sandercock (2009) reflects on the emergence of Neighbourhood Houses as a necessity, as a gathering place for "newcomers and oldtimers" (8). The idea of a Neighbourhood House is based on the idea of "creating a community based on common residency" (9). In other words, a local institution which is meant for everyone in the community, regardless of differences such as ethnicity. Sandercock (2009) describes the Neighbourhood House approach as different from traditional services because it not only meets a need, but it also provides a meeting place where "people can come together and connect through engaging in activities together" (9). Creating a space welcome to all is especially important in Metro Vancouver, where Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House is situated. Metro Vancouver is more multicultural than Miami, Los Angeles, or New York City, with about 51% of the population being foreign-born (Sandercock 2009, 7).

The needs of community members are numerous, and they can only be recognized, worked on, and fulfilled if the people concerned feel comfortable and welcome towards the Neighbourhood House (Sandercock, Attili, Cavers et al. 2009, 119). The programs and staff of Neighbourhood Houses are the first line of resources for those entering the Neighbourhood House. It is the duty of staff members to ensure that the community members feel welcome enough to use (and possibly continue using) the Neighbourhood House as a means of building community. In this way, Neighbourhood Houses are vital to the construction of a place where there is "genuine acceptance of, connection with, and respect and space for 'the stranger' (outsider, foreigner…)" in relation to the already settled members of the community (Sandercock 2003, xiv).

Methods

I did my research at the Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House from May to June 2014. I went there once a week for six weeks for two to three hours in the afternoon. I used the Frog Hollow's multipurpose room and did work with the other UBC students and Neighbourhood House's volunteers. We were all preparing for the Pathways Conference (which I will elaborate on later in the paper). As a participant observer, I took descriptive fields notes on site, which included information of who was there, what they were doing, when, why, where, and how. After my work at the Neighbourhood House, I reflected upon my experience with analytic field notes, elaborating on my descriptive notes with sociological and anthropological insights. I also conducted a thirty minute one-on-one interview with Jamie, one of the coordinators of Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House. The information presented in this paper is gathered from my interview and field notes.

The Entrance at Frog Hollow

At the north west corner of Renfrew and 5th Avenue, right at the #16 bus stop heading south, stand two seven-foot wooden poles, mounting a five-foot wide and three-foot high sign that says: "Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House. Creating Our Community Together." A logo next to the slogan has blue mountains, green grass, and orange, purple and pink people. The sign is located approximately three feet from the Frog Hollow parking lot, and four feet from the bus stop. The very location and size of this sign make it accessible to people commuting, driving, or walking to Frog Hollow, as well as to those who may have no intention of stopping by the Neighbourhood House, such as people driving or walking by. Perhaps this is a way of attracting future users, or simply a means of solidifying the Neighbourhood House's spot in the community.

The sign influences the everyday activities of the people who use the space. Dorothy Smith's (2005) concept of a text-reader conversation "recognizes reading a text as an actual interchange between a reader's activating of the text and her or his responses to it... Text-reader conversations take place in real time, in the actual local setting of the reading, and as moments in sequences of action" (288). When people walking by or toward the Neighbourhood House read the sign, they are activating the text by engaging in its material and responding to it in some way.

Those reading the motto, "Creating Our Community Together," which is ultimately the mission statement of the Neighbourhood House, are given an idea of what Frog Hollow aims to do. The staff members and volunteers who use the space are primed for work when they read the sign, because it directs their understanding of what Frog Hollow, as an institution, stands for. The people who enter Frog Hollow as community users will have expectations of what Frog Hollow should be doing, given their own ideas of what "Creating Our Community Together" means.

My own interpretation of the sign has two main points: that Frog Hollow is inclusive; and that the Neighbourhood House is active. It is inclusive because it uses the first-person plural "Our" and "Together," as opposed to "Your". It also uses the words "Creating," which I consider to be an action word. In this sense, by the mere act of engaging in a text-reader conversation with the Frog Hollow sign, the readers are already interacting in the community of the Neighbourhood House, thus strengthening the idea of "Creating Our Community Together."

When I first entered through the doors of Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House, I noticed that along the right wall is a table with a coffee machine, a cup containing stir sticks, a pile of about thirty paper cups, and a 5-inch pile of napkins. There is a sign on the wall behind the coffee maker that says: "We believe good coffee starts good conversations. So stop by and have a cup

free coffee and to also have good conversations with other Frog Hollow users. In other words, it is an object coordinating particular activities among particular people.

Text-reader conversations also coordinate a "local and particular course of action with social relations extending both temporally and spatially beyond the moment of the text's occurrence" (Smith 2005, 103). Reading the message displayed on the wall about coffee presupposes organization beyond the text itself. The coffee is "on the house" because it is donated to Frog Hollow by Ethical Bean Coffee. The coffee is meant to encourage those coming to Frog Hollow to keep coming back, because the organization is offering something with monetary value to anybody who comes into the Neighbourhood House. This welcoming includes "homeless person[s]," as Jamie demonstrated in her self-reflection when I interviewed her.

Using Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw's (1995) concept of members' meanings, which involves the researcher looking closely at what members say and do during particular moments, I noted that Jamie emphasized that she and the "gentleman" were both sitting in the lobby of Frog Hollow with different intentions (Jamie's being for an interview; the man's being for the coffee), but they still had something in common: the "sense of welcoming" that they both felt within the space of Frog Hollow. Jamie's first impression of Frog Hollow was constructed by her interaction with the other member within that space (i.e., the "homeless man") (167). She noticed that he felt "comfortable" enough to bring all of his belongings there, while drinking a cup of coffee and knowing that nobody would "question" his presence there.

The above analysis demonstrates the significant role that the sign outside Frog Hollow and the sign in the lobby about free coffee play in creating and maintaining the Neighbourhood House's welcoming atmosphere. The signs on display prime readers to have certain text-reader conversations and therefore certain

expectations of Frog Hollow, which include: building community, having free coffee, and fostering togetherness. This process, in turn, affects the members' meanings, as exemplified by Jamie and her impression of the "homeless person" drinking the coffee with "nobody question[ing]" him.

The People Who Use Frog Hollow

Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House provides services and programs that help newcomers settle and integrate with the local community (Sandercock et al. 2009, 115). One such program was the "We Are Strong!: Pathways to a Healthy, Supported Community" project, for which I was a volunteer, called the "Pathways Conference" for short by Jamie and the women organizing the event. The Pathways Conference brings together families to discuss important topics. The three chosen for this year were nutrition, domestic violence, and bullying and isolation. All of the women responsible for this conference were mothers, and most were immigrants. The users of Frog Hollow are attracted to the Pathways Conference because it utilizes what Sandercock (2009) refers to as the "Neighbourhood House approach" (9). The services that Frog Hollow provides, such as the Pathways Conference, are meant to meet a need and create a place where "people can come together and connect through engaging in activities together," as I will explain and illustrate (Sandercock 2009, 9). Also, Frog Hollow is "neighbourhood-based," meaning that it is easily accessible to people living in the neighbourhood. Frog Hollow is next to a bus stop, has free parking, is also next to an elementary school, and many of the users, such as Yvy and Sary, live within close proximity.

Yvy and Sary are the women volunteers with whom I had the most direct contact with over my six-week volunteer placement. The two of them used the space of Frog Hollow to their advantage by bringing up their struggles of never being "fully Canadian." As Yvy and Sary said the first time I conversed with them (and repeated throughout my interactions with them),

"Even though I now have a Canadian citizenship, I still feel like I am not Canadian." Yvy and Sary confessed that they needed an outlet to express themselves, since they seldom had the chance to interact with adults when at home. In pursuit of their members' meaning, through interviews and participant-observation (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw 1995, 167), I found that both of them consider themselves to be immigrants, despite the fact that they have full Canadian citizenship status. Yvy and Sary realize that their status as immigrants will never truly disappear, because their non-White skin colour and their foreign accents will continue to distinguish them as immigrants.

At the same time, they realize that their Canadian citizenship status also gives them the privilege of bringing some of their family over to Canada to live with them and "start a new life." The discourse of "immigrant" and "Canadian citizen" identifies the ways with which these women undergo institutional capture (with the institution in question being the Canadian state). Smith (2005) describes institutional capture as the institutional discourse that can subsume subjective experiences, which can happen when both the informant and the researcher "are familiar with institutional discourses, know how to speak it, and hence can easily lose touch with the informant's experientially based knowledge" (225). Institutional discourse "swallows the perspective... and the subjective experiences" of individuals (156).

For instance, Yvy and Sary, both classified as Canadian citizens, have the advantages that come with being a Canadian citizen, including the right to apply to bring over some family members from their native countries to Canada, as well as the right to have their children who are born in Canada classified as Canadian citizens. However, becoming a Canadian citizen also has disadvantages, which includes the loss of free Canadian settlement services, such as language assessments and classes; help finding a job; and information about community services. Institutional capture does not recognize the fact that both Yvy and Sary both feel not

fully Canadian, as the institutional discourse does not identify with their individual experiences.

With these disadvantages, Yvy and Sary reach out to Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House as a means of institutional freedom, where they can temporarily be free from institutional capture. Their legal status as Canadians and self-identification as immigrants, as well as their motherhood, give them access to programs at Frog Hollow that specifically cater to that group, such as the Pathways Conference. Moreover, their experiences of feeling non-Canadian yet having the status of non-immigrant are unique, and not recognized within the institutional discourses that process their Canadian statuses. Going to Frog Hollow allows these women to navigate these exclusionary experiences and find new ways of inclusion precisely because Frog Hollow is a Neighbourhood House dedicated to the needs of the people in the community. This process with Frog Hollow, in turn, allows them institutional escape (Smith 2005, 123).

The Pathways Conference also allows Yvy and Sary to connect with other women who also identify as immigrants even though they have Canadian Citizenship. Despite these opportunities, Yvy and Sary seem to connect the best with each other, because they were born in the same country, and they often compare stories of their homeland with one another. S.R. Lauer and M.C. Yan (2010) state that "research on homophily (the similarity of personal ties) and associations has found associations often attract members with similar characteristics, thereby contributing to the homogeneity of social networks" (133). In this sense, Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House has coincidentally fostered an ethnically homogenized social relationship between Yvy and Sary through their participation in the Pathways Conference. Liisa Malkki (1997) suggests that "identity is always mobile and processual," that the roots of one's identity are "in a state of constant flux and change... [and] don't stay in one place" (37). Using this analysis, Yvy and Sary have a deep connection precisely because

they have struggles transitioning, both physically and mentally, from being immigrants to being Canadians. Their identities are transforming and adapting to their new way of life. The shift in identity from being citizens of their country of birth, to being immigrants to Canada, and now Canadian Citizens highlights the "multiplicities of attachments that people form to places through living in, remembering, and imagining them" (Malkki 1997, 38). Because Yvy and Sary share significant similarities, they are closer with one another than with the other women of the group.

For instance, Yvy and Sary often reminisce together about growing up in their homeland. Both of them grew up on farms. They talk about the crops, the weather, household chores, and what their family members were like. They talk about going to the mall during their free time --not because they wanted to buy things, but because it was the only place nearby with free air conditioning. This conversation will then transition into their current life in Canada, where both have just become mothers, and the difficulties that come with being a Canadian citizen but still identifying as a citizens of their country of origin. "I need to improve my English" they often state, as a means of solidifying their new Canadian identity.

At the same time, I must critique my theoretical observations because I only conducted six sessions of fieldwork over six weeks for the Pathways Conference. Also, during those six sessions, Yvy and Sary were the mothers who came in to the drop-in sessions for the Pathways Conference the most often. However, the analysis of their members' meanings show that the two have a special bond due to their ethnic and geographic similarities, as they are both from similar areas of their homeland, and they live quite close together in Canada. These commonalities lead them to share personal ties and stories that the other women are not able to. That said, my theoretical observations are still limited by the time allotted and actual interactions I had with the women in the Pathways Conference.

As Les Back (2007) states, "without a certain kind of space, a certain kind of story is simply impossible" (51). In this sense, the users of Frog Hollow maintain its welcoming atmosphere by participating in it and creating their own open space, where they can discuss sensitive issues and escape from the institutional captures of their everyday lives. For instance, during my term at Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House, I interacted with several mothers who prepared a presentation on the topic of domestic violence. In order to discuss this controversial and sensitive topic, they created a warm environment by smiling, translating for one another so that nobody was left out of the conversation, and thanking each person for her effort and contribution to the presentation.

To further elaborate, I will use Dorothy Smith's (2005) concept of standpoint, which is a methodological alternative starting point to the "objectified subject of knowledge of social scientific discourse" (288). From the standpoint of the women I interacted with, it is crucial to have a welcoming atmosphere in order to preserve the safe space in which they can discuss sensitive topics. The women who are attracted to the Pathways Conference are those who are interested in analyzing sensitive issues because they themselves have experienced things such as domestic violence and isolation. As a result, the welcoming and warm atmosphere that I experienced at Frog Hollow is maintained by the users of the space precisely because it is what they need in order to work on their projects and, even more importantly, to build connections with one another.

The Staff and the Tension of Grants

It is also critical to analyze the ways with which the users of Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House interact with the staff members, and how this relationship is an integral feature of the welcoming atmosphere that is fostered. I will be referring to my interview with Jamie, the Neighbourhood Houses Coordinator at Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House. As shown in the introduction.

Jamie emphasized the feeling of welcome and safety she felt when she interacted with the "homeless man" who just wanted a "free cup of coffee."

Jamie's first impression of Frog Hollow has stayed with her for the last twelve years that she has been working at the Neighbourhood House. Her reflections on the experience constructs a reality (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw 1995, 245), whereby this interaction was the catalyst that made her "really want to work" at Frog Hollow . With this constructed reality, Jamie has motivation to continue working at Frog Hollow and to maintain its welcoming quality. As a Neighbourhood Houses Coordinator who has been with Frog Hollow for over a decade, Jamie uses her work knowledge, member's meaning and standpoint to contribute to the overall creation, maintenance, and evolution[OR development] of Frog Hollow's welcoming atmosphere. I will begin by analyzing Jamie's work knowledge, which includes her experience of her own work, and her coordination of her work in relation to other people (Smith 2005, 151).

Jamie explained to me the process that the Frog Hollow staff goes through to ensure that they are staying true to their vision of being "always inclusive" and to look at "what it means to be diverse, to be welcoming." This process involves multiple meetings and staff getaways where the staff learn to work together. She emphasized that the staff "are always looking at a way to improve. [The staff] never relaxes [because Frog Hollow can] always be better." In this work environment, Jamie's work knowledge includes the need to improve in order to better provide for the community, which results in feelings of inclusion and open-mindedness. By working with a staff team that endorses similar values, Jamie has the extensive knowledge built on adapting to the new needs of the Neighbourhood House as the years progress and the users and staff members change (Smith 2005, 149).

In order to work closely with the users of Frog Hollow and to understand their needs, Jamie constructs meaning through her interactions with those people, and uses these interactions to interpret her own thoughts and organize action that she believes will enhance the Neighbourhood House, which shows members' meanings (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw 1995, 167). From my experiences with Jamie and the Pathways Conference, I noticed that she always referred to the volunteers as "mothers," rather than "women," "volunteers," or the like. By categorizing these Neighbourhood House users as "mothers," Jamie is able to better understand why the Pathways Conference is integral to the volunteers, as they address familial concerns such as nutrition for children, and how domestic violence affects families (134). Moreover, all of the volunteers were either stay-at-home mothers, or immigrant mothers, who lived by the Neighbourhood House and had the free time to create and develop the Pathways Conference. Others who were aware of the program and did not identify as mothers were invited to participate (for instance, UBC students). However, this group usually included the fathers, who worked full-time during the day and therefore could not commit to the Pathways Conference. As a result, the categorization of "mothers" also represented those who not only had the knowledge of familial concerns, but also the resource of time. This constructed meaning, in turn, affects Jamie's standpoint, which is her subject position in the local particularities of bodily existence (Smith 2005, 288). From her standpoint of being a mother, she is able to empathize and relate to the mothers and therefore become engaged in their conversations. Moreover, positioning her standpoint as a mother during the Pathways Conference allows Jamie to regard herself and to have others perceive her from an equalizing discourse, as opposed to positioning herself as a "staff member" or a "user," which does not carry the same connotations in regards to empathy and capacity to relate to others. From her standpoint of being a Neighbourhood House Coordinator, she understands how the Pathways Conference is significant to the families who attend the event and generate and take in the messages around nutrition, abuse, and isolation. From her work knowledge, she uses her skills to help create an environment whereby the women participating in the conference will feel welcome and safe enough to contribute their own input.

At the same time, Jamie's standpoint of being a Neighbourhood Houses Coordinator at Frog Hollow allows her to make visible the "extraordinary complex of the ruling relations" (Smith 2005, 288). Ruling relations are the institutional complexes that coordinate everyday administrative work and those lives "subject to administrative regimes" (227). In the case of the Pathways Conference, Jamie realizes that in order to run the program, she must continue "looking for funding" because Frog Hollow "never has enough" funding. In order to apply for funds, part of Jamie's job requires that she keeps "a ton of statistics" that prove to granting bodies that certain programs, such as the Pathways Conference, are worthwhile for the people who participate in them and that these programs should be funded.

This very part of our interview highlights the barriers that come with ruling relations that "coordinate the everyday work of administration and the lives of those subject to administrative regimes," relying on textually based realities (Smith 2005, 227). In this sense, the grant applications are the textually-based realities that need to be written and sent off by staff of Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House. These documents coordinate the everyday workings of Frog Hollow users because they are essential in running the programs and projects that Frog Hollow administer, as they provide the monetary funding needed to keep the organization in operation. Jamie acknowledges that this is a barrier for Frog Hollow, because the funding provided determines the quantity of resources that they can secure for a project. Moreover, if there is not enough funding (i.e., they do not get the grant, or only receive a small amount of the grant), then a program may not even be able to run.

With the reality of ruling relations making programs vulnerable, Frog Hollow is under a fascinating tension. Going back to the Pathways Conference example, Jamie's job requires that she proves the value that this conference has to the neighbourhood. In order to do this, she uses her work knowledge and standpoint to connect with the users of the Neighbourhood House who are involved with this conference, by ensuring that they feel welcome and safe. The welcome and safe atmosphere is further encouraged by the mothers who are participating in that space, because they need those attributes to discuss the sensitive topics of their lives. Only when these events occur, and the popularity and usefulness of the Pathways Conference is shown, is Jamie able to apply for the grants that are the textually-based realities needed to run the program sufficiently, and for the upcoming years. In other words, these ruling relations coordinate the everyday workings of Frog Hollow and those subject to it, including the staff members, volunteers, and users of Frog Hollow.

The Conclusion: Space Within Frog Hollow

The mission of Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House is to be flexible and multi-service, which reflects its vision of addressing neighbourhood needs in order to build and strengthen community, including its staff members, users, volunteers, and neighbourhood partners. The major challenge that Frog Hollow faces is in raising "public awareness of the vital role they perform, in order to attract more funding for what they do" (Sandercock, et al. 2009, 120).

A critical point that I must make is that although the lived experiences of users are regulated by the ruling relations of those textually-based realities that obtain funding, that does not mean that the welcoming atmosphere within Frog Hollow is inauthentic. The very need to apply for grants stems from the fact that people in the community continue to feel a need for specific programs, such as the Pathways Conference, at Frog Hollow. The welcoming atmosphere may be influenced by the textually-based

realities, but that is as far as it goes. The welcoming atmosphere, I argue, stems from those people attracted to the Neighbourhood House and their everyday doings and lived actualities. Jamie, on her first impression of Frog Hollow, interpreted the interaction she had with the "homeless man" as a sign of the Neighbourhood House's openness, and from what I can ascertain, she has dedicated herself to fostering the warmth that she then felt and still feels. This kind of attraction is not coordinated by the ruling relations; rather, it stems from members' meanings and how they interpret people and events (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw 1995, 168).

Yvy and Sary, upon learning about the Pathways Conference, used it as a means of going around the exclusionary experiences created by institutional capture, which in turn allowed them institutional escape, where they discussed the sensitive topics involved in their lives (Smith 2005, 225). These topics of domestic violence, isolation, and nutrition required a welcoming atmosphere in order to preserve the safe space for discussion of such sensitive topics. By starting from the everyday experiences of people as subjects, rather than objects, the significance of the standpoint of the women who are attracted to the Pathways Conference becomes clear from my ethnographic fieldnotes: they are interested in analyzing sensitive issues because they themselves have experienced things such as domestic violence and isolation (Smith 2005, 288). For instance, Yvy and Sary often mentioned that staying alone in their houses with children made them feel isolated their mother tongue and English. Yvy also shared with me the abuse she went through with her ex-husband, and how many of the other women participating in the Pathways Conference also experienced multiple forms of abuse from their family members.

The concept of homophily is useful in this analysis, as it shows how members with similar characteristics are contributing to the homogeneity of social networks (Lauer and Yan 2010, 133). At this moment, the users of the Neighbourhood House include mothers who identify as immigrants but who also have either

permanent resident or Canadian citizen status. This similarity breeds trust among them, as they have experiences that they can relate to, and can lend support to one another in their circumstances (135). This theory of homophily can help explain why the users of the Pathway Conference share foundational attributes: they are mothers who are attracted to the ideas that the conference will discuss, and who continue volunteering at the Pathways Conference and Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House because they have created strong social ties with other people there. These bonds are a result of specific similarities, including motherhood and conflicting Canadian and immigrant identities.

It is then a part of Jamie's job as a Neighbourhood House Coordinator to use her work knowledge to observe the significant effects that the Pathways Conference has for the mothers, and to use these insights to enhance the overall experience by having Frog Hollow adapt to the needs of the users (Lauer and Yan 2010, 151). Her insights are understood by her interaction with the users of the Neighbourhood House and how she interprets them into her own member's meanings. By adapting to the needs of the users of the space, the atmosphere within Frog Hollow evolves to continue to be welcoming for those members. It is integral for the space to evolve, in order to complement the needs of its users (Back 2007, 51).

As the staff members, volunteers and users of the space create, maintain and develop this welcoming and safe space throughout the Pathways Conference , they clearly place a high value on it. This value is seen in how members construct meaning through interactions with other members of the group and are able to have institutional escape and share the experiences of their standpoints, as exemplified by Yvy's and Sary's interaction with one another, as Canadian Citizens who identify as immigrants with children. This value is also constructed by how members interact with the space around them, such as the homeless man coming in to have a free cup of coffee.

In order to keep this space for current and future members of the Pathways Conference (and similar programs), funding must be secured. The textually-based realities of grants needed to keep the space running requires that its users maintain the welcoming and safe space. The maintenance is kept through small yet meaningful actions, such as the provision of free coffee, and the bigger actions of mothers grouping together to share past experiences and learn from one another. At the same time, this space has to constantly evolve to match the needs of the new members using the Neighbourhood House. Because the evolution of space is determined by its members, Frog Hollow has to keep a welcoming atmosphere in order to encourage its users to keep coming back and to raise awareness of its programs. With this constructed cycle, the welcoming atmosphere of Frog Hollow is essential to its very existence as a Neighbourhood House serving the needs of its local diverse community.

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ENDNOTES

1. Names of people and certain job positions have been changed to protect confidentiality; the real name of the Neighbourhood House (Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House) is used with permission

"Can You Bring Me Some Water?"
A Reflexive and Engaged Ethnography of Rastafari "Bush Doctors" in South Africa

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This paper explores the relationship between Rastafari herbalists and tuberculosis in the Western Cape province of South Africa. Marginalized and impoverished communities are the worst affected by the TB epidemic, and government-funded biomedical treatment plans are struggling to address the problem. Anthropologists have thus begun to explore the social and cultural factors influencing the prevalence of the disease. The Rastafari herbalists represent an important avenue for affordable alternative healthcare, when biomedical care is insufficient, socially and culturally inappropriate, or simply unavailable. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork, including participant observation and unstructured interviews conducted in the homes and workplaces of these healers, I found that many Rastafari herbalists believe they have superior treatments for tuberculosis, and often discourage the use of biomedicine. This is the result of a long history of oppression and inequality, in which bureaucratic systems of control – and the biomedical systems they include – have kept knowledge and resources away from marginalized peoples who need them most, thereby reproducing and deepening structural inequality. Using reflexive analysis, I sought to challenge the dominant modes of anthropological engagement and knowledge production as themselves mechanisms of hegemony. Finally, some suggestions have been provided regarding the future of anthropology, and its quest to enable tangible and positive change in the lives of its research participants.

Framing the Research: A Meeting at the Taxi Rank

I was woken by the piercing alarm of my touchscreen smartphone (1998 Rands (R) per unit; PriceCheck 2014). I got up, got dressed, and walked out of my secure apartment (R11000 a month, for rent), crossing the road to my local café. After a breakfast of bacon and eggs (R35), I bought a takeaway cappuccino (R19) to go with a cigarette of organic tobacco (R74 for a 50-gram bag). I got into my old hatchback (R18000, second-hand) and drove to the petrol station, where I swiped my debit card for about half a tank of petrol (around R400 at R13.20 a liter; The AA of South Africa 2014). From there, it took me four minutes to drive down the hill. After paying for an hour's parking (R12), I arrived at the Cape Town central taxi rank. This is a major transportation hub in Cape Town's central business district.

Fifteen kilometers away, a Rastafari herbalist, called Judah, woke up to the piercing sound of his mother's old alarm clock (which would probably go for about R20 at a pawn shop). He went on to smoke a pipe of common outdoor marijuana (R20 a gram), following it with a breakfast of oats (roughly R2.50 if you're buying two kilograms at R54.99; PicknPay 2014). He then left his modest house (which might rent for R900 a month, probably less) and walked for twenty minutes, carrying his monumental backpack. From Main Road, he caught a taxi to the central taxi rank (R12, one way). The journey took about an hour on most mornings due to the traffic and needing to stop for other passengers.

I strolled through the taxi rank's formal market area, which is comprised of homogenous white PVC structures designated for trading. Around the corner, Judah made his way to his spot, right beside the space in which thousands of taxis were dropping off and picking up their passengers. Here was a small sheltered strip of pavement, actually designed as a waiting area for passengers. Various informal retailers occupied this space, selling anything from pirated DVDs and counterfeit Ray-Bans, to bananas and second-hand books. Judah asked one of the salesmen if he could borrow his seat – a plastic crate – for a moment. He stood on top of the crate, and reached up to the ceiling that shades the area. Hidden and supported by the beams of this ceiling, was a metal, fold-up trestle table. Judah maneuvered the heavy object out of its nest and opened its legs to establish his own stall space. He then laid out a thick tarpaulin and a silken sheet, from his backpack, followed by a carefully arranged assortment of herbal medicines.

It was here that I first met Judah. I had been trying to find a "traditional healer". When Judah told me he was an "original KhoiSan bush doctor", I thought I'd hit a goldmine. Little did I know, Judah would introduce me to a series of experiences that would overturn my perceptions of the world, and of my research question.

This research began in my final semester of my Bachelor's degree. I discovered that my university's social anthropology department offered undergraduate students the opportunity to conduct a self-motivated project, producing a "mini-thesis", which would count as a course credit. This "course" was usually offered to students who needed it for the purposes of graduation. But my head of department, Francis Nyamnjoh, had told me I could do it if I could find someone willing to supervise me. Interested in producing something of my own, rather than responding to the requirements of my assignments, as well as getting a course credit without having to attend any lectures or write any exams, I began approaching professors. Unfortunately, as I tried to convince one of them, Helen Macdonald, to supervise me, I found myself agreeing to gear my research towards hers. She was studying tuberculosis (TB), so I would have to look at TB as well.

I wasn't opposed to looking at TB. The Western Cape province has the second-highest incidence of TB in South Africa (TBFacts.org 2014), and at the heart of it is Cape Town. With good access to biomedical care, TB is rarely more than a difficult, but

curable disease. Biomedicine declares its cause to be a microbe called Mycobacterium tuberculosis, which can be eliminated with antibiotics (Abney 2011, 12). However, for many South Africans, TB can be a death sentence when adequate biomedical care isn't available (Sinanovic et al. 2003). Although free biomedical treatment is provided by the state, it is often insufficient, or simply absent (Sinanovic et al. 2003, Naidoo, Dick, and Cooper 2009). Furthermore, biomedical TB treatment requires a strict adherence to a course of antibiotics (Naidoo, Dick, and Cooper 2009). For many South Africans, these requirements are difficult to uphold, due to a number of often unpredictable factors (ibid.). Sometimes, this has to do with family life and cultural conceptions of TB and biomedicine, as patients seek to avoid the strong stigma attached to a TB diagnosis (Abney 2011). In many cases in Africa, this stigma has been shown to be connected to the issue of HIV/AIDS: since many victims of HIV contract TB, TB is often seen as an indicator of HIV, which itself carries connotations of sexual promiscuity and immorality (Gelaw et al. 2001, Godfrey-Faussett et al. 2002). Other contributing factors include dealing with the difficult and sometimes unexpected side-effects of TB treatment, which can disrupt a person's ability to work, and therefore to survive (Naidoo, Dick, and Cooper 2009). These factors have led to widespread "defaulting", or failure to adhere to requirements of antibiotic treatment (Naidoo, Dick, and Cooper 2009, Abney 2011, 8). This has been described as the primary cause for the appearance of drug-resistant strains of TB, which are far more difficult to cure (Sharma and Mohan 2006). I saw the opportunity to work with Dr. Macdonald as a chance to make my own small contribution. My initial intention had been to study traditional medicine – a personal interest – and I saw this as a useful avenue to look at TB. In addition, my literature review showed a significant lack of research about the relationship between traditional medicine and TB in South Africa (with some exceptions, such as Gibson and Oosthuysen 2009, Gibson 2010, Madikizela et al. 2013, Mann et al. 2007 and Oeser et al. 2005).

By this stage, as my fieldwork was just beginning, the inequality of power relations in working with traditional healers was already becoming clear. In the hour that it took me to wake up and arrive at the taxi rank, I'd spent more money than Judah would spend in a week. Although I had been exposed to many statistics, stories, and theories about inequality and poverty, they had no impact in comparison to this realization. I'm actually a relatively frugal spender compared to some of my friends, and yet my spending habits far outweighed those of my first participant. Understanding this led me to realize that I couldn't simply derive personal benefit from this research. If I ignored the role of my identity in this ethnography, it would mean extracting knowledge from the field and furthering my career, without actually speaking to the issues that arose – of their own accord – in the fieldwork process. The involvement of the ethnographer's identity is more than just an obstacle to the so-called objectivity of the research – it is about realizing the anthropologist's "human responsibility" (Scheper-Hughes 1995, 411) towards his/her participants (Kellett 2009). Thus, I have employed a strongly reflexive approach to this ethnography, to reveal how ethnography can drastically alter the researcher's perceptions – but more importantly, to reveal how this process enables tangible, beneficial change in the lives of one's participants.

I explored a number of methodological options, in order to develop a balanced and nuanced representation. Participant observation, involving unstructured interviews, and what Bernard (2011, 277) calls "hanging out", were my primary methods of gathering data. The fieldwork was conducted between July and September of 2014 from various sites in and around Cape Town, including the Cape Town central taxi rank, Table Mountain, the homes of some of my participants in Kensington, the Stellenbosch University Botanical Gardens, and the Marcus Garvey Rastafari community in Philippi. These locations, where bush doctors gather and trade in herbs, are fairly close to my home, meaning that I was able to spend a great deal of time with them.

I use a narrative format, following a chronological sequence of events through my own perspective, and taking an approach inspired by Tedlock (1991) who explores the value of narrative ethnography in terms of its ideology of focusing on both "Self" and "Other" instead of focusing exclusively on one end of the spectrum. I chose to do this for a number of reasons. Firstly, I enjoy reading and writing narrative content. Secondly, I found that my theoretical analyses of the data developed in a coherent and logical manner, so as to arrange a cohesive argument. This is not to say that my data was coherent and cohesive – my participants were naturally diverse and at times discordant in their views. Still, as I played my anthropological knowledge against my experiences, my theories seemed to arrange organically into a logical flow. This story therefore traces my encounters with three of my most prominent participants – Judah, !Gora, and Zebulon – bolstering my claims with data gathered from other participants.

The narrative format also allows me to easily include comments on reflexivity, as discussed earlier (Tedlock 1991). Finally, but most importantly, I have decided to use this format in an attempt to make my findings more accessible. The narrative style and chronological sequence are intended to make the theoretical concepts and arguments develop in an easy and 'natural' way so that the content is not too difficult to understand. Most academic knowledge is produced and protected in a format that's accessible only to the educated and privileged (Asad 1986, Nyamnjoh 2007). As Nyamnjoh (2007, 1) rhetorically asks: "How can social science be 'social' unless we translate our jargon into ordinary language and relate to non-specialists, horizontally as equals?"

The focus of my research certainly defines the data that I have selected for inclusion (Bernard 2011), meaning that it will inevitably reflect particular issues. It's important to remember that the participants described are human beings embedded in socio-cultural systems that are far too complex to be comprehensively dealt with in the scope of this paper. (Those interested in a broader understanding of Western Cape bush doctors can refer to Aston Philander 2010, Kroll 2006, Reid 2014 and Olivier 2011, 2013; for discussions of the Rastafari more generally, see Zips 2006 and Murrell et al. 1998.) However, I have tried my best to include the data that is most important to my participants. This has meant departing, to an extent, from the research focus given to me by my supervisor.

In order to contextualize this research, I will give a brief outline of the Rastafari religion. A global religious movement, originating in Jamaica, Rastafari is grounded in the teachings of Marcus Garvey, a Jamaican black consciousness theologian (Lewis 1998, Zips 2006, Steiner Ifekwe 2008). In the 1920s, Garvey predicted the crowning of a black king in Ethiopia to herald a new age of equality and freedom for black people all over the world, who had been dispersed and oppressed by colonialism and slavery (Lewis 1998, Steiner Ifekwe 2008). When Ras Tafari Makonnen, a prince of the ancient Solomonic dynasty in Ethiopia, was crowned emperor of the country on 2 November 1930, with the name Haile Selassie I, meaning "power of the Holy Trinity", the Rastafari religion was born (Steiner Ifekwe 2008).

Drawing on various revivalist traditions and Ethiopian orthodox Christianity, Rastafari involves elements of African traditional religion, such as ritual drumming (Herzfeld 2006). The most distinctive and well-known characteristics of Rastafari include the dreadlock hairstyle, smoking marijuana, and the colors red, green, yellow, and black. Rastafari theology is largely concerned with promoting black dignity and indigeneity, as well as racial equality (Kroll 2006, Aston Philander 2010). Important to this research is the Rastafari focus on returning to the supposedly "authentic" African lifestyle of living in harmony with nature (Kroll 2006, Aston Philander 2010, Olivier 2011).

Rastafari found its way to South Africa in the 1970s, where its messages found traction amongst the peoples of South Africa who were suffering under the race-based oppression of the apartheid regime (Aston Philander 2010). In the Western Cape, members of the cultural grouping referred to by the apartheid regime as "coloureds" began to explore the Rastafari messages of indigeneity and harmony with nature (Aston Philander 2010, 91). They drew on their KhoiSan heritage as a claim to the authenticity of their indigenous African roots, and began to revive and revitalize KhoiSan healing traditions. It is these Rastas who now refer to themselves as "bush doctors" (Kroll 2006, Aston Philander 2010, Olivier 2011).

Exploring My Bias

On the first day that I met Judah, I asked about TB, and he quietly said, "Tsh! What?" glancing around, eyes wide with suspicion or alarm. I responded warily, "Tuberculosis?" He nodded and, without a moment's hesitation, picked out the three herbs he would give to someone suffering from TB. The first I recognized from the local flora. "Rhino bush", (*Elytropappus rhinocerotis*) he called it (Van Wyk, van Oudtshoorn, and Gericke 2013, 134). Along with rhino bush, Judah picked out wild garlic (*Tulbaghia violacea*) (Van Wyk, van Oudtshoorn, and Gericke 2013, 298) and red carrot (*Bulbine natalensis*) (Van Wyk, van Oudtshoorn, and Gericke 2013, 72). All three of these plants have recorded medicinal use, and wild garlic specifically has been documented as a medicine used for TB (Van Wyk, van Oudtshoorn, and Gericke 2013). Judah assured me that he has cured at least one severe case of TB with these medicines – that is, all the symptoms were relieved and the person returned to his usual health. Although it's impossible for me to track down this person, and apply some other form of verification to Judah's claim, this piece of information remains extremely important. Judah's claim indicates that the bush doctors believe they have an effective method of dealing with TB. To understand the implications of this, I needed to interrogate the perceptions of biomedicine held by the bush doctors.

From the outset, all my participants expressed contempt for the biomedical system. It is often considered as one component of the wider capitalist world order, described by Rastas as "Babylon" (Edmonds 1998, 1). In Rastafari theology, "Babylon" refers firstly to an ancient kingdom, described in the Bible as an archetypal system of evil oppression (Lewis 1998, 23). The term has been redefined to refer to all evil, all "wickedness" in the contemporary world, specifically oppressive political regimes (Edmonds 1998, Lewis 1998). Historically, it has been used to refer to slavery, and more recently by South African Rastas to refer to apartheid (Aston Philander 2010). Looking at the term's relevance today, I found that the descriptions of Babylon were less specific. For example, bush doctors often refer to police officers as Babylon. This became easier to understand as I explored the legality of the bush doctors' work. The bush doctors' violation of legal restrictions is almost always threefold. First, they are targeted as users and dealers of marijuana, which is still illegal in South Africa (Mujuru and Sekhejane). However, it remains one of their most important medicinal herbs, even without considering its religious importance (Aston Philander 2010, Reid 2014). The bush doctors' second violation comes from their possession of plants gathered in the wilderness (Olivier 2011, 2013). Although it's not illegal to possess and consume these plants, it is illegal to harvest them in the restricted nature reserves in which most are found (Olivier 2011, 2013). This law is supposed to be a conservation effort, but it doesn't take into account the people who obtain their livelihood from this practice (Olivier 2011, 2013). One of my participants, Levi – a travelling bush doctor whose specialty is bulbs and roots from Gauteng – showed me a court subpoena he had been given, with only the phrase "possession of herbs" to indicate his infraction. Finally, trading is technically banned in Judah's spot. So, if and when the "law enforcement" arrived, he'd have to shove his full inventory of herbs into his backpack and flee the scene, or risk imprisonment, just like all the other traders sharing his strip. This happened anywhere between three times a day, and three times a week, drastically disrupting Judah's working hours and his ability

to earn enough to support his family.

I also discovered a more specific association between Babylon and biomedicine, in terms of biomedical treatments. Biomedicine's focus on physiological treatments was associated with materialism and the desires of the flesh, as contrasted against what the bush doctors perceive to be divine aspects of health and healing. Perhaps Judah's most persistent claim was that the healing of the herbs comes from "the spirit", and he emphasized the superiority of herbal medicine as he dealt with his customers, claiming that herbal medicines are free of harmful side effects. Furthermore, he foregrounded the transparency of his work, advertising and explaining where he had obtained each herb or who had made each of his prepared remedies. For instance, his "luck oil", from Glycyrrhiza glabra, or "sweet root" or "luck root" (Aston Philander 2010, 188; 2011, 585) is extracted by a bush doctor from the Eastern Cape whom Judah claims to know personally. This was contrasted with biomedicine's harmful side effects, and the inaccessible and cryptic information about biomedicines, which says very little about the origins of the medicine (Gibson 2010). Much importance was placed on the ethical integrity of the one who produced (or harvested) the medicine – factors which cannot be known when dealing with a pharmaceutical remedy produced halfway across the world in a big factory.

Apart from their implications about biomedicine, these insights also refer to the bush doctors' own concerns about earning their livelihood. Just like any salesman, a bush doctor is bound to promote the value of his goods. In a world where biomedicine dominates the official healthcare system, this must necessarily include an argument for the benefits of choosing a bush doctor's remedies over those of a biomedical clinic. In considering the interactions between bush doctors and TB treatment specifically, I became concerned that these 'sales tactics' could potentially have a negative impact on the success of biomedical treatment plans. With the concern of "defaulting" (Abney 2011, 8) being so

prevalent in TB treatment (Sharma and Mohan 2006), I was wary of any argument that devalues the efficacy of biomedicine, encouraging TB patients to stop using their antibiotics. Thus, it seemed crucial that bush doctors be "properly educated" about TB so that their "advertising" couldn't interrupt biomedical treatment plans (Gibson 2010). I thought, if bush doctors were to act as a positive influence on the health and wellbeing of the South African people, we must explore ways of promoting cooperation and mutual understanding between these different fields of healthcare. Still, I needed to excavate the reasons behind the bush doctors' contempt for biomedicine more thoroughly.

Although I had found some information about potential TB treatments, and potentially problematic perceptions of biomedicine, I had not come into contact with any TB patients dealing with the bush doctors. There were few stories about TB, and it wasn't one of the ailments commonly mentioned by bush doctors. I began to worry that, in exploring all these "potentials", I had constructed a relationship between bush doctors and TB that was not actually there in reality.

One afternoon, while driving Judah home from a day in the market, he explained his understanding of TB in greater depth. Describing it as an "infection in the blood", he showed that he had a fairly similar understanding of TB to that provided by biomedicine (Sinanovic et al. 2003), even if it was less technically complex. He agreed that TB was a big problem – people were dying and disappearing. Why then was he not treating these people? Judah explained that people are scared of coming forward with the symptoms of TB. It is true that many TB patients leave their homes to live in a hospital for extended periods of time (Abney 2014). It is true that scientific research is constantly being conducted around the treatment plans in these hospitals (Abney 2014). Furthermore, HIV/AIDS has been connected with conspiracy theories about its origins as a biological weapon (Nattrass 2013), revealing the prevalence of opinions similar to the one

expressed here by Judah. This indicates that many people in Judah's context have not been given appropriate information about biomedical treatment practices and policies. Or perhaps, it indicates the truly nefarious nature of biomedicine. Perhaps both.

I wondered if this was just another strategy to devalue the competition. It was possible that the bush doctors rejected biomedicine on principle, and it could not be explained away by commenting on the lack of appropriate education. "Education" is never a simple matter of spreading information that is good and correct. For example, (Gibson 2010) shows how problematic notions surrounding TB often persist even after significant exposure to biomedically-based TB "awareness" campaigns, and how these notions cannot simply be explained as the result of "culture". Nyamnjoh (2012) exposes the problems of imposing neo-colonial epistemologies of "objectivity" and "rationalism" on much more multivocal, pluralistic epistemological contexts in Africa, through the contested process of "education". Thus, "education" is often entangled with issues of cultural translation (Okazaki 2003), the agendas of those in power, and the hegemonic tendencies of elitist forms of knowledge (Nyamnjoh 2012). I couldn't explain this seemingly peculiar lack of TB engagement by assuming that it had everything to do with the management of the biomedical system and nothing to do with the agency of the bush doctors. What if the bush doctors simply would not engage with biomedicine as long as their religious perspectives on the nature of medicine were maintained?

I had come to see Judah and the bush doctors as simply trying to get by in a world plagued by poverty and the difficulty of finding a reliable, well-paying job. Seeing Judah's reasonably comfortable home, and his happy, well-fed family, I suspected that the bush doctors had found a method of earning a livelihood through the religion of Rastafari. In some ways, I had a decidedly patronizing view of the bush doctors. They seemed uneducated and, perhaps, ignorant of "the truth". Their criticism of biomedicine

certainly represented its shortcomings, but it seemed more like a dogmatic rejection than a critical reflection. I thought their conspiracy theories were a bit crazy, and I thought their encouragement of herbal medicine over biomedicine was, frankly, dangerous and in serious need of rectification. I wasn't "judging" them as bad people, but I was seeing them as the unlucky products of a fragmented, ineffective educational and economic system.

This changed as I spent more time in the homes of my participants. They were at times welcoming, and at times, wary. But, for the most part, I was faced with a profound awareness of the glaring financial inequality between us. Most bush doctors study the herbs for a minimum of seven years – a timespan equal to the basic degree required to practice as a biomedical doctor. It simply didn't make sense to me that people who had studied for so long lived their lives on a fraction of what I spend, while I had yet to receive my undergraduate certificate.

I decided to overturn the researcher-participant relationship, discarding what I saw as outmoded and useless concerns about academic impartiality or objectivity (Scheper-Hughes 1995). I invited first Judah and later more bush doctors into my home. I offered my balcony to Judah to store some of his herbs so he wouldn't have to lug them to and from his home every single day. I began to interact with him as an equal – rather than as a source of information useful to my research. A genuine friendship quickly developed between us, and "hanging out" as a fieldwork method (Bernard 2011, 277) became "hanging out" for fun.

One afternoon, Judah and I were sitting in my lounge discussing matters of the world, an activity known as "reasoning" amongst the Rastafari (Zips 2006, xii). I was smoking a cigarette of my organic tobacco, while Judah was smoking his marijuana, or "ganja" (Aston Philander 2010, 53). I had mixed my tobacco with a combination of herbs given to me by a friend who works as a natural medicine practitioner. The mixture – known informally

as "magic mix" is primarily a flavor enhancer for the tobacco, but also involves a kind of harm reduction as many of the herbs help to dilate the passages of the lungs and soothe the harsh effects of the tobacco.

After a long pull on his glass pipe or "chalice", Judah doubled over in a coughing fit. I tossed the packet of magic mix over to him, and said, "You should try mixing some of this with your ganja, it's good for you."

"What's that?" he asked.

"Magic mix," I answered, "It's good for your lungs. It will help with the coughing."

At the time, I knew very little about the magic mix. My friend had told me its ingredients, but the list had gone in one ear and out the other. All I knew was that it tasted good, and it made my lungs feel better than smoking pure tobacco.

"But what's in there?" Judah insisted, sniffing the packet.

"I don't know man, but it's good stuff," I answered dismissively. Judah shook his head and put the packet aside.

"Try some!" I insisted, "It'll help you with that coughing!"

"But you didn't tell me what's in there!" Judah laughed, "You just say 'magic mix' and you don't say what it is."

"But it's herbs," I answered, puzzled.

This was when I realized that Judah's rejection of biomedicine, and his support of herbal medicine, was far from a dogmatic repetition of an ideological principle. When he wasn't touting the value of herbal medicine, he regarded herbal medicines with just as much suspicion as biomedical treatments. It was all about the "roots" of the medicine: as discussed earlier, bush doctors seek to know the stories of their medicines. But herbal medicine – even in plant form, like the magic mix – is not exempt from this critical requirement, simply by virtue of its evidently natural origins.

Uncovering the Conspiracy

I contacted the Cape Bush Doctors, a non-profit organization based in Stellenbosch, some fifty kilometers northwest of Cape Town, which advocates for the rights and empowerment of the Rastafari bush doctors, as well as traditional healers from other traditions (Cape Bush Doctors NPO 2014a). The organization's aims include developing a standardized curriculum, culturally appropriate to the lives and needs of the often impoverished bush doctors, which is intended to empower the bush doctors through official certification, thereby adding a form of legitimacy to their work. Other organizational aims include advocating for the bush doctors' legal right to harvest and transplant plants in the wilderness, as well as advocating for the legality of ganja, as a religious and medicinal sacrament. I met up with the organization's chairperson, !Gora, in the Stellenbosch University Botanical Gardens, where he works to promote the knowledge and cultivation of medicinal plants.

!Gora is a respected elder and a priest in the Nyabinghi Rastafari mansion. He is also a highly accomplished bush doctor, and he works closely with various academics from the University of Stellenbosch, including Lennox Olivier (whose 2011 thesis and 2013 article inspired my research) and Nokwanda Makunga (Cape Bush Doctors NPO 2014a), to explore both the social and biological aspects of herbal medicine. Lastly, !Gora sits on the Interim Traditional Health Practitioners Council of South Africa, reporting directly to the Minister of Health about issues surrounding traditional medicine in this country. Surely, since !Gora works closely with biomedical practitioners, as well as members of government, it would make no sense for him to be inherently opposed to those systems.

However, I found that !Gora still carried a deep mistrust for various bureaucratic systems of control. He did not share the "conspiracy theory" attitude towards biomedicine and the government, but he had still struggled against repression by the law. CapeNature, the municipal organization responsible for conservation in the province, had been consistently and unresponsively refusing to provide avenues for bush doctors to harvest their herbs legally. !Gora explained how CapeNature, having submitted to the legal pressure applied by Cape Bush Doctors, does provide an application form for a permit to harvest herbs as a traditional healer. However, the applications are never granted and the organization remains steadfastly opposed to involving traditional healers in decision-making about conservation. On the other hand, applications to harvest herbs for biomedical and academic research purposes are granted quickly and easily – indicating CapeNature's bias. According to !Gora, this attitude is the result of negative perceptions of traditional healers as primitive and outdated (see also Olivier 2011, 2013).

Since CapeNature controls almost all of the viable harvesting land in the province, its strict regulations make the bush doctors' livelihood much more difficult. !Gora went on to tell me how this is not simply a matter of harvesting herbs. Bush doctors have developed a rich tradition of custodianship over the land (Aston Philander 2010, Olivier 2011, 2013). This tradition involves techniques to ensure the survival and continued supply of certain herbs. Bush doctors are taught various methods of transplanting, propagating seeds, and planting cultivated bulbs, to rehabilitate struggling populations. However, this work is impossible to carry out when merely being caught in the protected areas can be grounds for imprisonment. Moreover, many of the bush doctors' harvesting practices involve a profound appreciation for their environment, enacted through deeply meditating with the plants they plan to harvest. The belief is that this meditation empowers the medicine of the plants being harvested, simultaneously empowering the spiritual sensitivity and healing capacity of the

plants being harvested, simultaneously empowering the spiritual sensitivity and healing capacity of the bush doctor. Unfortunately, I was never exposed to this practice because all the bush doctors I accompanied on their harvesting excursions were under pressure to get the mission over with as quickly as possible, to avoid being caught.

When I asked !Gora about TB, I discovered another layer to his reasoned mistrust. He responded first with his characteristic, bright-eyed chuckle, saying, "Jaaa, my bru, we actually have a cure for that. Using two or three herbs, we've actually been having very good results with the multi-drug-resistant TB."

"And?" I asked, "What are those herbs?"

"I can't actually tell you, it's still top secret," followed by another sneaky laugh.

Why was this information so closely guarded? !Gora told me that there are two reasons for this secrecy. The first has to do with Intellectual Property Rights, and it refers to the concern that such knowledge could be illegally appropriated by big pharmaceutical companies, who may reap the profits of such knowledge, without providing adequate rewards to the Rastafari herbalists. This has been a common concern for bush doctors, who themselves struggle to obtain the herbs needed to earn their livelihood, and run the risk of having their relevance stripped by pharmaceutical companies that have the capabilities of mass production and mass marketing (Aston Philander 2010, Olivier 2011, 2013). This issue is illustrated by the well-known controversy surrounding the medicinal plant, Hoodia gordonii, which was marketed for its appetite-suppressing properties without any compensation being provided to the San people who had been using this plant for hundreds, perhaps thousands of years (Aston Philander 2010). Vandana Shiva (1998) has described this appropriation of knowledge as "biopiracy", and it remains a pressing concern for marginalized peoples everywhere as their traditional cultural knowledge is exploited without fair distribution of the profits. The second concern is that the pharmaceutical companies – who reap

the profits of mass-produced TB medication – may deem this new knowledge to have the potential to undercut profits on their existing products. According to !Gora, such companies might seek to destroy, repress, or undermine this new discovery so as to prevent this loss of profit.

On a more philosophical level, !Gora still disagreed with the dominant practices of biomedicine. He referred to the impersonal, standardized method of dealing with patients, arguing for a more intimate connection with people who need medical care. He explained how the most important part of his work is his relationship with his patients – not the medicines he gives them. He emphasized the importance of providing a space in which people feel genuine care, with the time and space to ask questions and learn about the processes of their own healing.

I had come to see the depth with which the bush doctors have engaged in understanding their role in society. The seven years of training usually required to become a bush doctor involve much more than just learning about the herbs and where to find them. The training involves developing a holistic understanding of the world and the people and plants within it, where the concerns about harmony with nature are equal to the concerns about harmony with people. In short, I developed a deep respect for these people and their work.

Understanding the Solution

Now that I truly cared about what the bush doctors were doing, I began to explore ways in which I could be of assistance to their cause. Specifically, I was inspired by the work of several anthropologists. First among them, was Nancy Scheper-Hughes (1995), who boldly critiques anthropology's dispassionate, potentially inhumane effort to maintain some form of academic neutrality, challenging anthropologists to take ethical standpoints and look for ways to use anthropology for meaningful, critical change. Kellett's (2009) work was also useful, converying the

contemporary debate around advocacy in anthropology, offering balance by revealing its benefits and potential drawbacks, but still ultimately calling for ethnographers to be more engaged and concerned with the lives of their research participants. Most pertinently, however, I drew on Lennox Olivier's (2011, 2013) direct participatory research with the bush doctors. Taking up the position of managing director at the Cape Bush Doctors organization, Olivier has truly responded to Freire's (1982) call for engagement and connection with the lives of research participants. I felt compelled to explore ways to really mobilize my own research for producing some real good. But how could I help? I was a student, with little, if any power to do anything.

I travelled to Marcus Garvey – a Rastafari community in Philippi, Cape Town. There, I found a community of people who were eloquent in their critique of society, as well as their expression of their beliefs. I had the privilege of attending a church service, in which I was inspired by the short sermons given by various members of the community, calling for the congregants to help one another in any way they could. In general, the atmosphere in the community was one of love, kindness, and eagerness to bring about positive change.

There, I met Zebulon, one of the community elders who works in the community center to help people find jobs, apply for loans and grants, find schooling, etc. Although Zebulon was not a bush doctor, he knew of their work and supported their methods. He readily accepted that some medical ailments couldn't be treated through the use of herbs, believing that TB – for example – is one such illness. This shows that contempt for biomedicine is not a standard amongst the Rastafari. However, Zebulon went on to explain that the Rastafari lifestyle promotes health and healing in a way that can prevent many of the health-related difficulties plaguing the South African people. One of the core principles of the Rastafari religion is vegetarianism, based on the belief that it is

a sin to eat the flesh of a sentient animal (Aston Philander 2010). In addition, there is a very strong prohibition against the consumption of alcohol and drugs (excluding marijuana, if you consider it a drug) (Aston Philander 2010). This religious instruction has its roots in the Nazarite vow of the Old Testament, which prohibits the consumption of grapes and their by-products, i.e. wine (Aston Philander 2010, 48). These factors form a strong emphasis on living a healthy lifestyle, translating into a number of interesting developments. These include the avoidance of sugar, salt, coffee, and cigarettes, which are all seen as tools of colonial oppression, designed to colonize the minds of slaves through the mechanism of addiction (Aston Philander 2010, 51). Zebulon thus claims that a healthy lifestyle is the best solution to the problem of TB, and, moreover, to an entire array of health-related issues. Certainly, this claim is easily supported by scientific knowledge that has long since discussed the dangers of all these substances (Freund et al. 1993, Higdon and Frei 2006, Kopelman 2006, Bayer, Johns, and Galea 2012). Furthermore, it has been shown that TB will very rarely develop into a life-threatening illness, if it presents any symptoms at all, in a body that has a strong and healthy immune system (Van Crevel, Ottenhoff, and van der Meer 2002).

Until that moment, I had been seeking to evaluate these healing methods according to my familiar frameworks for healing – as specific cures for specific illnesses. But it is problematic to measure the value of African knowledge systems against the standards of dominant knowledge systems that have stemmed from colonialism (Nyamnjoh 2012). This kind of comparison sets up the neo-colonial science-based knowledge as the benchmark for all knowledge, holding a central position of inherent superiority. As such, contemporary anthropologists studying traditional medicine – like me – have been inclined to explain the reasons why traditional medicine should be viewed with greater respect by the biomedical community. Zebulon's philosophy on healing – by a man who isn't a healer – seemed to hold promise for addressing the issue of TB, even though he wasn't offering a specific medicine

to "eliminate the Mycobacterium tuberculosis". What if anthropologists and academics looked at traditional medicinal systems (in this case, the holistic health-seeking lifestyle of the Rastas) to see their internal value, without trying to measure them against some other, central truth that we assume should be playing the key role? If the Rastafari lifestyle can help in lowering the chances of TB turning into a life-threatening disease, and the bush doctors' medicines can help in healing those cases of TB that do arise, then the Rastas have a very meaningful contribution to make in dealing with the TB epidemic, without needing biomedicine's stamp of approval.

So, unable to find an answer by myself, I asked Zebulon:
"How can I help?" "Anything!" Zebulon responded, without hesitation, "If you have some knowledge of computers, come and teach me. If you have some knowledge of the land, come and share it with us. You, with your university education, come and share it."

But what could I offer Zebulon with my anthropological education? Spending more time with Zebulon, I came to see the importance of independence to the Rastafari. Most Rastas, especially bush doctors, have chosen to pursue self-employment. This focus on independence is part of the Rastafari agenda for liberation – resisting and avoiding the status of serving someone else, i.e. avoiding any semblance of slavery; the ultimate expression of "Babylon" (Aston Philander 2010, 27). From an anthropological perspective, however, the kind of "independence" attained through earning enough money to survive within the monetary system is clearly a complex notion (Maurer 2006). Money is not a naturally valuable commodity – in and of itself, it cannot provide anything – no food, no shelter, no security, nothing (Maurer 2006). However, when people agree on the value of a monetary unit, then it can be used as a placeholder for exchange. Thus, as people place value on money, they are able to exchange it for things that have inherent, practical value – like food, shelter, and security. This reveals the fact that financial "independence" is not really independence. Rather, it involves a dependence on the

socially constructed value of money (Maurer 2006).

Already, many of my participants had expressed their contempt for money as a corrupting influence, encouraging greed and materialism, often associated with Babylon. Rastas commonly engage in bartering or gifting amongst one another, emphasizing the importance of sharing. Aston Philander (2010, 114) has described this as a "diversified economy". However, they remain largely dependent on commercial producers of food. Discussing these matters with Zebulon, I was again struck with a sense of being overwhelmed and underpowered. Until Zebulon expressed his dream for the future:

"I want a farm," he said.

Growing edible plants is one other noted method of pursuing independence within the Rastafari philosophy (Aston Philander 2010, 52). Zebulon and I quickly reached the conclusion that farming food could liberate the Rastafari people – in a much truer sense – than attaining financial wealth. In an ideal world, the Rastas would be able to grow enough food to sustain themselves, thereby removing their absolute dependence on money. Unfortunately, the Rastas, in Marcus Garvey and elsewhere, lack the land and skills needed for a really meaningful endeavor. But, letting this goal rest in the future, Zebulon recognizes the value of working towards it through incremental, small-scale changes. Many community members already cultivate small vegetable gardens, in the limited spaces they have managed to carve out.

"So what can I do, right now?" I pressed.

"Can you bring me some water?" Zebulon responded.

"What?" I laughed, utterly confused.

"You live by the mountain, right? Can you bring me some water from the mountain? That water is good for your soul."

This request finally revealed the solution to what had quickly become a personal, existential crisis of agency for me. Like so many others, I had spent a great deal of effort on pondering the question of how to create positive change without producing

destructive unintended side effects (Scheper-Hughes 1995, Kellett 2009). But Zebulon's request for water showed me the clarity of human collaboration in a way that had been obscured by my education. Through focusing so heavily on the socially constructed nature of all human cultural concepts and categories, I had lost touch with the meaning of action. Simply by virtue of the infinite complexity of human culture, one cannot possibly hope to predict every single outcome of a given action. For some anthropologists, this has meant refraining from action for fear of its unpredictable moral or material consequences. Hastrup and Elsass (1990), for example, argue against the movement towards advocacy anthropology, cautioning against a potential reification of the paradigm of "saving" people, as if one has the moral high ground to know what's best for others. Luckily for me, the action requested by my participants has not involved legal or moral battles. It has involved hands-on assistance by means of my physical and financial capacities. I could drive to town, buy a big water container, fill it up from the mountain streams, and bring it back. Fulfilling this request would mean fulfilling the community's religious ethic of giving your time and effort for the good of others.

I am not claiming that bringing a jerry can full of mountain water to Zebulon will change anything. I am suggesting that – if more people in positions of privilege were to offer their time and resources for the benefit of those in marginalized positions – then the entire world would change. Extrapolating this theory, I have sought to put my social, financial, and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) to much better use. In collaborating with the Cape Bush Doctors organization's Indigenous Knowledge Ark initiative (Cape-Bush-Doctors-NPO 2014b), I will be utilizing my expertise with social media and online communication – as well as my personal contacts in the worlds of media, film, and fundraising – to produce some of the first few episodes in an ongoing videographic archive, capturing and preserving the medicinal knowledge of the bush doctors. It's not going to change the world. It's not going to liberate the Rastas from the monetary system. But it will

contribute to the production of something they would love to create, but are unable to do so alone, due to the constraints of structural inequality. It will provide them with a repository for knowledge and education, disseminating useful advice for maintaining health, thereby contributing – in some small way – to securing the healthy lifestyle that can prevent the onset of TB.

In short, my most powerful finding – in terms of anthropological knowledge with the potential for positive change – is this method of engaging with people:

Find some people you like.
Ask them what they need.
Do whatever you can to help them get it.

This is akin to Scheper-Hughes' (1995, 418) description of anthropology as "a tool for critical reflection and for human liberation." Nyamnjoh (2007, 1) has described something similar in taking what he calls a "predicament-oriented approach" to social research.

Reflections and Conclusions

Perhaps the most striking aspect of this research is the fact that it is not new. It doesn't constitute a breakthrough finding, or a new theoretical framework, and it hardly challenges what most contemporary anthropologists are saying. As an undergraduate student trying to prove my worth, I was encouraged to go into the world with an open mind, and allow the world to present me with findings that I hadn't presupposed. Still, my education, and my research in all other anthropological writings, had given me a strong sense of needing to "make an argument" in my work (Jacobson 1991, 7).

However, fairly early in the process of my fieldwork, I realized that the intention to make "an argument" entailed a preconception in and of itself. It represents the desire of anthropologists and

researchers everywhere to prove their own worth, and the worth of their research. Without "an argument", a piece of research is nothing more than mere description (Jacobson 1991, 7). But, my research showed me that my participants were diverse people who could not be reduced to any intellectual conclusion about them. This, like everything else in my research, is fairly obvious. And although its implications have long been recognized by anthropologists, many have still insisted on creating generalizations and identifying common tendencies. We have critiqued Evans-Pritchard (1929) for reducing cultures to their core "idioms", only to reduce cultures to their core "arguments", even if we have mentioned the fact that diversity does exist (Clifford and Marcus 1986). I am, actually, making a plea for anthropologists to focus more on the active aspects of their work. Ethnography should be less a matter of producing a monograph, rich in detail, and inaccessible in language, and more a matter of working in the field to discover ways in which one's time, knowledge, and resources can be mobilized according to the visions of one's participants.

Certainly, there is value in the circulation of anthropological research amongst policymakers and advisors in non-governmental and governmental organizations alike (Nader 1972). There is value in the production of anthropological academic knowledge, which involves active, conscious engagement with the timeless project of understanding the diversity of human existence. However, in a world plagued by poverty and societal injustice, I believe it is insufficient for academic research to circulate only within the institutions of its production. In a sense, I am adding my voice to the call sounded by Brazilian activist and researcher, Paulo Freire (1982), to bring the locus of research dissemination more into the worlds of the people whose lives provide the research data.

This is why I believe in doing fieldwork among people who share similar aspirations and beliefs to me. Anthropologists can more feasibly dedicate themselves to cooperating with their

participants, in a genuinely involved and useful fashion, if they share a sincere, experiential understanding of their participants' lives. Having said that, I believe it is still exceptionally important to conduct ethnographic research amongst those with whom we might disagree intensely, especially in questions of power and domination (Nader 1972). In either case, we should no longer be seeking to use reflexivity to limit the impact of our subjectivity (Collins and Gallinat, 2010). Instead, we should use our reflexivity to discover our own notions and emotions, so that we might consciously and transparently align ourselves with communities in need, with whom we have a personal affinity, and critique communities in power, with whom we might have intense disagreements (Collins and Gallinat, 2010).

I began by looking for a relationship between traditional medicine and TB. What I found was a fascinating critical rejection of systems of knowledge that conceal and confine the relational narratives that are inherent in any process of knowledge production. As I explored how bush doctors and their patients perceived TB and biomedicine in general, it became apparent that their meaningful critique has often manifested into a rejection of biomedical treatment, as well as a widespread suspicion of institutional knowledge production and institutional control. More importantly, I forged some lasting friendships, with wise individuals urging me to stop looking for the things that I want in life, and start looking for the things that I can give in life.

By producing a paper in a relatively informal style, I am hoping to demonstrate how the ideas that anthropologists discuss need not be weighed down by unnecessary verbosity. In a way, I've chosen to use this opportunity to demonstrate the ways in which simple human honesty and compassion can achieve much more than the egotistical pursuit of academic relevance. 'Honesty' can be described as an ethical imperative towards reflexive transparency, urging anthropologists to explore and declare their personal, emotional, and political involvements in any research.

'Compassion', then, can be described as a second ethical imperative to mobilize one's research in accordance with those motivations. In this case, the motivations for my research began with the desire to complete an institutional degree, in the hope of finding relevance as an anthropologist in the future. However, as I sought to understand what that really meant, I came to share my participants' critique of academic knowledge. In the end, my research was no longer motivated by the desire to earn institutional valorization, rather, it was motivated by the desire to mobilize my skills and resources in whatever way possible, to work together with my friends in pursuing their aspirations of freedom and health.

Photo Credit: Gilad Levanon

Photo: Judah's Herbs at the Cape Town Central Taxi Rank.

ENDNOTES

1. "KhoiSan" is the ethnic name given to the descendants of two of this area's oldest human inhabitants – the KhoiKhoi and the San (Aston Philander 2010:89).

2. These are the names participants use to refer to themselves – except Judah. I have kept Judah's identity anonymous, simply because, in this ethnography, he is described as committing illegal activities, so his anonymity is necessary for his own protection (Marshall 1992). Throughout this ethnography, I have provided accurate information regarding everything else except Judah's real name. This is because I have seen no need to obscure the names and causes of people who have told me they would rather have the world know their stories. With regards to the fact that I still reveal Judah's home suburb, as well as his workplace, it may be possible to track down his general whereabouts through these details. However, there are number of bush doctors who share the same work area and home suburb. This means that these details are insufficient for definitively identifying Judah. Besides, having seen him successfully avoid police attention, I am confident that this ethnography poses no additional threat to him.

3. This is a problematic, imposed category. It refers homogenously to a very diverse group of individuals who could not be easily classified in any of the other racialized apartheid categories. It includes (among other groupings) the descendants of Malaysian slaves brought by Dutch settlers, as well as the descendants of so-called racial miscegenation between "black" and "white" people, and finally, the descendants of certain South African

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ENDNOTES (cont.)

3. ethnicities who did not carry that characteristically dark skin of the so-called Bantu peoples, such as the KhoiSan.

4. This term refers to the evidence-based, cause-cure paradigm utilized by biomedicine in approaching health and illness. This method has been problematized for its reductionist tendencies, attempting to isolate specific molecular or systemic causes for illness and produce targeted direct chemical or physical interventions. It has been described as the product of a mind-body dualism, which has also been implicated in the oppression of women, the destruction of nature, and the proliferation of racial discrimination (Scheper-Hughes and Lock 1987).

5. It contains chamomile (Matricaria chamomilla) (Repetto and Llesuy 2002) and sceletium (Mesembryanthemum tortuosum) (Van Wyk, van Oudtshoorn, and Gericke 2013:200), as well as mullein (Verbascum thapsus) (Turker and Camper 2002), and a few other plants.

6. This is one of the most prominent Rastafari orders in South Africa (Aston Philander 2010:59). In the Rastafari religion, theological and philosophical variation, as well as cultural diversity, has led to the formation of a number of what are called "mansions" (Aston Philander 2010:58). Mansions may be likened to denominations in Christianity, exhibiting a variety of 'outer' observable differences. There is a large degree of mobility and mingling between and amongst mansions, and often individual Rastas will not be steadfastly associated with one mansion or another. The Nyabinghi mansion, sometimes considered

ENDNOTES (cont.)

6. a stricter version of Rastafari because of its associations with the belief in a global theocracy, is named after the "Nyabinghi" worship ceremony (Aston Philander 2010:59). These ceremonies include drumming, chanting, and the smoking of ganja, and they are affectionately referred to as "the 'binghi" (!Gora, personal communication, 5 September 2014)

7. Informal for "my brother", coming from Afrikaans, "broer".

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