The Journal for Undergraduate Ethnography

Volume 6 Issue 1
Fall 2016

ISSN 2369-8721

# EDITORIAL Board



## JUE DESIGNER

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The Journal for Undergraduate Ethnography
Volume 6 | Issue 1
ISSN 2369-8721

# Economies Of Waste: Rethinking Waste Along the Korle Lagoon

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## ABSTRACT

This article focuses on practices of recycling that have emerged along the Korle Lagoon in Accra, Ghana in an attempt to rethink the role of trash in the city. Many have predicted that the city's garbage nightmare will be its doom. Much of Accra's trash ends up along the Korle Lagoon, near Old Fadama and thus the slum is blamed for the pollution of its waters. In what follows, I first examine instances of these allegations from the present day, and then juxtapose them with archival evidence. Using the historical record, I show that the history of trash in the Korle extends earlier than the establishment of the settlement and that moreover, the pollution of the lagoon begins upstream even before it passes by the slum. Old Fadama, I argue, is not—as has been believed—the principal polluter of the Korle. Instead, using ethnographic evidence from fieldwork conducted along the lagoon, and drawing inspiration from the concepts of the biological city developed by Wolman, Girardet and Gandy, the article suggests that rather than holding Accra back, the economies of waste facilitated by the lagoon and the slum have actually rechanneled some of this refuse, thereby contributing to certain forms of city-making.

## Introduction

At the start of the new millennium, the Ghana Institute of Architects, in collaboration with the Goethe Institute, convened a conference on the future of Accra as a global 21st century city. Proceedings from the conference, which were subsequently published in a fourteen-part compilation entitled: Visions of the City: Accra in the 21st Century, included Nana Araba Apt's "Accra in the 21st Century: Visions from the Crystal Ball of a Sociologist." In her chapter, Apt forecasts a daunting future for Accra:

The plastic debris that now engulfs our city was not there 20 years ago. It will continue to choke the city like unwanted vermin in the next 20 years as we meet our promised vision for "plenty in 2020 (Apt 2002, 46)."

> Within her prediction are two major claims about the city's past and future respectively. In the first place, Apt views the presence of garbage within Accra as a modern manifestation, which "was not there 20 years ago." Second, she depicts the city's disposal problem as an intractable one that will "continue to choke the city" thus threatening its survival. I take these two claims as a point of departure to explore waste management in Accra.

In this article, I make one main intervention. I argue for an examination of Accra's trash that does not simply identify it as a difficulty that threatens to overrun the city, but rather takes into consideration some of the ways in which the city's garbage has shaped its growth. Whereas much early literature on waste focused on disposal as a technical problem, more recent approaches have advocated for an examination of its social dimensions: which new structures have emerged as a response to the build-up of rubbish in many of the world's cities, and how do these shape the urban landscape? Notable among such studies is Mikael Drackner's "What is waste? To whom? (2005)." Drawing empirical material from Tacna, Peru. Drackner explores five main ways in which waste may be perceived: "as a risk, as a social contagion, as belonging in dirty places, as an asset and as someone else's problem," to show that at any given time and place, the same thing—i.e. garbage—may be experienced and conceived of differently by people within various contexts. Taking Drackner's example, this paper also attempts to locate alternative perspectives on waste and its use, outside of the dominant narrative. Using the Korle Lagoon in Accra, Ghana—long a receptacle for waste within the nation's capital—I examine the effects of garbage on the city, not merely in apocalyptic terms as many have tended to do, but instead by paying particular attention to how the recycling economies that have emerged around the Korle serve to produce new social and economic configurations within the growing city. To develop this argument, I begin by describing my research process and then review scholarship on waste and urban metabolism within the field.

## Methodology & Positionality

This article uses material collected as part of a larger research project on discourses of pollution around the Korle Lagoon. Information was gathered during two fieldwork trips: Dec 2013-Jan 2014 and May-August 2014, as well as almost two years of related coursework. During this time, I spent several weeks by the lagoon interviewing those who lived there, and walked along the streets of different communities in Accra to get a sense of what residents had heard and thought about the Korle. At present, public opinion strongly accuses the slum of causing the lagoon to become polluted and "dead". In order to examine the present narrative, it was necessary to compare it to the historical record and see whether the genealogy of pollution that is often presented by city officials and residents would actually hold up. Therefore, I also conducted searches of the city's libraries and national archives for texts concerning the Korle. The kinds of sources and methods used in this project, stem from my training in history, literature and anthropology, and are similar to those often used in historical anthropology. My approach, for instance, combines official government letters and maps gathered from the national archives with close readings of a video and a comic, or oral

histories with traditional authorities and ethnographic observations—both written and filmed—in an attempt to arrive at a multifaceted conception of how both the lagoon and pollution are perceived and responded to within the city.

Many of these observations were, to a great extent, influenced by my position within various communities along the lagoon: I was strange but not too strange, familiar but not uncomfortably so. To residents jaded by international visitors and attention, my identity as a Ghanaian student who could interact with others in Twi—the most widely spoken local language—or Pidgin English meant that fellow Ghanaians were more ready to engage with me. And among other West African migrant groups my fluency in French and my Nigerian heritage had much the same effect. On the other hand, I was also sufficiently strange. In a community that is heavily looked down upon by the rest of Accra—a reality conveyed by the nickname "Sodom and Gomorrah" given to the slum—being a student from "abrokyire" (i.e. "America", or more accurately an American university) gave me some distance from the rest of Accra, enough perhaps, that I could ask seemingly obvious questions (like "does the Korle Lagoon matter?") and still be answered.

Another factor that shaped my interactions along the lagoon was the video-recording equipment in my possession. Having spent two years engaging with sensory ethnography, my research process culminated in Fadama (2014) a 25-minute non-fiction film about work at the e-waste dump, as well as longer written piece on discourses of pollution. The possession of a camera and the process of filming imply a subsequent act of viewing and therefore an audience. For this reason, though I explained that my film would not contain dialogue or interviews, many people were keen to address my lens and correct misconceptions about their community. Surprisingly, even those who had voiced a strong distrust of cameras appeared eager to talk to me about this, in order to explain how both local journalists and international freelancers had preciously taken advantage of them. Here too, being at the intersection of both local and foreign—a Ghanaian-Nigerian schooled in America—meant that people seemed more willing to speak with me.

Lastly, in some cases I suspect there may have otherwise been pushback against a stranger asking questions about the lagoon, or wanting to film people at work—especially at the controversial e-waste site—but the fact that I was a student and a young woman mostly on my own seemed also to make others want to help me. Once my interlocutors or I explained that I was working on a school project I got a more favourable reception, almost as if everyone felt responsible for contributing to my academic success. Moreover, in a slum mostly led by older men, being a young woman rendered me harmless in the eyes of many that I met, and made them more permissive of my witnessing and even documenting some otherwise heavily guarded activities.

In turn, these encounters informed my investigation. Often nature is presented as "the last remaining place where civilization, that all too human disease, has not fully infected the earth" (Cronon 1996, 69-90), and urbanism as a destructive process that encroaches upon it. Such has been the case in Accra: the media reiterates accounts of a recently devastated lagoon, and then of the settlement that caused it, as well as the detrimental effects it has on the city. Yet the information I received did not fit this: I found that the Korle's pollution went well beyond what was remembered, that a host of other factors beyond Old Fadama were responsible for its contamination, and that moreover the slum could be said to have had some constructive effects on Accra. This paper reflects the challenge that such findings pose to the mainstream view—the simplistic depiction of the lagoon as a victim and the slum as its aggressor.

## Beyond the Bacteriological City

In a seminal work within the study of urban metabolism, American intellectual and sanitation engineer Abel Wolman defines "The Metabolism of Cities" as the sequence of processes required to provide a given city with all its resource consumption and waste disposal needs:

> The metabolic requirements of a city can be defined as all the materials and commodities needed to sustain the city's inhabitants at home, at work and at play…The metabolic cycle is not completed until wastes and residues of daily life have been removed and disposed of with a minimum of nuisance and hazard.
> (Wolman 1965, 179)

Drawing examples from American cities such as New York and Los Angeles, Wolman focuses on three major areas in which metabolic dysfunction often arises, as cities expand and are less able to appropriately discard their waste. These three are "adequate water supply", "disposal of sewage" and "air pollution". Within the article, focusing mostly on the use of water, he then models a hypothetical American city whose input-materials greatly exceed its output-waste. Using this model, Wolman attempts to demonstrate the detrimental effects of the compilation of garbage on the health of urban centers.

Building upon Wolman's concepts, cultural ecologist Herbert Girardet in "Regenerative Cities"—his report for the World Future Council—takes the idea of an urban input/output balance a step further. He prescribes a shift in policy from striving for the "metabolic city" and proposes instead that cities work towards what he terms the "regenerative city". In explaining this, Girardet first differentiates between the two forms of metabolism inherent in nature (i.e. circularity) and cities (i.e. linearity) respectively:

> Nature essentially has a circular zero-waste metabolism: every output by an organism is also an input which replenishes and sustains the whole living environment. In contrast, the metabolism of many modern cities is essentially linear, with resources flowing through the urban systems without much concern about their origin, and about the destination of wastes. (Girardet 2010, n.p.)

Unlike the natural environment, where an output in one context is simultaneously an input within a different scenario, Girardet contends that within most modern cities, inputs and outputs are largely unrelated, contributing to the pileups of waste material the world over. As a solution, he prescribes the establishment of "Ecopolis"; rather than merely reducing waste produced, such "regenerative cities" will introduce forms of circular metabolism into urban centers. Whereas the "metabolic" city sought simply to dispose of waste, this its "regenerative" counterpart would aim higher and "positively enhance rather than undermine the ecosystem," by finding ways to reincorporate waste into systems of production as new inputs.

Though recognizing the usefulness of each of these biological metaphors—which he himself terms "the biological city"—as a useful entry point for imagining the city, urban geographer Matthew Gandy (2010) contends that reducing the urban landscape to inputs, outputs and flows in this way inhibits an examination of all the complexities inherent in today's global cities. Instead of just conceptualizing the city as an efficient homeostatic machine, Gandy makes two points. . The first is that everything works more messily in the increasingly globalized present; "metabolism" is not merely determined by policymakers, as Wolman and Girardet seem to suggest. Rather, in some cases, particularly in the Third World, city flows are conducted from the bottom up. Secondly, he argues that hydrological infrastructures—and other metabolic systems that facilitate urban flows—are not merely functionalist but also dialectical: they do not just do things for the city but also to it, making the relationship between nature and cities mutually constitutive. In line with this claim, the article centers primarily on the movement of water, emphasizing: "the symbolic

role of water infrastructure in the modern city and the emergence of new forms of social and cultural hybridity" (Gandy 2010, 364).

In what follows, I apply Gandy's approach to an investigation of waste disposal (or the lack thereof) along a different hydrological system: the Korle Lagoon in Accra, Ghana. Using the concept of metabolism as starting point, I examine how Accra's waste products are managed and reused along the lagoon. In addition, I look at the social and economic changes that have been facilitated in the city through the intervention of this body of water on the urban landscape.

## "Garbage Nightmare"

On 23rd May 2014, the Black Narrator—an anonymous Ghanaian political cartoonist, affiliated with national newspaper The Daily Graphic—posted a cartoon entitled "Garbage Nightmare" onto his/her Facebook page. In it, a terrified figure, bearing a striking resemblance to the Mayor of Accra, Alfred Nii Oko Vanderpuije, attempts to escape being captured by the colossal trash-monster behind him. The beast, with an overflowing trash-can for a head, and similar litter comprising a body—such as empty bottles on his back, a used syringe in his right thigh, a spoon on his belly, chicken bones in his side, and an old television set on his back—leans forward in pursuit: arms outstretched, with fingers poised to grab a fleeing Mr. Vanderpuije.


**Figure 1** The "Garbage Nightmare", Cartoon by the Black Narrator, 2013 (reproduced with permission)

To those familiar with Accra, this cartoon launches a poignant critique of the city's decades-long struggle to cope with waste both locally and internationally produced.

At present, 2,500 tonnes of waste are generated daily throughout the city and the Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA)—the planning and management authority for the nation's capital—is only able to deal with an estimated 60% of it all (Boadi and Kuitunen 2003). In 2013, for instance, the situation came to a head with the closure of the Oblogo landfill site, a popular metropolitan dumping location. For several days the lack of a replacement disposal site meant that garbage collection stalled, and waste piled up in locations across Accra. With the announcement by Samuel Kpodo, the AMA's deputy director for waste management that "we still lack a final disposal or dump site for the Accra Metropolis" (The Weekend Globe 2003), anxieties began to escalate about the threats to hygiene—such as an outbreak of cholera—that such piles of rubbish could pose to residents.

Unfortunately, locally produced trash—though itself a major problem—is not the only kind that fills the city. In recent years, Accra has emerged as a digital dumping ground where millions of electronic waste products—symbolized by the television on the back of the trash monster in The Black Narrator's cartoon above—from the Western world are annually sent off. Initially begun under the guise of providing affordable second-hand devices for use in less developed countries, the movement of technology into Ghana now takes the form of derelict equipment. Foreign companies, unwilling to bear the costs for the proper recycling of their old electronics, instead sell them to dealers. These middlemen then illegally smuggle such items into the country to be cast away at sites such as Agbogbloshie near the Korle Lagoon in Accra. Here, these electronics are broken down and burnt by groups of otherwise unemployed young men. Then, copper wiring, and other valuable components are gathered and sold to larger foreign recycling companies in order to earn an income. As a

result of these electronic waste dumps, and recycling activities, the Agbogbloshie area is now ranked alongside Ukraine's Chernobyl among the top ten most polluted places on the planet in a report produced by two pollution-based non-profit organizations, the Blacksmith Institute and Green Cross Switzerland (2013).

If the Mayor of the cartoon represents Accra, then it may well be said that the monster which plagues the city is its own creation: the "Garbage Nightmare" that haunts Accra is one that the city itself has bred and fed to such horrendous proportions, through failing to adequately dispose of its own domestic waste, and also in allowing refuse from foreign countries to pile upon its shores. It is at the center of the city, along the banks of the Korle Lagoon, that most of this waste washes up.

## Korle Lagoon—Odaw River

With a catchment area of about 400km2, the Korle Lagoon is the city's largest drainage system (Boadi and Kuitunen 2002). From the hills of Abokobi and Adjankote in the north of the city, water flows downwards through the Odaw River and its tributaries and into the Korle Lagoon near Accra Central, emptying out into the Atlantic Ocean at the Gulf of Guinea. The Odaw River is the largest tributary of the Korle. There is no exact point at which river becomes lagoon, only approximation. For this reason the two names are sometimes used interchangeably in news reports. For much of the 21st century, the dream has been to establish a tourist resort along this lagoon. This vision was reiterated in 2013, when the AMA promised, as part of its city upgrade scheme, to "transform the filth-laden Korle Lagoon in Accra into a modern pleasure and transport complex comparable to those in Paris" (Radio XYZ 2013). If successful, this would radically alter the Korle from its heavily polluted present state.

Sources of pollution to the Korle are many. Factories in the industrial area as well as the nearby Korle Bu Teaching Hospital's mortuary discharge effluent into the lagoon. Faecal matter, dumped into the sea by the city at the ironically-named "Lavender Hill", may backwash into the lagoon, and residents of nearby communities often throw domestic waste into the Korle Lagoon and its tributaries. Decomposition of these toxins depletes oxygen resources and as a result, plant and animal life cannot be sustained. Siltation also causes huge problems. Sediments wash in from the banks, clog the bed of the lagoon, block drainage into the sea, and cause the water to stagnate. Still waters then pose a danger to human life and property: they breed mosquitos, making malaria more likely; host pathogens which cause cholera, typhoid and so on; and create risks of flooding during the rainy season when the lagoon overflows into neighboring communities, damaging homes and other structures.

**Figure 2** "Trash Mountain," Still from film Fadama by Author (Onuoha 2014)

Though many do remember moments in time when the Korle provided ample tilapia and crabs for local fishermen, a swimming spot for young boys, and a hub of canoe transport for traders, present uses of the lagoon are a far cry from this its idyllic past. Nowadays the Korle Lagoon exists as one of the planet's most polluted bodies of water. Direct comparisons are thus often drawn between the lagoon's current state as "dead" and memories of it as a thriving source of fish. The following excerpt from The Daily Graphic illustrates this:

> The Odaw River has not only become a dumping ground for solid waste but also a receptacle for excreta, as some people squat along its banks to freely attend to the call of nature, even in broad daylight. As a result of this extensive pollution, the Odaw River is virtually dead. There is hardly aquatic life in the river, especially at places where pollution is very severe. Many years ago, people used to fish in this river. (The Daily Graphic 2012)

Often, "many years ago" is taken to signify an era within the same lifetime, and in particular just up until the 1990s, when the community of Old Fadama was established along the Korle's banks.

Popularly referred to as "Sodom and Gomorrah", the Old Fadama slum is home to about 100,000 of the city's poorest residents, mostly from the country's Muslim north. Lacking access to garbage collection and other basic services provided to communities elsewhere in the city, most residents dispose of household waste and sewerage by dumping into the nearby water. The municipal authority and local media consequently tout these activities as the greatest dangers to a restored lagoon, contending that it was the establishment of the slum and its poor sanitation habits that have made the water so unclean, and that their removal will therefore allow for the development of the lagoon and its environs.

## "Because of this Sodom and Gomorrah"

"Because of this Sodom and Gomorrah enti na ɛyɛ saa [that it is like that]!" This was the opinion voiced by the Korle Wulomo—Chief Priest of Naa Korle, the Korle Lagoon's eponymous resident deity—when during an interview, I asked him about the lagoon. To restore the Korle, he continued, this cause of its pollution would have to be eliminated: "It is my wish and my desire we should dredge the lagoon and we should remove the Sodom and Gomorrah people from there, then the lagoon will go back to how it used to be in the past." This is an allegation that is often heard in Accra about the role of Old Fadama and its inhabitants in polluting the Korle Lagoon. Like the Wulomo, many blame the dumping of the slum's domestic waste into the lagoon (an action admitted by residents) for its polluted and clogged state (Onuoha 2015). Some even go a step further, accusing the slum of spoiling the water by dumping human corpses into it: Akua, a 20-year city resident recalled rumours that "some of them" conduct abortions and dump the foetuses into the lagoon, and Nii Tackie, an Accra native, was adamant that "the Northerners kill people and put them inside," thus bringing both pollution and crime to the banks of the lagoon.

Considering the lore surrounding the Korle Lagoon and Naa Korle, these accusation highlights the perception of the Old Fadama settlers as a source of corruption to the city. The deity Naa Korle, it is widely known, despises filth, especially that of dead bodies, and several stories abound in which she exacts her revenge upon those who have dared to approach her waters with a human corpse in their possession: "During funerals," I was warned, "if you cross the bridge, coffin will go!" According to one very popular story, a group of Ashantis (an ethno-linguistic group from the interior) on their way to a funeral drove their hearse across the Guggisberg Bridge. This bridge passes over the Korle Lagoon, right beside the clump of mangroves near its center, where Naa Korle is believed to dwell. The trunk of their car was

immediately yanked out of it. In some iterations of the tale, the corpse was cast up into the sky, and in others, it was flung down into the depths of the Korle. Worst of all, when told by the Wulomo, a further curse accompanied all the relatives of those responsible: "If you carry a dead body over that bridge, your entire lineage will be destroyed, no one will survive." Within this context, stories about the dumping of foetuses and the murdered into the lagoon are accusations of the slum as polluting the Korle on a spiritual as well as a physical plane, and thereby doubly deserving of removal.

These accusations are perhaps no louder voiced than in print and audio-visual media. This can be seen in a three-minute documentary on the Korle Lagoon, created by YouTube user selasekove that locates the slum as the exact spatiotemporal point at which the lagoon's waters were spoilt. Aptly titled: "Sodom and Gomorrah: Between a City and its Dream" (2011), the piece introduces the "dream," i.e. the AMA's future plans for converting the lagoon into a tourist resort of sorts. Right from the start, the video devotes much of the narration and images to situating "Sodom and Gomorrah" as a major obstacle to the dream's realization, as it is lodged firmly between Accra and this vision for a beautified lagoon. The clip opens with scenes of fishing boats on the open sea, houses along a waterside resort, and people strolling and riding horses along a beach waterfront. These images of aquatic recreation are abruptly cut short by shots of trash piles, men burning plastic amidst dense smoke, and shacks packed tightly together. The juxtaposition of images of waterside leisure (symbolic of the dream) with garbage (representing the slum community in which it was shot), that is present on the visual track, is also mirrored in the audio, as the narrator tells us:

> The Korle Lagoon…has been identified by city authorities as one natural resource, which can serve as a source of tourist attraction when given a facelift…
>
> But somewhere not too far from this lagoon, lies an obstacle to this dream…Sodom and Gomorrah. This slum is the point where the pristine waters of the lagoon have become murky, silted and lifeless.

From there, the video goes on to describe the establishment of the slum, tracing when the "the pristine waters of the lagoon [became] murky, silted, and lifeless." Together, the progression of the sound and video channels mimic the supposed role of "Sodom and Gomorrah": like the jolting cuts in the editing from beach to trash pile, the slum by its existence—or so we are led to believe—disrupts the reality of what was, and perhaps could again be, a clean and picturesque lagoon at the heart of the city.

Though many blame the slum for polluting the water, the reality is that even before the slum appeared, the Korle Lagoon had long served as Accra's waste receptacle.

## Korle in the 20th Century

Some of the first gutters and pipes to be laid in Accra in the 20th century emptied into the Korle's mouth where the lagoon's flow could then channel them into the sea. Moreover, night soil workers from the period were often instructed to dump their loads into the Korle (Tahal Water Planning Ltd. 1965). Unfortunately, as the city grew—and the waste flowing into the lagoon with it—city authorities consistently failed to upgrade the pipe and gutter systems to accommodate the swelling volumes of foul water. As documents in the national public archives show, a proposal to renovate the lagoon's sea outfall gate was rejected in 1946 (PRAAD 1), and as a result, by 1956, wastewater began to overflow well beyond the limits of the collecting drains that had been put in place decades earlier (PRAAD 2). Yet again, proposals for the installation of adequate sewer systems were drafted then discarded, since neither the colonial national government nor the Accra Town Council (predecessor to the AMA) were willing to provide funding out of their organizational budgets for

construction on the lagoon (PRAAD 3). Instead of continuing into the sea, sewerage from the pipes and garbage from the gutters began to collect in the lagoon, causing pollution and concerns about hygiene.

Yet another incident would add to pollution in the Korle, as documented by Jonathan Roberts (2010) and K. David Patterson (1979). At the height of the Second World War in 1942, when supply routes from the Mediterranean to North Africa were disrupted and diverted to West Africa, Accra became a major stopover spot for the Allied forces. However this alternative almost immediately presented problems of its own. The 37th General Hospital of the British Empire, which had been set up to treat soldiers' war injuries, increasingly became inundated with malaria cases such that during the rainy season that same year, 62% of British soldiers in one camp were admitted with the disease. Despite the fact that soldiers had been housed on a ridge, far away from the city center, outbreaks of malaria in the military camps were blamed on the disease-ridden bodies of locals along the banks of the Korle, itself "swarming with Anopheles larvae." Along with the Germans, malaria—associated with the lagoon—became another adversary standing in the way of an allied victory, and posters were created urging soldiers in the dual fight against Hitler as well as the threat of infection. When a Japanese invasion of Java in Indonesia cut off the Allies' principal source of quinine, a popular antimalarial drug, a new solution had to be sought. Unsurprisingly, these efforts targeted the heart of Accra: the Korle. The idea was to eliminate the mosquito breeding grounds rather than treating the disease in humans. But re-engineering the lagoon, as had been done in other colonies, proved too expensive. Thus, British and American troops launched their own incursion into the lagoon via the Inter-Allied Malaria Control Group (IAMCG). In 1945, British and American forces poured oil and sprayed large quantities of insecticide and larvicide into the lagoon in attempts to eradicate the mosquitoes. In particular, pyrethrum and dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane (DDT) were the chemicals that fogged up the Korle's waters.

Therefore by the 1960s—long before most people would trace the contamination of the Korle—the lagoon was already notorious for its "obnoxious smells" and "offensive condition" (PRAAD 4), according to a speech by Mr EK Benson, the then Minister for Communication and Works, during the commissioning of the Guggisberg Bridge in 1963.

Decades later, by the time Nat Nunoo-Amarteifio began his four-year tenure as Accra City Mayor in 1994 not much had changed. Indeed by the 1990s, before the establishment of Old Fadama as a temporary settlement, trash was already ubiquitous in the lagoon's environs, as he described in an interview:

> At that time the banks of the Odaw River leading to the lagoon was an empty lot that was used as a dumpsite for the city's garbage. A lot of garbage was ending up in the Odaw River and helping to pollute it. It was also flowing downstream into the Korle Lagoon and blocking the outlet of the Lagoon into the sea. This was resulting in the yearly flooding of the city.

Subsequently, in one of many reiterations of the Korle Lagoon Ecological Restoration Project (KLERP) launched to mitigate pollution and reduce flooding along the Korle, money was secured from the Kuwaiti Fund to dredge the lagoon and from the British government to build a solid waste management system. Though the growth of the slum, its adjoining market and eventually the e-waste dump may have increased the rate at which waste matter was introduced into the Korle, the failure of these two projects meant that the original cause of the Korle's pollution—improper waste disposal throughout the city of Accra—persisted too.

In the past few years, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in Ghana has undertaken several biological and physio-chemical studies of the lagoon. For instance in 2013, a team from the EPA launched a "reconnaissance survey and monitoring" of the Korle Lagoon and the Odaw River. Though many believe that it is the activities of Old Fadama that have caused a decline in the water quality, experts say that were the slum not to exist, the Korle's prospects would be just as dim. As Dr. Sam Adu-Kumi, a scientist in Accra's EPA, expressed when I interviewed him:

> The pollution is all over. Even right from the point source you can see that there is refuse dumps [sic] close to the place and these things are thrown into the river even from the source, so its true that it's polluted right from the source.

Although the community's dumping undeniably contributes to the pollution of the Korle, studies show that there is a very minor difference in levels of pollution of the Korle between its mouth near the sea, and its source far to the north. Before arriving at Old Fadama, the Korle is polluted by the region's industries, 30% of which are located in its catchment area and dispose of their untreated effluent into its waters. The rest dump waste into network drains which later feed into the lagoon too (Acquah 1998). In other words, much of the solid waste and effluent present in the lagoon is introduced into it long before its waters pass by the Old Fadama slum. According to the report the "indiscriminate dumping of garbage, open defecation, domestic discharges, mechanic shops, car washing bays", and unlawful construction in and around the riverbed are some of the many activities to which the EPA attributes the heavy pollution of the Odaw and by extension the Korle too. Even before it enters the Greater Accra Region (within which Accra is located), human activity from an hour away in the Eastern Region—including a waterside dump located right in front of the house of a parliamentary minister!—has

## Sitting on a Waste Timebomb?

As a 2013 article "Accra is Sitting on a Waste Timebomb" in The Weekend Globe expressed, several people predicted that the city would become "choked" by its waste in short order. And yet several of these predictions greatly underestimated the beginning of the contamination in the center of the city, which then flows out along the Korle Lagoon. To some extent, this change in the perception of the lagoon's trash past raises questions about the ways in which we consider its future. Having pushed the sources of pollution on the Korle back by several decades, one may wonder, what becomes of the end date: how has the city not already been overrun by filth as was projected?

A major shortcoming of predictions such as those advanced by Apt, Wolman and Girardet is that they view waste as stagnant outside of official government interventions. Without some sort of drastic change from authorities, they assume that trash will simply continue to accumulate to the ruin of the city. This is not always the case. Reasons for this perhaps lie, as Gandy suggests, in attending not only to the presence or absence of metabolic trash pathways within the city, but also to their on-the-ground communal effects. When there is insufficient or no official action, individual actors take matters into their own hands, resulting in many grassroots changes in the urban fabric.

In other parts of the world, similar accounts have emerged concerning how the management of trash may be turned into a profitable industry for the more marginalized sections of society. After the Argentinian financial crisis of 2001-2002, Risa Whitson (2011) and Kate Parizeau (2015) each document the situation of "cartoneros", groups within Buenos Aires who make a living from collecting and processing recyclables from the homes and streets within the city. A.S. Moates similarly (2010) presents an insight into the lives of "classificadores" in Uruguay following its own economic strains in 2002. These "classificadores", in addition to recycling waste, are also able to raise hogs for sale on

the organic refuse they come upon in their line of work, thereby generating further sources of income from their engagement with waste. In each case, informal recycling practices provide opportunities for members of various groups to make a living and earn money by working with an otherwise overlooked but ubiquitous resource: waste. Where opportunities are scarce, informal recycling becomes a way to enter into the economy as income-earning citizens.

Similarly, I now focus on economies of waste that have emerged along the Agbogbloshie Scrap Yard and along the slum community of Old Fadama. As was demonstrated earlier, contrary to popular belief, the Old Fadama slum cannot possibly bear sole responsibility for the build-up of waste matter in the Korle Lagoon—something that was well underway at least forty years before the slum was ever established. Indeed instead of being the primary cause of pollution to the lagoon, the slum and its residents have become, I will argue, one of the key conduits by which garbage circulates—rather than stagnates—along the Korle.

## Agbogbloshie E-Waste Dump

Amidst the mounds of scrap surrounding the Korle Lagoon, elaborate routes of recycling have emerged around the many different kinds of waste materials available. The vignettes described below are taken from scenes in my documentary film Fadama (Onuoha 2014), which is an exploration of "Sodom and Gomorrah" and the types of work that take place there.

A group of high-school friends collect and dismantle televisions—breaking up the plastic shells, shattering the glass screens and salvaging only their wire skeletons, which they pile upon a wheelbarrow and haul off to market. Not far off, young men hammer away at everything from old engines to electric fans and computer motherboards. Behind billows of black smoke nearby, another group of twenty young to middle-aged men stoke the blue-green flames that melt off plastic wire casings, exposing the bright copper strands, which they too lug onto a wheelbarrow and off to a trader. Further along, six burn up leftover plastic casings—such as old computer units—out of which these wires were ripped. A few metres down, two trios zig-zag in and out of the trash heap, each with a collecting bag in one hand and a searching stick, for pushing away unwanted rubbish, in another. These men (sometimes referred to as "scavengers" by journalists) rifle through the mound beneath them, each combing for his own collector's item—for one, glass bottles, for another, aluminium soda cans, and for another still, plastic water sachets. These scraps, they tell me, are eventually sold in bulk to a Chinese recycling company. But first, they would be taken to one of the many middlemen who keep storehouses within the market and the scrapyard.

On many levels, what one finds at Old Fadama is not entirely unlike Girardet's regenerative city, where those things that are cast off as outputs are quickly channelled into new productive circuits. With no dustbins or garbage disposal facilities provided within the slum (and some parts of the rest of the city), many view dumping into or near the water as a lesser evil than incineration (Onuoha, 2015). Instead of burning—which would release toxic gases into the air—some of the trash is put to other uses. At the same time that shipments of old metal parts are offloaded, groups of workers retrieve scraps, sorting then selling them for money. In the very space where residents empty out bucket-loads of household trash, cattle and birds feed on what grass and bits of food are to be found. Thus, along the lagoon, one notices the concurrent drop-off and pick-up of these different kinds of waste.

Understandably, the recirculation of waste does not presently occur at a pace that allows it to completely reverse the pile up of mounds and mounds of garbage and sewerage along the lagoon. Regardless, it has resulted in significant changes of social formations within this section of the city. In particular, it serves as a means of integration for new migrants, it provides a source of subsistence for a considerable segment of society, and lastly it

contributes to the making of social and economic groupings even within the slum.

## Trash and City-Making

In addition to recycling, these activities have helped to shape the experience of many new migrants into the city. The Korle serves as a preliminary springboard for new migrants, until they find their feet and can afford better alternatives, as described by Maemuna, a middle-aged resident.

> In all of Accra, this is the only place that you can come to. Nobody wants to come here, but when you come from the North there is nowhere else. Unless you come here, then you hustle for a while, that's when you can make a little bit of money, enough to find somewhere else to go.

For the newly-arrived the lagoon and the trash that surrounds it provides an opportunity to become economic citizens, that is, to find an income, housing and employment within the big city. In this regard, this space has become a site of social cohesion—a point that was very often emphasized in conversations with residents during my time there as justification for why they should be allowed to remain. This is not just limited to new migrants—informal economies like those that have emerged along the Korle have provided a means of living for many people in Accra.

As the nickname "Sodom and Gomorrah" indicates, the slum community that has developed along the Korle is not particularly liked by majority of the residents of Accra. Like its Biblical counterpart, many believe first that the slum's destruction is inevitable but more importantly that it has become a center of social degeneration that threatens to infect the city (Onuoha, 2014). To the contrary, many community members described their presence on the lagoon as facilitating, not threatening, the city's peace: according to them, without the opportunities that the slum provided they would "be forced to turn to stealing" to make a living. Having grown so rapidly in recent years, the city, through authorities such as the AMA, is unable to adequately deal not only with garbage and sewerage but also with the provision of other amenities such as housing and employment. Since half of Ghana's urban population lives in slums (Kuria, 2009) and works in the informal economy (GSS 2008), the opportunity to live in the slum and to work with trash therefore becomes an informal alternative in the absence of government-made jobs and accommodation. It is thus conceived of as something constructive that contributes to the making of the city, rather than as something destructive that threatens to unravel it (as the cartoon, and the prediction by Apt suggest), by those who live there.

Lastly, the Korle has also been influential in the making of socioeconomic categories within the slum. Trash collecting along the lagoon is fairly differentiated. Interestingly, each of these specializations comprises groups of men with the same or similar regional origins. Somewhere near the top—after the scrapyard Chairman and his committee—these middlemen consist largely of Nigerians and others from the north of Ghana. In the middle, more Northerners (who make up the majority of the slum), perform most of the breaking and burning. And at the very end of the hierarchy, many of the "scavengers" I met come from other West African countries such as Benin and Togo, and a small minority of them from other very rural parts of Ghana. Whilst each of the scrap metal workers has a relatively defined space within which he works (and to which old electronics and engines are dropped off), these trash-pickers are constantly moving: looking through the growing trash heap for recyclables. According to one of them, the barrier that prevented them from advancing into scrap work

was a linguistic one: "C'est les gens qui ne parlent pas l'anglais qui font ce travail. [i.e. It is those who do not speak English who do this work]."

Though there may well be other reasons for this, overall it is clear that at the Korle Lagoon there is more to be witnessed and explored than the build-up of waste along the banks. For instance it is useful to examine the economies that have emerged around the handling of waste, that is, how the trash moves, and how this has in turn impacted social cohesion within the city.

## Conclusion

From both local and international sources, garbage and sewerage is being introduced to Accra at levels that exceed the ability of the Metropolitan Assembly to adequately dispose of them. Urban theorists such as Wolman and Girardet have discussed the danger that cities face when their outputs exceed their inputs in this way, and cities are unable to manage their trash. In the case of Accra, much of this waste ends up being dumped in and around the Korle Lagoon at the center of the city. The build-up of refuse here has caused anxieties about the future of the city, as is evidenced by the cartoon "the Garbage Nightmare" and Apt's "Accra in the 21st Century", which suggest that the trash problem might overrun the city before long.

This paper contributes to literature that treats the concept of waste as subjective: such an approach maintains that the very things that some view as a source of risk and/or contagion, are simultaneously perceived as opportunity by others. For Drackner, these varying notions of waste are essential to local waste management campaigns in his field site in Tacna, Peru. The same may be said of Accra. Though the historical archives and geographic surveys say otherwise, the prevailing view of waste along the lagoon—and that advanced by the media and city officials—is that it is largely (or even entirely) the fault of the slum. Consequently, when discussing solutions, many propose the removal of Old Fadama, which they view as the main cause of refuse pileups near the Korle. As I argue elsewhere, this particular perception of trash forms an essential part of the city's policy of "decongestion". In constructing waste and the slum as detrimental to the lagoon, officials are then able to mobilize popular support for urban renewal programmes to remove the pollution—i.e. both the waste and those who handle it—from the city. Thus such perceptions of waste contribute to an exclusionary geography, which justifies the excision of its poorest residents from the city center (Onuoha, 2014). Alternative views of the role of refuse and its recyclers along the lagoon, might correspondingly allow for the conception of other approaches to waste management in the city, besides the displacement of 100,000 people from the urban landscape.

Therefore instead of focusing solely on how inputs and outputs enter and leave the city, this paper has examined, as was suggested by Gandy in his "Rethinking Urban Metabolism," the social dimensions of trash along the Korle Lagoon. In the absence of adequate infrastructure and urban policies, residents of Old Fadama have created various recycling networks that channel some of Accra's waste into more economically productive means. Thus, this paper has argued that rather than exacerbating the problem, residents may be said to have helped mitigate it. For new migrants to the city, moving to the Old Fadama slum provides them with a preliminary residence. Additionally, those who have lived in the slum for some time argue that in the absence of adequate job and home creation by the AMA, the Korle helps them to make a decent living rather than resorting to a life of crime. Lastly, my examination of the different social impacts of the lagoon shows how working in recycling helps to create various social hierarchies within the settlement.

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The Journal for Undergraduate Ethnography
Volume 6 | Issue 1
ISSN 2369-8721

# Alienation and Identity Maintenance in Quasi-Total Institutions

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## ABSTRACT

A great body of work exists within sociology concerning the role and character of total institutions. However, the existing research primarily concerns either seemingly benevolent versions of such institutions or more absolute realizations of total institutions. In this article I explore the alienating and identity-constructing roles of quasi-total institutions by means of qualitative research conducted at an intensive mental health facility for female juvenile offenders. First, I examine the ways in which the physical space is used as 'critical space' in identity construction. Second, I investigate how peers can act as cohorts in the continued maintenance of personal identity. Third, I explore the manner by which the failures of the institution can be used as a vehicle of agency for those serving time. Finally, I discuss the ways in which these institutional characteristics might be precursors to, or share institutional characteristics with, more absolute total institutions.

## Introduction

Sociology has had a marked interest in the social phenomena of alienation and identity-construction. As these phenomena are deeply concerned with the interplay between individual agency and social structures, research has often focused on exploring how alienation and identity construction are manifest in specific social institutions at both the micro and macro levels. Research sites have ranged from educational organizations to penal establishments, but of these studies all share an interest in illuminating the far-reaching implications of institutions that seek to control or modify the behavior and bodies of their residents. The sociological literature makes it clear that the spectrum on which these institutions exist is broad and not easily classified. Clear distinctions between the more benevolent examples and those concerned with more complete discipline are not simply drawn. Thus, these institutions represent varying gradations of one another. Mandatory uniforms in primary schools do not have the same social connotations as prison jumpsuits, and class periods do not hold the same significance as a prison sentence. However, sociological research suggests that institutional efforts at bodily control have similar functional properties and produce comparable forms of alienation or identity construction despite their markedly different locations on the social spectrum. While these institutions may be characterized by similar functional tools or effects, they occupy different positions on the spectrum, from a more benign institutional force to something more totalistic. If we are to understand prisons and mental asylums as the archetypes for total institutions, how are we to understand the roles of juvenile detention facilities which bear some resemblance to those more fully realized institutions and simultaneously their more benevolent counterparts? In this article, I describe an institution that exists in the middle of this spectrum of bodily/behavioral control and explore the ways in which it functions to alienate and control the identities of those within its walls. In so doing, I address the need for a better understanding of such quasi-total institutions as a whole.

## Literature Review: Characteristics of Total Institutions

In the field of sociology much work has been done on the structure and functions of total institutions. According to Erving Goffman (1961, 2), "a total institution may be defined as a place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life." Total institutions "are encompassing to a degree discontinuously greater than" (1961, 4) those other social institutions found in society, with an all-pervasive character that is "symbolized by the barrier to social intercourse with the outside" (1961, 4). While he was quick to recognize the scholarship that preceded him on the subject of total institutions, Goffman laid the foundation in this area of study with his work on mental health facilities, which was eventually collected in *Asylums* (1961). In this book, Goffman explored in great detail the general similarities shared by all total institutions, to stress the importance of the consistencies between the varying iterations of these establishments. Goffman recognized the most important commonality as being the efforts of an institution to control or manipulate one's identity through alienation within its structure, whether it is the most severe or totalitarian or the most benevolent or seemingly harmless.

Goffman's work focused primarily on mental institutions. Several theoretical tenets of his study garnered a fair amount of subsequent research: poverty of resources, alienation and secondary adjustments. Poverty of resources refers to the function of total institutions that strips inmates of the tools by which they formerly maintained or expressed their individual notion of personal identity (Goffman 1961, 12). In total institutions, institutional powers undertake to remove or distance inmates from outside resources (e.g. family, friends, work, leisure pursuits, clothes, or even specific acts and behavior) to help assimilate them to the institutional standards of self or the labeling of persons (Goffman 1961, 11-12). This use of alienation is a crucial function of total institutions. Alienation, followed by a re-ascription of self by labeling individuals under conditions in which they lack the resources to counter such claims, leaves individuals little recourse besides assimilation or acceptance of the institutional identity.

Since a primary characteristic of total institutions is the control or disciplining of an individual's body and behavior, it is important to understand the function of secondary adjustments within these institutions. Secondary adjustments are practices "that do not directly challenge staff but allow inmates to obtain satisfaction… [by] forbidden means" providing the inmate "with important evidence that he is still his own man" (Goffman 1961, 54-55). Individual identity is under constant scrutiny and assault within these institutional structures, and the maintenance of personal conceptions of self, outside of the institutional powers that be, often becomes one of the most important aspects of inmate life. Secondary adjustments as observed by Goffman become common means by which an individual can rebel against institutional powers, and exercise personal agency in defining the self inside an institution whose primary function is to manage and redefine one's identity.

One could argue that Goffman's work on the structure and function of total institutions belongs to the same intellectual tradition as the work of Michel Foucault (1977). In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Foucault tracked the changes in penal institutions throughout the modern age, most importantly the ways in which power realized itself through these institutions (prisons), and the social implications of these changes in modern societies. Foucault (1977, 129) defines discipline as "a way of controlling the movement and operations of the body in a constant way… a type of power that coerces the body by regulating and dividing up its movement, and the space and time in which it moves." Foucault eventually argues that modern disciplinary modes within prisons replace the punishment of the body with the punishment of the soul. This process internalizes institutional or social norms within a person, within their identification of self, effectively creating an ever more pervasive form of punishment that perpetuates something akin to subservience both inside and outside of total institutions (1977, 30).

While Foucault focused primarily on prisons as opposed to mental health facilities, the similarities between the respective properties of total institutions in Goffman's and Foucault's work are obvious. Discipline acts as the primary vehicle by which an individual's behavior is managed, and the alienating nature of total institutions can be seen as facilitating the internalization of institutional norms. Discipline in Foucault's definition is the process by which an individual is stripped of his or her resources within total institutions, and the internalization of institutional norms is the re-ascription of individual identity enacted upon inmates themselves. Indeed, in his analysis of discipline, Foucault describes the functional implications of total institutions, in which a person's actions and self are under constant surveillance, as typified by the mental asylums of Goffman's research.

A final but equally important link between Goffman's and Foucault's work lies in the similarities between Goffman's idea of the moral career and Foucault's concept of the delinquent. In "The Moral Career of the Mental Patient," Goffman explains that the inmate's "image of self" or "felt identity" (1961, 127) is (re)constructed throughout the course of being admitted, serving time, and eventually being release. This moral career is a crucial component and can be seen as a trajectory that results from incarceration in any manner of total institution. The process of "mortification" effectively strips the individual of tools to sustain a sense of self and is fully indoctrinated into the identity presented by the institution (Goffman 1961, 148). Similarly, Foucault establishes the concept of the "delinquent" (1977, 266), arguing that an inevitable consequence of power and discipline in modern prisons is the creation of an entirely new "delinquent" class (1977, 300). Delinquency is a result of the outlawing of petty crimes, and functions as a means by which those incarcerated are further stigmatized or internalize the punishment process (Foucault 1977, 300-312). Disciplinary, delinquent, or moral careers all operate under similar functional frameworks and can be observed under the umbrella of alienation and identity construction.

The concepts of identity construction, secondary adjustments, and general institutional structural features are explored in more depth by scholars such as Jill McCorkel (1998), who examines the ways in which critical spaces, the areas within a drug treatment program that are not under constant staff supervision, allow the inmates to re-establish a sense of self or identity outside of the confines of the institutional framework (1998, 232). McCorkel, expanding upon concepts introduced by Goffman, comes to the conclusion that the resistance critical space provides within total institutions is essential to individuals' attempts to "maintain their sense of self in environments committed to radical self-transformation" (1998, 250). McCorkel confirms the concepts presented by Goffman, including the use of critical space, the relationship between an individual's image of self and the institutional expectations for ascribed identity, and how the process of alienation informs these matters.

Edward Morris also revisits the works of Goffman and Foucault in his research dealing with a seemingly more benevolent, or quasi-total institution: an urban school (2005). This institution attempts to regulate behavior and appearance by disciplinary means to address what are seen as cultural deficiencies among a particular social group of students (Morris 2005, 25-27). What is relevant in Morris's research for this article is his demonstration of the engendering of stigmatized roles among youth through efforts to correct certain behaviors by means of disciplinary acts (2005, 43,45). Morris argues that the efforts of total institutions to modify an individual's behavior have an inverse effect, essentially perpetuating further alienation and resistance. Morris's (2005, 27) work extends theorization of the internalization of disciplinary practices, showing how that act of discipline might engender further alienation or a delinquent career.

These concepts of identity construction within total or quasi-total institutions are so pervasive that they can be observed in more popular works such as Susanna Kaysen's *Girl, Interrupted* (1994). Kaysen's memoir of her time in a psychiatric hospital tells of her firsthand encounters with secondary adjustments and identity construction. While less academic than literary, *Girl, Interrupted* illustrates the pervasiveness of these institutional functions in society and lends credence to the academic studies that came before it. Kaysen takes a perspective similar to Foucault's when she claims that insanity functions to maintain standards of "normal" (1994, 172), and when she states that hospitalization in a total institution functions to distance those on the outside from the ascription of those on the inside as deficient (1994, 94). When Kaysen argues for the distancing effect of institutionalization, she is providing evidence in support of Morris's argument for the inverse effect of alienation and stigmatization.

There is a plethora of research on total institutions, their functions and societal implications. However, modern scholarship on the concepts of identity construction and functional roles of total institutions seems to focus exclusively on those institutions that embody the ideal-type of totalitarian institutions. The degree to which an institution is able or chooses to control its occupants – from totally to partially – is of great importance in scholarship on the impact of total institutions. Morris identifies an institutional model that is far more "benevolent" than a prison or penitentiary, and far from bearing the stigmatizing burden of those "purer" total institutions. Michael G. Flaherty (1983) similarly studied the impact of and differences between adult and juvenile total institutions; however, his methods were primarily quantitative and would be complemented by a larger body of qualitative data to further explore the differences between such institutions. Foucault's and McCorkel's studies focus on more all-encompassing models of total institutions, and fail to consider what role intermediary institutions might play in individual identity construction and what they might mean in the overall disciplinary or delinquent career.

This study focuses on one establishment that exists as an intermediary between school or family structures and more fully-realized total institutions such as adult mental hospitals or prisons. The Academy for Florida's Girls (AFG) is classed as an "intensive" mental health facility for female juvenile offenders who have been sentenced for any manner of crime short of felony murder charges. The girls who inhabit AFG range in age from 12 to 18 and have been identified by a judge as candidates for AFG by either having a severe mental illness or a history of trauma in their lives. The program is predicated on the idea that rehabilitation should be the focus of time served by these low to moderate risk youth, and that the nature of this rehabilitative work must show sensitivity to their traumatic pasts or mental illnesses. Therefore, a girl's stay in the program is no shorter than six months and is promoted as being centered around individual and group therapy, as a means to address and correct problem behavior before the youth's eventual release.

While these might be the ends articulated by the institution, AFG, much like other total institutions, attempts to discipline the girls' bodies and minds to make them comply more closely with institutional expectations, rules, and regulations as they serve their time. The youth are fully aware of the incongruities between the rhetoric of therapy-based treatment and the actual function of the institution. The facility constitutes a remarkable case that demonstrates secondary adjustments and identity management in very interesting ways. While the program essentially functions as a juvenile detention facility, the girls are afforded more freedom than in a higher-risk facility, and less freedom than presented by a halfway house or lower-risk facility. AFG is a perfect location in which to observe the processes of identity construction and alienation and the use of critical space, in ways that are perhaps not as fully developed as in more severe total institutions, but that give evidence for the relationship between those incarcerated in a total institution and the inherent functions of the institution itself.

## Methods

The data for this study of a total institution that seems to fall in the middle of the spectrum from "benign" to "totalistic" come from field notes I took between February and May in 2015 as an employee of the mental health facility, while working full time five days a week including frequent "doubles" (back-to-back shifts totaling 17 hours). This means the field notes indicate the full breadth of life within the facility. My official position was that of a Youth Care-Worker (YCW) which, for all intents and purposes, is a glorified babysitter. At the beginning of this study, I had already been working at the facility for about six months while also studying for a degree in Sociology and the research opportunity presented itself as I satisfied my work responsibilities. YCWs accompany the youth on all their daily tasks, from school to meals and recreational time. I primarily worked first shift from 6 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. However, when working doubles I stayed until at least 10:30 p.m., with the occasional overnight shift as well. The act of recording data covertly was made possible by the nature of documentation required for the work itself. Documentation is a major part of the Care-Worker's job: keeping an accountability sheet for the youth while they are in their rooms, maintaining a movement log to track youth locations throughout the facility, and documenting on point sheets the youth's general adherence to the rules and regulations of the facility throughout the day. All of this documentation is maintained on a clipboard, which has become a fixture of care-workers throughout the facility and served as a perfect foil for recording field notes in a covert manner for this work.

Field notes were supplemented by two other forms of documentation commonly used within the facility: Incident Reports and Special Treatment Team Referrals. Incident Reports are filled out for any physical altercations or verbal conflicts that could potentially result in an investigation or grievance in the future by the youth. Incident Reports act as a safeguard to protect the facility from potential outside investigations of misconduct or

abuse, as well as a means by which to provide documentation to insurance providers in instances where a staff member is injured on the job. Importantly, these Incident Reports are detailed accounts of the events that took place that are corroborated by as many staff members at the facility that witnessed said event as possible. The Incident Reports are therefore invaluable as data to supplement the field notes to examine individual occurrences of a particular phenomenon; they can also be viewed as quantitative data in that they can help demonstrate the frequency of such events.

Special Treatment Team Referrals were used as well in the overall body of data. Special Treatment Team Referrals (from here on called simply 'Referrals' as they are known more commonly in the facility) are the major form of punitive action taken against youth. In theory, every time a youth breaks a rule within the facility they are subject to a Referral, which records the infraction and either adds additional time to their sentence, or takes away certain privileges they might have. Referrals were a useful addition to field notes in that they effectively made researchers of my fellow employees and I could read their Referrals to gain their individual perspective on events or again to simply observe the frequency of particular events or occurrences. Referrals and incident reports were used exclusively as a means by which to identify and gauge the frequency of thematic phenomena within the facility. No youth is quoted unless the recording of such data was done in a timely manner so as to ensure accuracy. If the quote could not be recorded word for word, or as close to that as possible, then it was omitted altogether or simply used as an example of thematic elements, rather than being attributed to an individual.

Finally, in qualitative studies of this type the issue of rapport is of great importance. It was evident that rapport was never in question during the collecting of data for this research. Being a staff member who was recognized as far less strict and less apt to write a Referral for minor infractions, I was able to develop strong rapport with the youth almost from day one. This is not to say that I got along well with all youth, or that they were always honest in their behavior or utterances. However, I could observe a stark contrast between how the girls behaved around me and how they acted around staff they were vocal about not trusting or liking. Often I would catch girls being crude or displaying illicit behavior right in front of me, only realizing after the fact that they were in the presence of staff. Even more frequently I was privy to conversations that were exceptionally frank and detailed about individual girls' feelings and attitudes towards staff, other youth, and the program as a whole. In my time in AFG I tried to present an approachable demeanor while maintaining the boundaries between youth and staff. I believe this conscious choice allowed for accurate and honest collection of data within the facility.

The youth and staff at AFG were not aware that I was conducting this study, which was, in effect, a covert ethnography. On the one hand, covert ethnography has been criticized on ethical grounds (Erikson 1967). On the other hand, it is well known that research subjects alter their behavior when they realize that they are being studied. This problem is referred to as "reactivity" or the Hawthorne effect (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983, 110; Macionis 2014, 45). Consequently, objections to covert ethnography have been challenged from the standpoint of naturalistic inquiry (Denzin 1968, 1971), and a long line of ethnographic studies in sociology attempt to avoid reactivity by means of covert research (Festinger, Riecken, and Schachter 1956; Goffman 1961; Rosenhan 1973; Adler 1985). In each case, the argument is that the study could not have been done, or would have produced reactive effects, if covert ethnography had not been used. Following these precedents, I elected to take a covert role in my own study. In so doing, I hoped to collect data concerning the actual behavior of my research subjects and avoid compromising my established rapport with them. Moreover, I only collected data as part of my required role as a staff member, and all data were recorded from public spaces where subjects knew that they were under staff

observation. I have protected the identities of all those involved as well as the organization and its location. Any potential risks to youth or staff that might have resulted from this research were therefore minimized.

## Findings: Individual Stratagems or Tricks of the Trade

The program is a therapy-based rehabilitation program for female juvenile offenders run by a private security firm. The security firm bids for a contract with the Department of Juvenile Justice and, if successful, it is given a set amount of money to house juvenile offenders under state laws and according to the sentences given out by the state. While the firm has to adhere to state law, its program methods and curriculum are not dictated by the state and are almost exclusively governed by the firm itself. The established curriculum at AFG is a gender-specific program of positive behavior reinforcement policies accompanied by in-house therapists who provide individual and group therapy sessions throughout the week. This program is predicated on the notion that for female youth, treatment can best be realized through a gender- and trauma-sensitive, therapy-based approach to rehabilitation.

The facility is located in a semi-suburban/rural area in between two larger commercial centers. Youth demographic composition is in a constant state of flux as girls graduate and others are brought in after sentencing. As its composition is always changing, it is difficult to definitively state the demographic character of the institution. During my time at the facility, however, the population was roughly three quarters Black-American (Black-American being the preferred institutional label considering the Haitian-American population) with the remaining third a varying mix of Latin-American and Caucasian youth. It is important to note that this same proportion is reflected in the composition of staff throughout my time at the facility. The facility is comprised of six main buildings on about two acres of land surrounded by fifteen-foot fences. Every door in the facility is locked, granting access to staff alone who have a single set of keys each. The primary building and the one where the girls spend the majority of their time is "the unit" where they eat, sleep, receive visitors, undergo group therapy sessions, and have a fair amount of recreational/down time. The unit is shaped like an open 'V', with a dorm on each arm of the V, which includes a long hall where four rooms face each other, two on either side, with a shared bathroom for each side. Each room has two bunkbeds, housing four girls to a room and 16 girls to a hall, so there are 32 girls in all in residence. In the center of the V is the cafeteria, with six iron tables having six attached iron seats each. The tables are bolted to the ground and are speckled with paint and scratches and dents from years of use. On one side there are giant sliding glass windows which are sealed shut, facing a patio that sits between the two opposing arms of the V. On the opposite side of the patio windows is a metal-slated screen that can be raised and lowered on runners to allow the Kitchen Staff to serve the youth from a safe distance and to prevent youth's access to the kitchen in case of an incident in the cafe. On each side of the cafe, separating the two units, are large plexi-glass doors with neighboring windows, so one can see from one hall to the other if there is no one around to obstruct the view.

To set the findings in context, it is useful to give a quick overview of AFG outside of the technical structure of the facility and focus on the effect of relative disrepair on the perceptions of those housed within or working amongst its halls. The unit is a run-down building that was purchased by the corporation as a former mental health facility constructed in the late 1980s. The rooms are dark as the windows have been painted out, or are of the smoky variety obscuring an individual's view of the outside. The lighting is florescent bulbs behind plexi-glass enclosures that give off a dim yellow light, like the basement boiler room of an old building. The rooms are carpeted, and since the girls are not allowed to have cleaning supplies (which are handled instead by the Care workers) except for a simple broom, cleaning becomes a weekly task which most of the girls hate. Therefore, the rooms

have a constant taint of urine and sweat, the floors are littered with bits of trash and parts of hair weaves, and the halls are spotted with the white splotches of paint periodically applied to cover up graffiti. In fact, the whole facility is littered with weave. In the halls or on the dayroom couches you will find stringy knots of used hair strewn about. In the yard or patio you will find what the staff and youth have dubbed "tumble weaves" of hair that may have come out in fights and have rolled around in the grass and woodchips to create a ball of mess perpetually collecting more junk.

In the facility everything is locked down. The limited access to locations and everyday items is a primary vehicle by which a poverty of resources is created within the facility. If a youth needs a "personal" (sanitary pad) or more toilet paper she must ask staff to get some from a supply closet. If scissors or a pen are necessary for some task, they must be checked out from staff and checked back in, for if they go missing a facility-wide random search could be called by the acting supervisor. When youth are traveling from the unit to education rooms (portable units inside the fence but outside of the main facility), the dorms to the café, administration to the unit, or really between any locked location to another, they must be briefly searched by a female care worker for contraband that might be hidden in socks, underwear, or bra. The girls are fed prison food with seemingly little nutritional value but a surprising amount of sensitivity to potential cultural preferences. Hot sauce is used on everything. Large amounts of salt, pepper, hot sauce, and potato chips are used in combining different dishes into a hodge-podge of mash that is considered by the youth to taste better than the original concoction.

Simply put, AFG feels like an experiment someone is conducting on how little money one could spend on the actual construction of a facility and have it still be deemed legitimate. Every uniform is a hand-me-down and a mix of items of clothing from Target or Wal-Mart that conform to the "official" dress code of "blues & khakis" (blue shirts or sweaters and khaki pants). Plastic garbage cans that dot the facility have been thrown and smashed so many times that they are littered with holes and cracks that allow for all manner of grime and filth to leak from the bottom, making the floors perpetually wet or sticky in the areas they sit. The water pumps and hot water heaters constantly fail, so there will be days at a time when girls are stuck taking cold showers or, worse, cannot flush their toilets. The toilets often break and end up leaking into the girls' rooms to leave the carpets soggy with waste, which often takes weeks to fix. And all of this is observed by the staff and youth, creating a sense of cognitive dissonance. In research done by Aviram (2014), the financial incentive and "cost-minimizing" approach to privately run prisons is more thoroughly explored including the effects such an approach might have on the greater physical, and human, conditions of these institutions. If one subscribes to the rhetorical justifications for the necessity of the program itself, one must forgive the obvious betrayals of said philosophy, in that what funds the corporation acquires for the facility's maintenance and daily function are apparently used on something else entirely.

## Rooms as Spaces for Identity Construction

In a short amount of time one can see just how important critical space is to the youth involved in the program. Specifically, their individual rooms become the areas most coveted for the expression of self. Cameras are hidden in many corners of the facility with few blind spots on the monitors in Master Control and the Facility Administrator's office. Two places that cameras do not watch are the bathrooms joining the neighboring rooms on each side of the halls, and the rooms themselves. As a result of being watched constantly and their behavior being

scrutinized, downtime in their rooms and the freedom that provides become extremely valuable to the girls in the program. The girls are hyper-aware of people listening in on their conversations. Therefore, they will often have conversations outside of earshot of staff or other youth, effectively using these spaces to air grievances that they fear might otherwise have difficult repercussions. One particular youth demonstrated just how valuable these spaces were by making a habit of sitting at the door to her room during downtime so that she might listen to the conversations being had in other rooms. Patty had an uncanny ability to hear her name being said in the conversations of others and she often interjected, as on one such occasion:

> Patty: What is you all saying about me? [she yells from her door way] What y'all say about Patty? [in an increasingly irate tone] Cuz I heard my name!
> Girl in other room: Nothing! Jesus, we were talking about that bag you are making!
> Patty: Then why is you whispering? Seems like some "scary bitch" shit! [calling someone scary equates to basically calling them a coward]
> Girl in other room: Jesus, Patty you're fucking paranoid, ain't nobody talking shit about no one. [then in whispers] That fucking girl hears everything.

While it is true that Patty displays paranoid behavior, on this particular occasion she was correct in assuming that she, and the transgression the girls believed she had made earlier that day, were being discussed. More importantly, by sitting in her doorway day after day during down time, with the express purpose of listening to what "the girls be saying" Patty is displaying just how valuable this space can be.

If youth are feeling bold, the rooms can also be places where they might try to engage in relations with other girls that are strictly forbidden, as the program maintains that all romantic relationships are "unhealthy." Weekly the sleeping arrangements are altered and girls are moved as new relationships begin and others end. If a romantic relationship is observed by the staff on the unit then often not only will the girls be separated from each other by rooms, but more often than not one will be reassigned to the other dorm as well. Therefore these rooms are viewed as highly valuable and almost sacred spaces in which girls can express themselves and act out some of the illicit behaviors that they would not do if they were "on camera." Relationships with other girls, whether sexual or not, are among the most desirable and time-consuming aspects of their time in the program, and safe spaces for them to act out these relationships are highly coveted.

Finally, being off camera and in the sanctity of one's own room also affords the girls a degree of protection from punitive action in regard to physical altercations. It is easy for courts to tack on additional time to a girl's charges if she engages in physically violent behavior within the program. This does not stop all youth from engaging in such behavior, but it does make most youth savvy to the spaces in which they are most likely to get away with it. If a girl intends to "jump" (gang up on and beat) another girl, or rarer still attack a staff member, it will most commonly occur in a girl's room. Throughout training staff are instructed not to enter the youth's room unless accompanied by another staff member for this express reason. By simply being "off camera", a staff member is making themselves vulnerable to potential allegations from youth who might have a vendetta against a particular staff member, or the program at large. Often I observed that when things were "turnt up" (the way in which girls describe general unruliness or chaotic behavior on a unit-wide scale) there would be select youth who would quietly enter other girls' rooms to settle a former "beef" (conflict) in the anonymity provided by the frenzied surroundings and being off camera. The most vicious or

damaging of fights always happen off camera and usually in the girls' rooms where they can feasibly deny culpability for their actions should another girl or staff press charges against them.

The girls' rooms, and to a lesser degree other spaces off camera, therefore become critical spaces where girls are free to act out in ways that are not deemed permissible by the program or staff. They become spaces where relationships can be formed or solidified, fights can take place, or conversations can be had without the usual fear of being caught or outed for such behavior. Rooms become critical spaces in which the youth can establish boundaries of self and personal identities outside of those ascribed to them by the institution or program as a whole, and free from the scrutiny of all besides their intended audience.

### Peers as Cohorts in Identity Maintenance

An obvious stigma exists for the girls inside of the program as a result of it being a mental health facility. With this ascription it is assumed, though not always explicitly, that the girls are sentenced to this particular facility because of some mental affliction. This is often the case, but girls are also sentenced to AFG because of traumatic histories, or sometimes something as simple as a diagnosis of ADD or ADHD. However, in spite of the facts around their mental health or conditions of their arrest or sentencing, an obvious and conscientious acknowledgment of stigma prevails. One aspect of life in the program that seems to perpetuate this stigma more than others within the girls' expressed views is the company they keep among their peers in the facility itself. The very act of incarceration is an extremely alienating experience, and for the entirety of their stay the girls are surrounded by staff, their fellow youth, and no one else. The youth are allowed visitation on Saturdays and Sundays according to their individual treatment teams; however, many youth go the entirety of their stay having received visitors only once or twice, thus severely limiting their interaction with the outside world. This can lead some to see staff and peers as the only avenue for support or interaction, as the outside world is far removed from their experiences within the program.

The severity of crimes for which the girls are sentenced range from petty drug offences, to molestation and violent crime. Sexual offenses are the minority but it is not uncommon for a girl who was busted with a small amount of marijuana to be roomies with a girl who sexually assaulted a child, or who pistol-whipped someone in a robbery attempt. As the severity and nature of crimes run the gamut, so too do the girls' perceptions of their peers in the facility. Peers are observed as playing two primary roles for those incarcerated in the program: as a means of positive reinforcement of individual conceptions of self, or as polarizing opposites from which a girl can argue for her relative normalcy in comparison.

Girls in the facility can be very forgiving and understanding of individual failings. I often observed girls forgiving one another and resuming close friendships after horrendous displays of violence against one another sometimes moments before. An interesting sort of phenomenon exists where the mere refusal to forgive an individual's transgressions seems to indicate a more severe character flaw than the acting out of the transgression in the first place. The girls allow one another a great deal of space to construct their own identities inside the program without drawing attention to incongruities in one's story or description of self. Often girls take to the hall of the unit like a soap-box from which to declare the merits of their own character in opposition to the youth they call neighbors. It is common practice for a girl to address what she perceives as confusion regarding her own character in blatant proclamations to the unit and staff. What is of note in regards to these proclamations is that I never once witnessed someone interject to refute a girl's claims to self, despite how obviously untrue they might be. One such event happened two days before a youth named Miller was going be released. She got it into her head that someone had messed with her toothbrush

(a common way to get back at someone in the program) and she took to the hall during down time to address the dorm:

> I don't know who fucked with my toothbrush but that shit is petty. Y'all bitches are petty and I can't wait to get away from all of you. But you know what [she says pantomiming as if she was going back to her room but had just remembered something important], I have been here for almost eighteen months and I ain't never fucked with no one's toothbrush. I might've fucked a bitch up, but I don't fuck with no bitch's stuff, and that's why y'all bitches are petty and some basic [someone far from exceptional or amazing but instead totally ordinary] ass thoughts [someone not worth a second thought]!

What is interesting about this outburst is that Miller had the day before laughed about how she peed on a girl's toothbrush for eating her chips. No one interjects, perhaps from fear of repercussions, but such acceptance of contradictions was observed almost daily concerning a myriad of issues, most of which are inconsequential: a girl's promiscuity; her skills as a student or a braider of hair; her value as a friend, mother, or daughter; her ability to sing, dance, or play basketball; concerning all of which her fellow youth often possess disparaging evidence that contradicts their claims to self, but are almost always held back.

Perhaps more importantly, peers serve as an example of just how normal a girl is by comparison. The previously mentioned sex offenders are the perfect example. Girls with violent criminal charges often point to these girls and say, "Hey, I might be bad but I am nowhere near as crazy as that girl." The diversity in crimes and degrees of mental health provide girls of all demographics with someone else they can point to as a more dire case than themselves. Those with petty drug sentences can create images of self in opposition to those with breaking and entering charges. Those with B&E charges can place themselves in opposition to those with grand theft auto charges, GTA to aggravated assault, and aggravated assault to sexual assault or molestation. Moreover, the comparison can be seen in the ways one particular youth who was charged with molesting an eight year old girl compared her idea of normalcy to another youth charged with sexual assault who also admitted to engaging in bestiality with her family's dog.

In an institution that is constantly labeling them as deviant or criminals, the girls act in ways to maintain their own felt identity that they are not as strange as the program would have them believe. The girls can also reinforce positive ascriptions of self in not reminding one another of personal transgressions or moral failings and allowing a bit of room for each other to construct individual identities that are defined not by their acts but simply by their words and expressions of felt identity. In AFG, peer relations become the most obvious and unique way in which the girls would re-establish and re-define themselves despite institutional ascriptions or efforts to label them as criminals, delinquents, or otherwise.

## The Perceived Failures of Curriculum as a Vehicle for Agency

If there is a single all-pervasive sentiment held by youth (and many staff members) in the facility, it is that the proposed institutional methods are a failure and a joke. The language used to describe the program to outsiders or those being processed into the facility is that it is a therapy-based rehabilitative institution, but by the time girls leave they almost always hold the view that they were simply doing time. The punitive action taken is seen as arbitrary, and the therapy that is supposed to be the focus of the program is generally considered close to non-existent. By the time a girl leaves she is often in open defiance of the system, and has a keen understanding that she will be released eventually despite her behavior, and that sometimes the more combative you act, the faster you are processed out. A perfect example is Shawna.

She was 15 years old, AFG was the most recent of three juvenile justice programs in which she has been incarcerated, and she was close enough to her release date that she no longer ascribed to the expectations of the program at large. On a particular evening she was refusing to go to her room after "lights out" (the time when all girls are supposed to be in their assigned rooms and going to sleep), and responded to a fellow staff member after being threatened with a referral in the following way:

> You know what, fuck that referral…I am gonna do what I feel and take that referral [implying that she will suffer the consequences without concern]. You know why? Because fuck your referral and fuck this place! Matter of fact let me sign that shit first before you fill it out since I am probably going to CO [controlled observation, which is a room used for youth in extreme states of combativeness or self harm]. [She then begins to sing and dance along the hall] Because referrals don't mean shit and this place is a joke! I won't stay here longer because y'all don't want me so my release date is safe! [All while donkey-kicking the doors and walls of the dorm] Shawna's blatant display of defiance and refusal to comply with the institutional standards is commonplace among girls who have spent a decent amount of time in the program. What Shawna demonstrated – normal behavior for most of the girls – is the awareness that the curriculum is not necessarily operating as it proposes to, and that once they come to this realization the youth can act out behavior that is supposedly illicit or problematic without fear of repercussions.

In addition to the perceived failures of the institutional curriculum, the therapeutic aspects of the program are also seen as failing and a point of contention with the girls in the facility. One such exchange displays this perfectly when three girls were sitting by the door to the patio as they spotted a therapist leaving the opposite dorm with a youth in tow:

> Girl 1: there goes [therapist name] with [other youth]. That's gotta be like their fifth session this week! Must be writing a fucking book. [She then turns to another youth] Isn't [therapist name] your therapist?
> Girl 2: She was but then I got [a second therapist name] and then they switched me back to [original male therapist upon arrival] but I haven't seen them for weeks.
> Girl 3: Shit I have been here for three months and have had two sessions!

This conversation is emblematic of the general sentiment observed in the facility: therapy is seen as something that is an afterthought at best. Girls end up treating their one-on-one therapy sessions as a game of sorts to see what will make a therapist return to them on their scheduled appointments and what will not. One youth relays a story about her interactions with her therapist:

> At first I wouldn't say shit. I would sit there and stare at the ground and she would ask questions until she got pissed and then she would do her paper work, and type and shit, and I would just sit there [kind of laughing as she tells the story]. But then I'm like, "da fuck? I gotta meet with you so I can leave, so do your fucking job! Right?" And she would be like, "If you don't want to talk that's your choice." So then I started telling her I was having suicidal thoughts and she called bullshit, and she was right but, the fuck! That's the only way you're gonna meet with me then I gotta say some shit like that! [the therapist in question is now in the cafe, within eyesight but cannot hear the conversation being had] So now she's all fucking pissed because I am all pissed and telling her she doesn't know how to do her job and she is like, "I can't help someone who doesn't want to be helped," but this is our fucking second meeting in like

two months so fuck that!

The attitude this youth articulated is in fact the norm among the girls of AFG. Many grievances against staff or the program in general come from complaints that the therapists display favoritism or fail to keep appointments. This results in the youth understanding that the only way to get attention from the therapists is to display more dramatic, potentially threatening behavior.

By discussing the shortcomings of the methodology or proposed curriculum of the program, the girls can exercise personal agency or redefine their place within a system that they recognize as failing in its goals. The failures of the facility are used to reaffirm their own beliefs that they are victims of circumstance, and are doing time for crimes that might not be as severe as the program or judicial system would have them believe. In my time at AFG, the pervasive sentiment that the program was flawed or broken became an almost expected aspect of relations with youth and staff. AFG became a subject of ridicule as the ineffectuality of its methods became more commonly accepted as true.

## Discussion: The Intermediary Role of Quasi-Total Institutions

Organizations such as AFG exist as intermediary total institutions on the spectrum of control of behavior and bodies. AFG lies in between seemingly benevolent schools and clearly harsh prisons. A gap in previous research exists in that the work done by Goffman and Foucault focused on more fully realized versions of total institutions and did not include the likes of AFG, which exist on the more lax end of the spectrum of bodily control and discipline. AFG offers an obvious opportunity to extend such theories of total institutions; however, it is the halfway point, a quasi-total institution, or a not-fully-realized version of an ideal-type. The identity construction and control that exist within AFG are not as dramatic as those found in Goffman's work, and the control and disciplining of individuals' bodies are nowhere near the scale seen in the work of Foucault. However, total institutions like AFG occupy a very important space where this identity construction and bodily control is first introduced to individuals who, due to potential failures of rehabilitation and the generally high likelihood of recidivism, may eventually find themselves in the types of institutions that are of a more absolute variety.

As demonstrated by McCorkel (1998), Morris (2005), and Colwell (2007), as well as Goffman and Foucault, total institutions "engender resistance and alienation" (Morris 2005, 41), both of which can be easily observed in the material I gathered at AFG, although they are nonetheless slightly more nuanced and less explicit than in total institutions. The environment and nature of incarceration at AFG serve to alienate the youth held there by limiting contact with the outside world as well as information the girls receive or transmit from the facility. Girls use their rooms as critical spaces for identity maintenance and as a means for secondary adjustments. The critical spaces can be seen as an outlet by which they can reaffirm their personal identities inside an institutional apparatus that is attempting to convince them otherwise. Images of self can be further explored and solidified by reference to their fellow youth, who they portray as their polar opposites. And finally, secondary adjustments are pursued by the rejection of the program's methodology or curriculum, which is increasingly seen as obsolete, ineffectual or inconsequential.

If we subscribe to theories of the internalization of disciplinary power and the importance of identity maintenance in total institutions, then we must understand the machinations and structural features of total institutions that are not ideal types, but exist as something of an intermediary, or as an agent for future total institutional powers. If it is true that there is a delinquent career or disciplinary career, then institutions like AFG are an important phase within those careers and more scholarship should be dedicated to its study. Perhaps most importantly, if total institutions engender alienation and resistance within a delinquent or

or moral career, this phase must be clearly understood within institutions like AFG that serve in between the more absolute and the more benign social institutions. The claims that a quasi-total institution offers concerning therapy or rehabilitation help to make it a palatable (and, for that reason, increasingly common) intermediary in the juvenile justice system.

## Conclusion

Quasi-total institutions have a multifarious role in the process of alienation and identity construction for those housed within their walls. The quasi-total institution (AFG) in this study exhibits many of the same functional elements as more fully realized total institutions and thus raises similar issues of identity maintenance and use of critical space. For future research it is necessary to study total institutions of similar structural nature as that of AFG. While existing research on quasi-total institutions exists (Flaherty 1983), it is primarily quantitative research that would be nicely complemented by further qualitative study. To study more cases one might delineate a clearer relationship between the ideas of identity construction and institutions that are not all-pervasive in their methods or structure, but still (at least in theory) share some of the features of fully-realized total institutions. Importantly, it would be wise to explore in more depth the effect of gender, class, age, and sexuality on secondary adjustments and identity construction. How does a gender-mixed facility of similar structure compare to those of single sex? Do juvenile detention facilities echo the findings of this research, or do they seem more closely related to institutions where the opportunities provided by mental illness ascriptions do not exist? Identity maintenance and secondary adjustments may manifest themselves in dramatically different ways depending on gender, sexuality, and other demographical characteristics, but those differences will only become clear with subsequent research. And finally, potential connections should be explored after girls are released from institutions like AFG with transitional periods in other societal institutions outside of, or in between, other total institutions.

Clearly, the fact that AFG is a for-profit, private company dramatically affects the methods by which it is run and its institutional structure as a whole. Research such as that of Brett Burkhardt (2014) suggests that the moral legitimacy of private prisons has been a significant concern for the greater population as well. It would be interesting to explore the similarities, or differences, in facilities of similar structure that are non-profits or completely state or federally run. Perhaps the fundamental institutional characteristic would exist to lesser or greater degrees, but the profit motive may well have a drastic effect on an institution's influence or structure. I suspect that alternative methods of rehabilitation exist, as well as institutions that have the potential to combat the perpetuation of disciplinary power, internalization, and alienation, but that these possibilities have not been fully explored, as the acceptance of total institutions of this nature is something close to unconditional in contemporary US politics and American society at large.

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The Journal for Undergraduate Ethnography
Volume 6 | Issue 1
ISSN 2369-8721

# From 'I love you, habibi' to 'Oh My God Habibi, it's not that hard!': What Address Terms Tell Us about Relationships and Culture

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## ABSTRACT

The address term *habibi* is one of the most frequently used terms by the Arab community. Literally translated, 'habibi' and the feminine version *habeebti* mean my love or my dear, however, use of this word extends to far more figurative uses than literal ones. Personal address terms are fertile grounds for examining interpersonal relationships and by extension examining the culture as a whole. This study examines the different functions invested in the term 'habibi', where four major codes were identified through interviewing participants and taking part in participant observation. The data were analyzed using Hymes' speaking framework and a grounded theory approach. Through primary-cycle coding, I identified the following codes: maintaining a relationship/closeness, politeness, showing compassion, and saving face. All of these codes belonged to more general codes of familiarity, solidarity and unity, all of which belong to the larger overarching theme of harmony. The implications of this study suggest that key terms of address such as 'habibi' are important to study because of the relational information they contain, as well as the invested cultural values which will ultimately help us understand how members of a given cultural group communicate.

## Introduction

Every culture uses different terms of address depending on variables such as age, sex, social ranking and of course the relationship between the people communicating. Terms of address are loosely defined as "words used in a speech event that refer to the addressee of that speech event, [and] can be extremely important conveyors of social information" (Killean 1988, 230). This is to say that address terms contain social information that is not explicitly stated throughout interactions. One of the first things children are taught is how to properly address others and understand the significance of doing so. When interacting with others, "receiving the appropriate term is considered to be one of the most important ways" (Killean 1988, 230) of establishing and maintaining relationships between speakers. Moreover, "in the act of addressing others, speakers evoke personal identities and define the nature of the relationship existing between themselves and those addressed" (Fitch 1991, 2). Not only are personal identities and relationships invoked, but broader cultural values are also present when using terms of address.

In other words, language is socially meaningful: "the broader linguistic issue of language in interaction creates and displays social relationships and identities" (Kiesling 2004, 2). Address terms not only have different uses and possess several meanings, but are also "acknowledged to be one of the most interaction-oriented utterances among humans" (Afful 2007, 1). Understanding the functions of a widely used address term will indicate cultural patterns embedded within it, and as a result will lead to a "better understanding of how everyday language-in-interaction is related to widespread, enduring cultural discourses" (Kiesling 2004, 2). Therefore, we consider personal terms of address as being the "public index of the relational imperatives of a speech community" (Fitch 1991, 2). The study of these terms allows us to recognize and define the cultural beliefs and themes within which meaning is negotiated (Fitch 1991).

Even though address terms are important carriers of cultural values, in the Arab world they continue to be under-researched. Not only address terms, but any sort of published studies about "communicative phenomena in the Arab region have been scarce" Feghali 1997, 2). Looking at the Speech Communication Association publications, we can see that in the 1980s only five articles were related to communication in the Middle East, and none of those articles addressed any Arab cultural patterns (Feghali 1997). One notable exception is an exhaustive study on Egyptian terms of address by Dilworth B. Parkinson (1985), in which "the author deals with a number of terms included under chapter headings like "family terms", "terms of respect", "friendly and joking terms" and "terms of abuse" (Abu-Haidar 1987, 106).

However, even throughout this thorough analysis of Egyptian address terms, no special attention was paid to the term habibi; arguably one of the most widely used term of address between Arabs. 'Habibi' and its feminine form habeebti mean approximately, my love; my beloved; my sweetheart; my darling. The word 'habibi' is derived from the word 'hub' which means love. The 'habeeb' is then the dear/lover/beloved and the added "i" for the masculine form or "ti" for the feminine form are the possessive suffixes, used when referring to a specific person.

There is no universal definition for an Arab: "the term 'Arab' becomes strange and baffling when you dig into just what it means" (Feghali 1997, 5). However, there are certain values present when Arabs communicate, since "communication[n] embodies a social experience and ritual that involves sharing knowledge and emotions" (Al-Kandari and Gaither 2011, 6), thus connecting Arabs through their communicative style. Furthermore, there is such a large vocabulary repertoire available for Arab speakers that the specific use of 'habibi' "may encode several types of social information as well as implications about the relationship between the speakers" (Reynolds 1989, 145). Since Arabs infuse nearly all forms of communication with emotions, the choice of one word over another implies specific affective meanings. (Al-Kandari and Gaither 2011). That is to say, "it is the selection of that address term, rather than others which might have been used, which conveys meaning" (Fitch 1991, 3). By using the term 'habibi', speakers are conveying certain meanings that would otherwise not be available with another address term. However, until now no study has focused on what functions 'habibi' performs within society and what it says about the culture.

'Habibi' is a term used, and quite often overused, in most Arabic-speaking countries. It has infiltrated all sorts of conversations and communicative events. Use of the word is not questioned, but rather accepted, to the point that Arabs utter it unconsciously. That said, some people do notice it: comedians make fun of the exaggerated use of the word; YouTubers welcome new viewers with a "Welcome, Habibi!" video, and bloggers write about the widespread use of the term. In this way, its overuse can be a point of debate. In a blog post titled "Stranger or not, you're still my habibi", Fatima Abounassif (2012) writes: "I admit that 'habibi' can get pretty annoying sometimes because of its lack of meaning… it no longer has an aura [,] it no longer means anything." Although this blogger may believe that it no longer carries meaning, the fact that 'habibi' is so common among Arabic speakers in a variety of different communicative events tells us that certain cultural values underlie the use of the word. What is most interesting to note is that the term is so deeply embedded in the culture, and its use is so automatic, that users may believe it serves no function, when, in fact, it is more likely that the values implied by 'habibi' have been ingrained in the culture for so long that we don't even realize they're there. This important address term clearly carries meaning about interpersonal relationships, but also contains traces of cultural values that are shared across the Arab countries.

Due to the various uses and meanings of 'habibi', it is necessary to understand the pragmatic use of the word, that is, to understand the meaning of 'habibi' in interaction. Pragmatics, an area of study in linguistics, sociolinguistics and anthropological linguistics, allows us to look beyond the literal meaning of an utterance and consider the context of the interaction and how meaning is constructed; interpret layers of meaning beyond what is literally suggested and focus on implied meanings (University of Sheffield 2009). In order to understand the different functions of the term 'habibi' and what this says about the culture, I seek to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the different pragmatic functions and meanings of the word 'habibi'?

RQ2: What does the use of 'habibi' indicate about the values of Arab culture?

## Methods

### Overall Design

For my study I collected data using three different approaches: media studies, participant observation and semi-structured interviews with ten participants over the course of four months. I used multiple sources of data and research methods because all of these combined can give more multifaceted descriptions and perspectives. They are a form of triangulation, which "is an important way in which a qualitative researcher establishes the credibility of his or her study" (Lincoln and Guba quoted in Baxter and Babbie 2004, 318).

### Media Studies

In addition to the participant observation and interviews, I supplemented my study by analyzing the use of 'habibi' in media, specifically on TV shows. "The media reflect and portray […] forms of culture" (Fourie 2011, 355), and whether fact-based or fictitious, media reflect back the surrounding culture and are therefore fertile grounds for analysis. I narrowed my focus to two Egyptian TV shows; the popular 2001 show *Haj Metwalli's Family* and the more recent 2014 hit show *Dalaa Banat*. Both series are light hearted drama series with quite a bit of comedy, or what could be considered comedy-drama television series, which provide examples of language use in quasi-naturalistic settings.

### Participant Observation

Being a native of the culture and the language has given me the advantage of witnessing and participating in the use of 'habibi' for many years. At the beginning of my study, I adopted the role of complete observer, which allowed me to include more people in my study, in addition to the interviewees. Any time that I heard people using the term 'habibi', I would write it down as raw data. However, for the majority of my research, specifically for four months, I took on the role of 'participant-as-observer', whereby I engaged with the participants and would wait until they used the term. I would then ask them about their use, after which I informed them of my study. Since 'habibi' is used unconsciously and spontaneously, knowing about my study did not seem to affect their use of the term. Furthermore, since I myself am a native and belong to the culture, I used 'habibi' in different events and was able to record my interlocutors' reactions or reciprocal behavior. In addition, the participant-as-observer role allowed me to ask questions right after the term had been used and was still fresh in participants' minds. Although I do belong to the culture, I did not take my own explanations for granted, and so I would wait for any in vivo' (that is, 'live', spontaneous) language to come up and then elicit explanations of the meaning of 'habibi' in that situation. Being a participant-as-observer allowed me to "go beyond reports that rely on the five senses – of what they see, hear, taste, touch, and smell – to what they also intuitively feel" (Tracy 2013, 109). Yet at the same time, I could also take a step back and take notes, ask questions and leave. In total, I observed about 20 different interactions with 'habibi', and only stopped recording the events when I reached saturation point, which is to say, no new information was forthcoming.

### Interviews

Over the course of four months, I conducted ten informal, semi-structured interviews with Arab friends and family. Even though Arab is hard term to define, for "Arab is not a race, religion, or nationality" (Feghali 1997, 5), for the sake of my study, I define as Arabs all those who are fluent and capable of speaking the Arabic language and belong to Arab countries. With my participants, I was aiming for a maximum variation sample so that I could get a wide variety of responses and interpretations; to this end, I spoke with people of different nationalities (including Morrocan, Libyan, Lebanese, Egyptian and Saudi Arabian), different professions, and different age groups (from 19 to 65). All participants were natives of Arab countries, users of the word 'habibi/habeebti' and spoke the language fluently. The widespread use of the word 'habibi' across all borders, "indicate[s] that native Arabic

speakers share common features of communicative style" (Feghali 1997, 13), and thus the various Arab cultures share certain meanings behind the use of the term.

Half of the interviews were in English, and the other half in Arabic, which I then translated into English. One of the interviews was a focus group of four participants, which allowed the participants to discuss the topic more in depth and was beneficial since "group interaction aids respondents' recall and stimulates embellished descriptions of jointly experienced events" (Tracy 2013, 169). Interviews took place either at the university campus or at home, lasting between 10 minutes and an hour. Since I was conducting qualitative research, and my aim was to find out what the natives had to say about 'habibi', the semi-structured nature of the interviews gave me and the participants more freedom to pursue topics that I had not planned on asking but came up during conversations. However, my research question limited the scope of what we talked about because I had already narrowed down my focus to the point of wanting information about one key term. Member checking and making explicit comparisons between participants' responses are two other advantages which come from semi-structured interviews (Baxter and Babbie 2004).

## Data Analysis

In order to analyze the data from my interviews and field notes, I first used Hymes' 'speaking' framework and focused on 'rules' – why someone used 'habibi' in that instance, 'norms' – how the other person perceived it, and 'goals' – what was achieved by the term (Hymes 1972). Secondly, I used the grounded theory approach, involving the constant comparative method, in order to code the data and determine the functions of 'habibi' (Baxter and Babbie 2004) . Then I engaged in primary-cycle coding and searched for all the different functions and looked for associated terms in the data that could be grouped together under a code, and found the following: removing negativity, reducing intensity/tension, (re)establishing closeness, integrating into the Arab community, increasing intimacy, being polite, expressing feelings, asking for favors, maintaining a relationship, establishing solidarity, saving face, greeting someone you care about, showing compassion, remembering someone fondly, softening the blow and using the term reciprocally.

To illustrate how one instance of 'habibi' can fit under several primary codes, I draw on two examples of 'habibi' found in Arabic TV series. In *Dalaa Banat*, Heidi is a wealthy upper-class woman, who due to unusual circumstances has to go live with Korea, a straightforward lower-class woman. Both clash from the very first moment, but ultimately they grow to love one another. In episode 4, minute 25:43, Korea gives Heidi some of the leftover food in the fridge and tells Heidi that since she lives with them, she should eat what they eat, and drink what they drink. Heidi answers her with "habeebti, I don't eat from this disgustingness, I would vomit." In this instance, the codes of softening the blow, saving face, removing negativity and reducing tension/intensity all apply. Another example of multiple codes applying to one use of 'habibi' is when Korea gets out of prison after having spent a year there, and sees her fiancé Ibrahim for the first time. Although she doesn't use the word 'habibi', she tells him how much she had missed him and how she had wished she could get out of jail, if only for five minutes, just to see him. Ibrahim responds to this with "habeebti, habeebti ya Korea". In this case the following codes apply: (re)establishing closeness, increasing intimacy, expressing feelings, maintaining a relationship, greeting someone you care about and using the term reciprocally (although she didn't use the word, Ibrahim used the word 'habeebti' to reciprocate her expressed sentiments to him.) Given that many of these codes were overlapping, I went through constant comparative approach and secondary-cycle coding. Eventually, I was able to re-group them into four codes, with the 'saving face' code having several strategies (Fig.1).

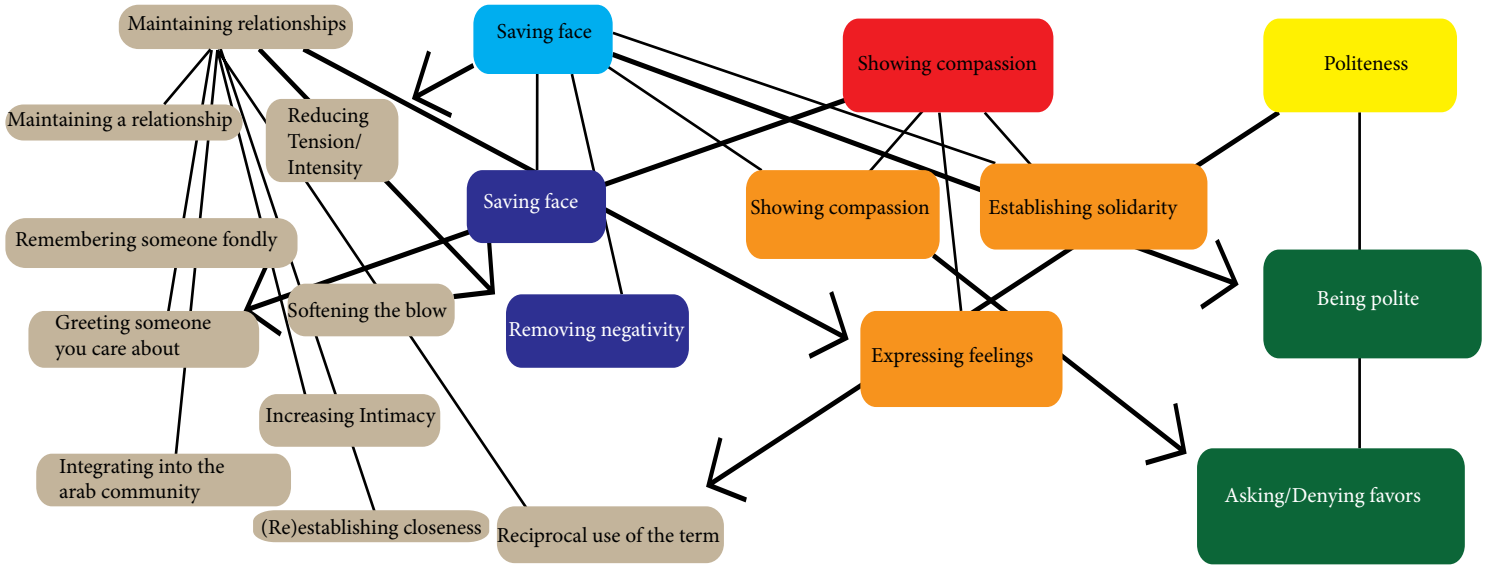


Figure 1: Mapping out the 16 primary codes and regrouping the overlapping ones into four main codes.

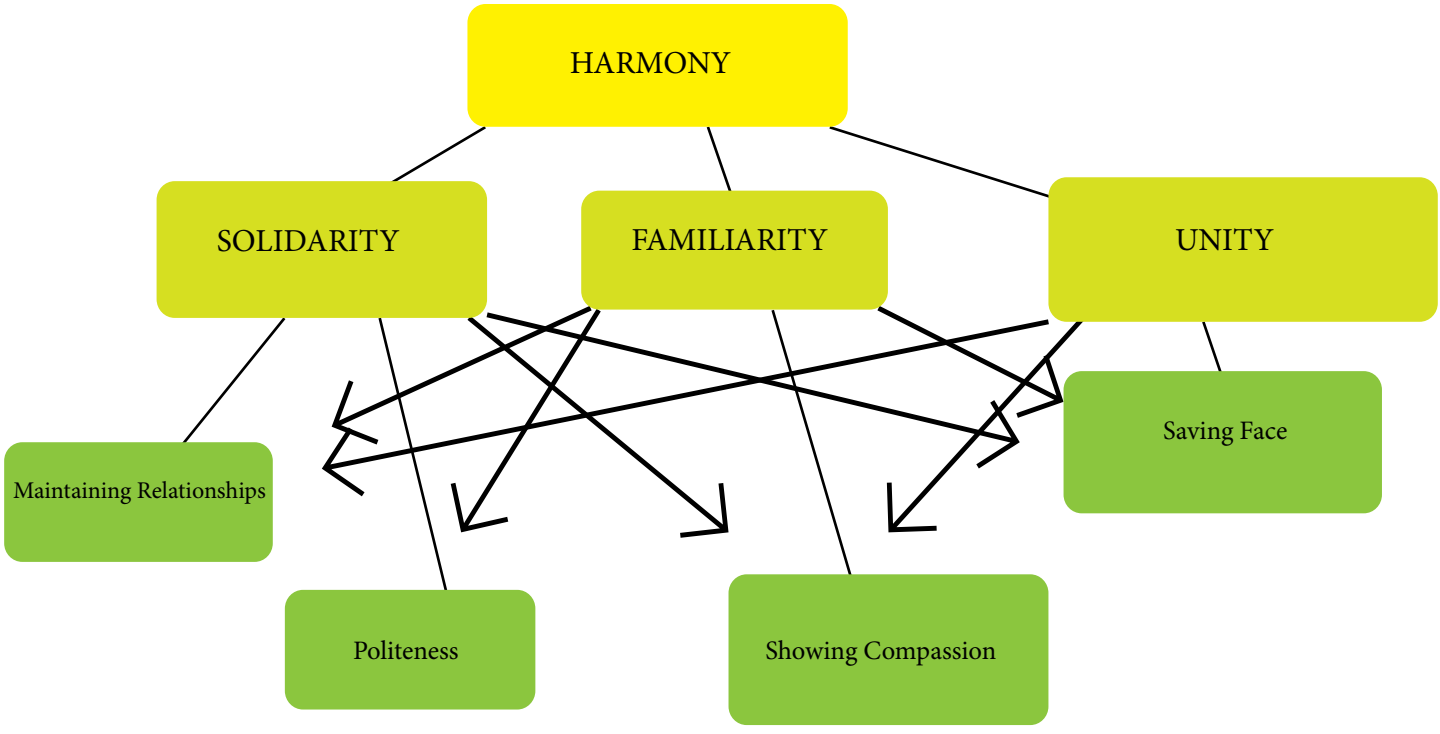


Figure 2: Illustrating how the 4 primary codes connect to the cultural theme of harmony.

These four codes then served the more abstract third-level codes of familiarity, solidarity and unity, which in turn belonged to the overarching cultural theme of harmony (Fig. 2). My belonging to the Arab culture helped me understand interactions and interpret meanings more accurately; however, I also checked with participants to see if they agreed with my terminology and coding process to make sure I was correctly analyzing the data.

## Findings: Unveiling the Unexplored Functions of "Habibi"

Four main functions of 'habibi' emerged from the data: maintaining relationships/closeness, expressing politeness, showing compassion, and saving face.

### Maintaining relationships/closeness

This function seems to be the most obvious and literal use of the word 'habibi'. For every single one of my interviews, whenever I asked the question, 'What is the function of the word 'habibi'?' all participants said it was to make someone feel close to you, express your feelings to them, show them how much you value and care for them, and let them know that even if you don't see them very often they are still very dear to you. A common way 'habibi' is used, other than in normal conversation, is during greetings. In the Arab world, greetings are "very important indices of appropriate socialization, the measure and type of relationship existing between interactants, as well as the means of ensuring the sustenance of the binding fabrics that hold the community together" (Nwoye 1993, 1). Therefore, you must ensure that you greet people warmly and from the heart and make sure they know you've missed them, even if it's a quick hello; by using 'habibi' you convey to them much more meaning than with ten other words. Shortly after I decided to study the functions of 'habibi', my close friend Dana saw me on campus, and called out to me using the term 'habeebti', so it made me curious as to how she was using it in this particular situation. She explained to me that "even though I may not see you as often as I'd like, I use the term 'habeebti' with only you and one other friend whenever I see you because it's important for me to keep our friendship as strong as it was, and when I use 'habeebti' I am trying to convey that to you, show you that I care." And then after leaving for our respective classes, indeed I felt like our friendship was still intact and that we were still close friends, in large part because of the continued use of 'habeebti' between us without any hesitation or awkwardness.

I found similar uses of 'habibi' in several TV shows, where 'habibi' was often part of the greeting. In *Haj Metwalli's Family*, Metwalli is married to four women, the first three of whom get along well. In Episode 8, when his first wife, Amina, gets sick, Namatalla, the second wife comes to visit her and see how she's doing (min 0:05). At this point, Namatalla had only just married Metwalli and they were still relative strangers. However, when it came time to greet each other, they greeted each other warmly and used the word 'habeebti' several times. Amina uses it first and says "Welcome, welcome, I swear it is as if the Prophet Himself has visited us, ya Namatalla! Welcome ya habeebti!" To which Namatalla answers, "May God increase/add to your blessings, ya habeebti." Here we see how two women, who are potentially positioned in a relation of competition, greet each other effusively and use 'habeebti' to maintain a close relationship with each other.

### Politeness

This second function of 'habibi' serves to help you come across as polite and tactful. By 'politeness', I am not referring to social rules of behavior such as letting someone go through a door first, but instead "the choices that are made in language use, the linguistic expression that give people space and show a friendly attitude to them" (Cutting 2002, 45). Across cultures, it is common for speakers to "respect each other's expectations regarding self-image, take account of their feelings, and avoid face threatening acts" (ibid.), and throughout Arab cultures, the word 'habibi' helps accomplish these goals. From what I observed, participants tend to use 'habibi' when asking for something because the term

invokes the closeness you share and is more likely to get the other person to do what you need from them. Specifically, the word *labaqa*, meaning tact, came up several times during my focus group, and was one of the most common explanations for the use – or non-use – of 'habibi'. All focus group participants agreed that use of 'habibi' would be appreciated as signaling good manners. Following the maxim of tact, the speaker's intention is to maximize the benefits for others, thus 'habibi' aims to make others feel more comfortable and at ease; it is part of positive politeness and attends "to the hearer's interests, wants and needs" (Cutting 2002, 49).

An example of using 'habibi' to make others feel comfortable can be found in *Dalaa Banat*, in episode 13, minute 23:05. Marwan is upset with an art dealer, because the art dealer believed that Marwan was trying to cheat him in a deal, when Marwan proposed to exchange a car for a painting of the same worth. Having only met him that day, the two were practically strangers. Then the art dealer had Marwan's girlfriend arrested, because the car was in her name. Later, when he discovered that Marwan was innocent, he offered a compensation of a million Euros, and said to Marwan "my brother Marwan, habibi, we will pay you 1 million euros, this is to apologize and satisfy you." Seeing as the art dealer used a "deliberate, situated and contextually appropriate expression of consideration for the feelings/face-needs of the addressee" (Davies, Haugh and Merrison 2011, 114), we understand that 'habibi' was performing politeness in this case.

Furthermore in the focus group interview, Suzan said that "when I use that word I am welcoming you, and trying to be nice and gracious; I am trying to embrace you as a person." This means that through 'habibi' you are capable of turning a stranger into someone familiar, or bring them closer to you. In other words, 'habibi' is used as a positive politeness strategy, which aims to "demonstrate closeness and solidarity, appealing to friendship [and] making other people feel good" (Cutting 2002, 48). Lastly, it is also polite to reciprocate the use of the word, so if someone calls you 'habeebti', it is polite to answer them in kind, whether it is 'habeebti' or another term of endearment such as 'ya omri' (my life) or 'ya roohi' (my soul)..

## Showing Compassion

In this particular function Arabs use the term more consciously and carrying more of its literal meaning, which is my love/dear. Often when Arabs talk to one another, their ways of communicating are filled with emotions, and if something bad has happened to the speaker, they will tell you in such a way to elicit a compassionate response from you (Al-Kandari and Gaither 2011). The listener must then respond in an appropriate way, expressing genuine sympathy to show them you care and make them feel validated. One way to accomplish this is to use 'habibi'. More often than not, it is the older Arab women, mothers and grandmothers, who use the term in such a way, since they are the ones expected to be kind and understanding. For example, when I told my mother about staying up all night studying, only to come back and sit down again in front of the computer in the morning, she said "Poor you, my habeebti, inshAllah God will help you in everything, just trust in God." Although she can't do much to help me, she will come around every once in a while to check up on me to see how it's going. Her actions paired with her words, most importantly 'habeebti', show that she is supporting me however she can. She is showing compassion and letting me know that she is right there with me every step of the way. Her use of the word 'habeebti' is important because not only does it let me know that she loves me, but also that I am in her thoughts; thus, I feel her solidarity with me.

In addition to this example, there were several instances of the use of 'habibi' to show compassion in *Dalaa Banat*. In episode 5, Korea, the main character, has just witnessed her fiancé, Ibrahim, get hurt in a street fight and rushes him to the hospital. Once he's in the operating room, she crumbles to the ground and starts crying desperately. Her uncle is there with her and tries to calm her down and comfort her in any way he can (min 6:30).

Crouching next to her on the floor, he puts his arm around her and says "God have mercy! God have mercy! It's okay, habeebti, why don't you go on and go home and keep your aunt Sundus and your cousin Gamalat company? Suka (her friend) and I will spend the night here and I will keep you updated by phone." Korea's uncle is showing her compassion and consideration through his actions and through the use of the word 'habeebti'.

There are two further examples in Episode 2, where 'habibi' is used to transmit sympathy to the other. In this case, Korea's aunt Sundus, who is a little mentally unstable, gets lost when Korea accidentally left the door open. Ibrahim and Suka are helping her find her and Korea is once again desolate (min 20:15). Ibrahim takes her hand and kisses it and says "Ya habeebti, calm down, calm down." And although "verbal explicitness in sex-related terms like love and honey […] are condemned among adult speakers [in Arab communities] of the opposite sex and tolerated among speakers of the same sex" (Farghal and Shakir 1994, 249) unless they're officially married, Ibrahim still calls Korea 'habeebti' because he is trying to convey his understanding and compassion. Lastly, also in Episode 2, Nader's fiancée, with whom he was deeply in love, all of a sudden leaves him for another man and leaves the country. Nader is heartbroken; he won't answer his phone, go to work, leave the apartment… and his older sister is trying to motivate him and get him out of this state (min 10:59). She says "Ya Nader, ya habibi, you have to go on with your work and your life." She even suggests they go on a vacation and is trying her best to let him know she is right there with him and is supporting him.

## Saving Face

Even though participants did not realize it when they used 'habibi' for this particular function of saving face, it was in fact one of the most common uses. Arguments, requests, denials, demands, criticisms and other communicative events can all be considered face-threatening. The term face refers to "an individual's claimed sense of positive image in a relational and network context[;] face in essence is a projected image of one's self in a relational situation"(Boden 2008, 131). In other words, face represents "the confidence of society in the integrity of moral character […and] loss of face occurs when one fails to meet the requirements of one's position in society" (Burek 2010, 46). Problems arise since individuals may lose face in many ways, and although not all cultures lose face the same way, losing face is still a serious issue, so communicators have to be mutually aware of face-threatening acts.

Face is thus the identity that is "defined conjointly by the participants in a setting" (Boden 2008, 131), and is of great importance to Arabs, since if they have an active role in defining the other person's face then they will always ensure to not threaten the other's face or make them look bad. Although most people try to maintain a balance between autonomy and approval, this greatly depends on their culture. In relation to this study, Arabs belong to a collectivist culture, where people focus on meeting the need for inclusion and are more other-oriented, and therefore concentrate less on the self-face. "In collectivist cultures the honor of the group is the most important aspect in human interaction [and] to avoid losing the honor of the group, people's behavior will be dominated by the avoidance of losing face" (Boden 2008, 132), in any given situation. Even though all cultures are concerned with face, there are varying degrees of concern. In most Western societies, which are 'low-context' cultures, meaning that context is relatively unimportant to the way messages are communicated, "one is not offended when met with contradiction" (Burek 2010, 55) and is therefore not concerned about losing face in that particular situation because "the place that face issues hold in low-context cultures is not nearly as important as in collectivistic cultures" (Burek 2010, 54). However, in high-context cultures, where a great deal of communicative meaning is inferred from the context, a "negotiator's nightmare is loss of face […] and the individual will do everything to ensure it will not happen (Burek 2010, 55). This helps explain why a term like 'habibi' is so popular

across all Arabic-speaking countries and why people use it so frequently even when the term would not be deemed appropriate in its literal meaning, for example, during arguments.

This means not only that any communicative event can be considered face-threatening, but also that Arabs may even be offended by certain communicative expressions which could be harmful to the relationship. It is important to not threaten someone's face, since it can be "degrading and considered as shameful to someone's reputation in society because it relates to individual honor and pride" (Al-Kandari and Gaither 2011, 7). So, naturally in conversations between Arabs, this particular function is most prevalent, especially since many participants don't want to risk threatening the other person's face and therefore use several strategies to save face. Throughout the data, 'habibi' was often used to soften a blow and mitigate tension whilst saying something somewhat harsh, the aim being to keep things smooth and maintain the peace for the sake of the relationship. Softening the blow and ultimately saving face was achieved through three strategies; protecting the other's negative face, protecting the other's positive face and protecting the self's positive face. The positive face is characterized by one's desire to be admired, accepted and generally well liked by others (Brown and Levinson, 1978). In contrast, the negative face is related to one's freedom; the desire to not be imposed upon (Brown and Levinson, 1978). Seeing as "high-context individuals are more concerned with trying to save the face of the opposing person and value inclusion (respect and approval)" (Burek 2010, 54), we can see how the three face-saving strategies that 'habibi' performs fit seamlessly together, since they are concerned with protecting the other's face and one's own positive face.

A particularly face-threatening communicative event for both participants is asking for favors, because it threatens both the asker's positive face, and the other's positive and negative face. In the following example, I was able to see how 'habibi' was used to protect the self's positive face, and the other's negative and positive faces. When Sofia, Lidia and I were sitting together during lunch, Sofia had an appointment in about 45 minutes, and didn't feel like going. Since Lidia had come to school with a car, Sofia asked her if she could give her a ride to the clinic and used 'habeebti' as the first word in her request, to which Lidia answered "Oh, habeebti, I'm so sorry but I can't! My mum told me to pick my sister up and I wouldn't have time to do both! So sorry, habeebti!" Lidia had to use 'habeebti' to deny Sofia's favor because she really didn't want to say no, but had no option. Also, she made sure to give a valid excuse and apologize several times, so that Sofia wouldn't take the denial personally. So, in this case we can see how Sofia used 'habeebti' to protect Lidia's negative face, and make sure she wasn't imposing and giving her the chance to say no. And on the other hand, Lidia was trying to protect Sofia's positive face, her need for approval, appreciation and inclusion; by using 'habeebti' she was able to transmit those feelings much more efficiently. However, Lidia was also trying to protect her own positive face, her need to be liked and accepted, because she didn't want to lose face in front of her friends and risk coming across as uncaring. In this interaction, we see how both participants are concerned with the other's face more than their own faces. Thus, we can see how in "collectivist cultures, face is concerned more about what others think of one's self worth, especially in the context of one's in group" (Boden 2008, 132). In other words, how we come across to others, especially to those close to us, is a significant aspect of identity and very important, relationally speaking.

There were several instances when participants used the word 'habibi' in somewhat heated situations. High tension, loud voices and irritated family members would not seem to be the typical setting for using the term of endearment 'habibi'. Yet after I had seen this happen a number of times, it became clear that 'habibi' was not used to coax the other person to see things their way; rather, the word was used to make surrounding words less harsh, in other words to soften the blow and save face. One afternoon I was passing by a friend's house, and once inside I found Sara showing her mother how to use a program online, and growing exasperated, she repeated for the third time "Mama… habeebti, it's not that hard! Didn't I just tell you that this is the number of the base and you just have to type it in?" Sara's mother followed her instructions and did not get upset at her tone or response, because 'habeebti' was used in this situation to 'sugarcoat' the snapping tone and ultimately to protect her mother's positive face. In contrast to "U.S. Americans' self-reliant and "individual-centered" approach to life, social life in the Arab region is characterized by "situation-centeredness", in which loyalty to one's extended family and larger "in-group" takes precedence over individual needs and goals" (Feghali 1997, 8), and therefore the relationship is placed above the participants; it is more important than you and me. Sara was striving to protect her mother's positive face and above all to not harm the relationship.

### Habibi: Striving for Harmony

All of these different functions answered my first research question, and have given me a better understanding of what 'habibi' is used for. However, the data were telling me more: all of the functions seemed very similar and had common features. Therefore, I went through the codes again and synthesized them into more abstract third-level codes of familiarity, unity and solidarity. These three codes were coded with terminology found in the data. More than one participant told me that 'habibi' functions to maintain solidarity between the in-group, that is, Arabic speakers. We use 'habibi' to relate to one another, to be united against the out-group, in hopes that the term will bring us closer to each other. However, 'habibi' is also used because we believe that there *should* be this easiness and informality between Arabs, a certain familiarity that erases barriers between us. Lastly, these third-level codes were also very similar and all belonged to an overarching cultural theme: harmony. Seeing as Arabs are members of high-context cultures, where they seek to repair and build relationships, many expressions of respect and courtesy are included throughout interactions (Burek 2010). As a result, "high context communication is primarily concerned with maintaining face and group harmony" (Burek 2010, 54-55). In other words, Arabs seek to establish and maintain that harmony above anything else.

Seeing as 'habibi' is a term used by all Arabs regardless of where they are from, it suggests that 'habibi' represents a unifying cultural theme shared by Arabs everywhere. Harmony serves to protect the social realm from disruption and maintain interpersonal relationships, as well as collective identities intact. In a culture where pride and honor are of great relevance and importance, it is integral to the well-being and functioning of the society to maintain the harmony between the people, and 'habibi' is one way that harmony is invoked and maintained.

## Conclusion: Understanding Cultural Values through the Looking-Glass of Habibi

This study has looked at the different functions that the address term 'habibi' serves, along with discovering the cultural theme behind the use of the word. Address terms in themselves are very important and evoke personal identities, as well as relational and cultural values (Fitch 1991). It was surprising to find that no one has already conducted a study specifically on such a popular term, especially considering the importance of address terms. So, I decided to focus on the different functions of the word, and what these functions implied. The results show that 'habibi' is more than just a term to call your loved one, for it serves multiple functions, including: saving face, showing compassion, being polite and tactful, and maintaining the relationship. All of these

functions are very similar and for good reason, since they belong to higher codes which are more descriptive than functional. The codes of familiarity, unity and solidarity were terms used by the participants to describe the purpose of using the term 'habibi'. Furthermore, these three codes belong to and function to maintain the larger cultural theme of harmony. Making sure that there is no tension, negativity, or ill feeling is a priority for Arabs; nothing should disrupt the harmony of a situation, and one way to diffuse tension is through the use of the word 'habibi'.

Throughout my study, many of the explanations and conclusions resonated with the existing research related to the cultural theme of 'honor versus shame'. The notion of 'face' is highly salient in Arab interactions for various reasons. As a high-context, other-oriented culture, one can interpret the "honorable and modest self-presentations in the public sphere as structured masks worn for social approval" (Abu-Lughod 1985, 253). "The discourse of honor belongs in the public arena of everyday" (ibid.), for Arabs "desire to project an image of strength and capability, or conversely to avoid projecting an image of incapability, weakness or foolishness" (Burek 2010, 55). Under the honor code, Arabs "seek to appear potent, independent and self-controlled" (Abu-Lughod 1985, 253) to others, for what truly matters is how others perceive them. The fear of shame among Arabs is so powerful because the identification between the individual and the group is far closer than that in the West due to the fact that "high-context collectivistic cultures believe that every action and decision affects the group" (Burek 2010, 53), and therefore demonstrating why "group-harmony is of utmost importance" (Burek 2010, 54). Among Arabs, the importance of the group weighs heavier than the importance of an individual. If an individual is in a position of shame, they then lose their influence and power, and through that person, the entire group is shamed similarly. If an Arab is humiliated before the group, or commits a social blunder, it results in a group shame. Losing face, and facing shame, is a serious matter "that will, in varying degrees, affect a person's ability to function effectively in society" (Burek 2010, 46).

The implications of this study are that terms of address are to be studied and analyzed more carefully, for they carry interpersonal relational information as well as socio-cultural values. Terms of address and in this case 'habibi' are important communicative phenomena to study because they are influenced by cultural themes and values. Also, since they provide valuable information about socially constructed notions of persons and their relationships, we have a lot to gain when we understand the use of a particular address term (Fitch 1991). In this case, there are dozens of personal address terms similar to 'habibi' available for Arabs to use, however, 'habibi' is the word used and shared by all the different Arabs around the world, and carries implications about the values shared by Arabs everywhere. Therefore, by the specific use of 'habibi' "we can come to understand how system[s] of expressive practices fraught with feeling, system[s] of symbols, premises, rules, forms, and the domains and dimensions of mutual meanings[…] are invoked in everyday conversation and behavior" (Feghali 1997, 27). Understanding the scope and importance of such a term gives valuable perspectives into a culture's values, and provides knowledge on how to communicate with Arabs and better understand their communicative patterns.

This study of 'habibi' raises promising directions for future research. An interesting pattern that I discovered, which was beyond the scope of this study, was why the term 'habibi' is far more popular and frequently used than the female version 'habeebti', even between female participants. Not only that, but in music videos where the singer is a man, he sings to his female loved one and refers to her with the term 'habibi' as opposed to the female term. When out of curiosity I asked several of the participants why they thought this was, responses were all along the lines of never having thought about it, suggesting that the flexible gendering of 'habibi' would be worth studying. Another suggestion would be to look at how non-Arabs perceive, understand and

potentially use the term. My study was only focused on native Arabic speakers' perspectives. Finding out how foreigners, such as non-native Arabic speakers or those who are friends or neighbors with Arabs perceive the term and then examining whether any Arab cultural values are being transmitted through the use of habibi would be worth looking into. These are some suggestions for future research that would help our understanding of Arabic language and culture and enrich the observations in my research.

## Acknowledgements

This paper has been a journey, a wonderful journey I took with several important passengers, all of whom deserve recognition. First off, I'd like to thank Dr. Daniel Chornet, for his unwavering faith in my work and his constant encouragement. Second, to my wonderful parents, thank you for your unconditional support, and for everything you've done for me. To my lovely sisters, you've always believed in me and for that you're the best. Lastly, thank you to family and friends for participating and helping me out with anything I needed. A big thank you to you all.

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## ENDNOTES

1. For the sake of brevity, I shall only be using the masculine generic form, 'habibi', throughout the paper, unless 'habeebti' is specifically used in the data under discussion.

2. All of the participants' names are pseudonyms.

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The Journal for Undergraduate Ethnography
Volume 6 | Issue 1
ISSN 2369-8721

# "Manufacturing" Community: Solidarity, Profit and the Bar Owner

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## ABSTRACT

This study considers the potential of eight independently-run bars in a small Connecticut seaport city to "manufacture" community. It focuses on the marked tension faced by the seven owners (and one manager) of these establishments, who seek to attract regular "crowds" with whom they respectively identify while also sustaining profit margins. By examining bar activity and functionality, this study contributes to contemporary understandings of "community" within anthropology. Of particular interest are theoretical frameworks that account for the negotiation of identity and potential development of community as these occur *within specific localities*, especially small businesses. Based on interview and observational data collected over a six-month period, this study finds that the bar may, indeed, be said to "manufacture" community. Each of the establishments reviewed entices patrons to identify (both as individuals and as members of a "crowd") with a highly personalized bar space and, by extension, to make regular bar visits. This process fosters continuous discourse between owners and patrons concerning various elements of bar environment. Because owners hold greater influence over the bar space

than patrons, and must often understand this influence in financial terms, bar-based community is best described as "manufactured."

## Introduction: The Social Importance of Bars in Thatcham

The city of Thatcham, Connecticut has experienced numerous transformations. First making a name for itself as a whaling hub in the 19th century, Thatcham bolstered its reputation during WWI and WWII, becoming an important site of submarine manufacturing and naval activity. Through the second half of the 20th century, however, industry declined, and the city gained a reputation for raucous nightlife fueled by sailors, prostitution and, as the stories go, innumerable bars. Although Thatcham continues to face considerable economic obstacles today, a recent revival in local art has prompted community leaders to pursue stronger relations with the three colleges located on the periphery of the city's downtown. These revitalization efforts follow crackdowns from the navy as well as local politicians, which, over the past thirty years, have prompted a reduction in Thatcham bar activity. That said, many residents still describe Thatcham as a "bar town."

Thatcham's oldest bar, open for nearly a century, is the Nine Innings Tavern. A single-room establishment crowded with black-and-white photographs, baseball memorabilia and vintage beer advertisements, Nine Innings is, in the words of owner Gary McAllister, a "home" for its regular patrons. Among his clientele, Gary counts many close friends with whom he shares a general understanding of the values, aesthetics, and narratives represented by his establishment. The interactions that take place within Nine Innings facilitate continual reinterpretation and reproduction of identity on the level of the individual, of the group, and of the bar.

Activity such as that which occurs regularly in Nine Innings is a familiar scene to most Americans. In recent years, the success of television programs such as *Cheers* and *The Simpsons* have brought to the forefront of American pop culture a notion long accepted by many frequent bar-goers: that bars are important sites of social interaction and, in certain cases, community. That "community" holds a notoriously ambiguous position in the social sciences, however, makes this a problematic suggestion. What is a community? Do relationships such as those developed in Nine Innings constitute community, or is this possibility nullified by the exchange of capital that transpires between Gary, his staff and his clientele? Certainly, Gary cares about his patrons, but he also cares about making a profit. How do these two loyalties coexist?

This study explores the processes through which for-profit businesses facilitate social interactions crucial to community development. By examining the tension that seven Thatcham bar owners and one bar manager face as they attempt to remain finacially stable while also fostering feelings of solidarity among patrons, I argue that the activities and interactions of participants in the bar scene may "manufacture" community. In so doing, I contribute to contemporary interpretations of community within anthropology and the social sciences more broadly.

## Literature Review: Conceptualizing Community, Drinking and the Bar

Although drinking practices and places have been analyzed extensively in relation to identity as well as to economic structures (Douglas 1987; Wilson 2005), the bar as a site of "community" does not neatly conform to either of these models. This is largely due to the ambiguity of "community" itself, which may refer to manifestations of solidarity formed in accordance with any number of factors, including geography, ideology, ethnicity or vocation. In order to study how community is developed, felt and expressed within bars, a productive theoretical approach to this term must first be outlined.

For many social scientists in the second half of the 20th century, the term "community" lost its salience as the binaries

developed by 19th century sociologists–premodern and modern, organic and mechanical solidarity, Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft (Durkheim 1893; Marx and Engels 1902; Tönnies 1957)–fell under increasing scrutiny. Functionalist anthropology, with its focus on the personal relationships and shared knowledge seen to characterize community in so-called "primitive" societies (Schröder 2007) was replaced by more reflexive approaches to fieldwork. With the rise of globalization in recent decades, however, certain scholars (Amit 2010; Amit and Rapport 2002, 2012; Anderson 1983) have begun to analyze the potential of "community" to describe collectives not *necessarily* delimited by geography. The term is increasingly understood as a symbolic ideal, rather than as a social entity (Anderson 1983; Cohen 1985).

How "community," as an abstraction, articulates with actual social relations has, thus, become a question of renewed interest to anthropologists (Amit 2010; Amit and Rapport 2002, 2012; Creed 2006). Arguments that this term should be replaced with the more place-centric "locality" (Cooke 1990) must now account for the potential overlap of these two terms. With several exceptions (Cox 1997; Day and Murdoch 1993), however, such overlap has remained largely unaddressed. As Wilson (2005, 11) asserts, "anthropologists today…choose to avoid making linkages between respondents and their local actions and groups…and the larger social formations of which they are part, such as ethnic groups, classes and nations….As a result, anthropologists also increasingly avoid studies of 'communities.'" By exploring the capacity of interactions and understandings embodied by "community" to emerge within a small business, this study aims to revisit this concept at the micro-local level.

Contemporary social scientists understand "community" to represent a "genus of concepts" (Amit 2010, 358), the study of which demands a shift in scholarly focus from meaning to *use* (Amit 2010; Amit and Rapport 2002, 2012; Cohen 1985; Creed 2006). As Creed (2006, 7) notes, this shift carries with it a temptation to "[distinguish] different uses of [community], such as 'geographical communities' and 'political communities,' but since these dimensions often overlap, such distinctions could hardly be sustained." In other words, a theoretically productive approach to the study of community should not simply interpret the variable use of "community" as grounds to develop multiple definitions for the term. Anthropologists must "retain the concept's inherent obscurity…so that it does not automatically evoke any preconceived ideas but rather requires specification" (Creed 2006, 7). Because "the meaning of community can affect social relations, not just vice versa" (Creed 2006, 44), to study "community" is to analyze a highly versatile process of continuous reinterpretation.

According to Cohen (1985, 12), community "expresses a relational idea: the opposition of one community…to other social entities." The "boundary" understood to facilitate this opposition is, in consequence symbolically dualistic. As Cohen (1985, 74) explains, "it is the sense [community members] have of its perception by people on the other side–the public face and 'typical' mode–and it is their sense of the community as refracted through all the complexities of their lives and experience–the private face and idiosyncratic mode." These symbolic "faces," Cohen (1985) argues, manifest when one social group is confronted, often through threats of invasion or displacement, by an "opposing" group.

Turner (1969), in contrast to Cohen (1985), develops the concept of "*communitas*," an experience of intensive solidarity that manifests not as the result of boundary-based distinction, but *internally*, through intense feelings of solidarity and equality. Like Cohen (1985), however, Turner (1969, 96-98) understands "*communitas*" as arising during exceptional "moments out of time." Addressing this theoretical parallel, Amit (2010, 360) asserts that, "[because] Cohen's [and] Turner's…versions of community

are dependent on the extraordinary and the polarized for eliciting communality…they are more likely to limit rather than open up this field of investigation." Emphasizing the ambiguity of "community" as a productive basis for theorization, rather than as a semantic hurdle, Amit (2010) and Amit and Rapport (2012) focus on quotidian social relations and expressions, introducing three concepts previously unused in community studies: "consociation," "joint-commitments," and "affect-belonging."

According to Amit and Rapport (2012, 25), "Consociate relationships do not inevitably or necessarily arise as an entailment either of readily available categories or the workings of existing structures." Instead, consociation manifests itself through the "circulation of interpretive narratives" (Amit and Rapport 2012, 26) which inform the self- and group-identification of individuals. The tendency of parents to exchange anecdotes and understandings while watching their children compete in athletics (Dyck 2002), for example, can facilitate consociate relationships. Due to the multiplicity of circumstances that may give rise to consociation, many of which do not require consistent or prolonged interaction, this term is especially useful in problematizing the ambiguity of community. Consociation yields expressions of communality, but does not, necessarily, define forms of social organization.

Reappropriating Gilbert's (1994) notion of the "joint-commitment" to inform theoretical understandings of community, Amit (2010) draws heavily from Burke's (1955, xviii) notion of "titular" concepts: ideas illuminated by examining "terms that clearly reveal the strategic spots at which ambiguities necessarily arise." A joint-commitment, according to Gilbert (1994, 16) references the interdependence of specific individual commitments that "cannot exist apart." Any agenda to which all members of a certain social group must contribute (governance, neighborhood safety, social activism, etc.) inevitably breeds joint-commitments. While Gilbert (1994, 14) recognizes the joint-commitment as a "special unifying principle" capable of producing "true unity," Amit (2010) notes that conflict can also arise between individuals forced to navigate their reliance on one another. By recognizing the versatility of the joint-commitment, which may emerge through any number of social relations and last for varying periods of time, Amit (2010, 359) defines the term as a "generative principle of community." In order to analyze this principle as a "spot" of ambiguity, however, Amit (2010) references not only the multiplicity of circumstances through which it can manifest, but also the uneven individual commitments of which it is comprised. Members of a group who depend on each other to achieve a common goal will not, necessarily, assume equal degrees of responsibility toward their shared objective.

The concept of disproportion also applies to feelings of "affect-belonging." Because these feelings are "unevenly and unequally…dispersed" (Amit 2010, 361), they must be examined in accordance with a "distributive model of culture" (Hannerz 1992 in Amit 2010). While joint-commitments develop out of shared responsibilities, however, affect is felt on a personal level, and is not necessarily tied to any collective obligations. While explaining her inclination to "feel 'at home'" (i.e. experience affect) in her neighborhood as the partial product of "familiar faces, sites and memories," Amit (2010, 361) highlights this contrast. "Beyond the reciprocity that I maintain with a couple of immediate next-door neighbors," she reflects, "I would be hard pressed to identify a broader sense of joint commitment with this sense of connection." Due to the fact that joint-commitments and affect remain distinct spots of ambiguity, despite holding the potential to inform one another, these elements of community may be explored across variable "forms of association" ranging from the consociate to the intimate (Amit 2010, 362).

In theorizing the production of community within drinking establishments, it is important to review the broad anthropological literature regarding alcohol consumption as a socially meaningful behavior. Over the past several decades, concern about the physiological effects of drinking stemming from research in the health sciences has been both challenged and complicated by studies (Robbins 1979; Douglas 1987) of the social interactions and cultural contexts that inform drinking behavior. Bearing in mind Douglas's (1987, 9) contention that "Sampling a drink is sampling what is happening to a whole category of social life," anthropologists have come to interpret the consumption of alcoholic beverages as an act "loaded with socially assumed meanings" (Turmo 2001, 131) and, by extension, "an extremely important feature in the production and reproduction of ethnic, national, class, gender and local community identities" (Wilson 2005, 3). Because drinking embodies an intimate relationship between substance and consumer, as well as an array of outwardly projected "meanings," the behavior must be understood as both an "individual act" and as a "social fact" (Turmo 2001, 131).

This duality is not the only source of ambivalence in perceptions of drinking. As Schivelbusch (1992, 171) comments, "Communal drinking…creates fraternity among drinkers… [but] this relationship is marked by mutual caution, obligation, and competitiveness." Ethnographers whose fieldwork concerns drinking behavior (Anderson 1979; Simmons 1959, 1960) have emphasized this ostensible paradox. Anderson (1979, 187), for example, notes that patrons of Jelly's, a bar and liquor-store in Chicago's South Side, "can easily close ranks and orient to an equality in a group that is otherwise stratified into particular crowd identities." Such orientation, facilitated by drinking behavior, aligns with Cohen's (1985) theory of "opposition." As Anderson (1979, 36) explains, "the extended group, e*specially in times of group trouble or triumph* [emphasis added]…becomes characterized by an intimate 'we' feeling."

That both communality and "stratification" may arise through drinking behavior serves to underline identity negotiation as a highly versatile social act. Drinking behavior that informs individual and subgroup identity in social groupings is typically based on purposeful and frequently premeditated acts of antagonism, self-promotion, and support (Anderson 1979; Robbins 1979; Simmons 1959, 1960). All of these acts, even the most hostile, occur in response to shared understandings of individual identity as fluid; members of drinking groups are consistently afforded the opportunity to relocate themselves within existing social orders. Such orders are, themselves, continually reinterpreted and reproduced on the group level within bars, clubhouses, or other "arena[s] of social life" (Anderson 1979, 29). By developing communal understandings of identity negotiation, as well as of the overarching structure that gives this interaction meaning, drinking groups are able to summon expressions of solidarity and cohesion quite readily.

As meaningful as the act of drinking itself are the places in which this ritual transpires. For decades, anthropologists have argued that "the locales of regular and celebrated drinking…are places where meanings are made, shared, disputed and reproduced, where identities take shape, flourish and change" (Wilson 2005, 10). How such meanings and identities articulate with the world outside of drinking "arenas," however, is a less definite matter. Certain studies of drinking places (Anderson 1979, Schivelbusch 1992) stress the inapplicability of bar-based behavior and understandings to external environments. Anderson (1979), for instance, analyzes regular bar patrons as members of a "primary group" (Cooley 1909) whose identities *within* the bar cannot be "carried along to different social situations" (Anderson 1979, 31). Other studies (Mars 1987, 99), in contrast, emphasize the propensity of relationships formed between drinkers to "[articulate] the spheres of leisure, family, and work." Apparently attempting to acknowledge both sides of this ambivalence, (Wilson 2005, 15) asserts, "no matter how socially significant drinking arenas seem,

their importance also rests with their roles in the framing of actions, networks and other social relations beyond their own bounds." What is important to this study, however, is not the magnitude of this "framing"–the extent to which meanings and identities negotiated in "drinking arenas" seep into social life outside of these sites–but, rather, the simple fact that such negotiation does, indeed, transpire within bars. The bar is a place of production and reproduction. Identities and meanings are formed *here*, regardless of their applicability to peripheral spaces of interaction.

Bar behavior is defined by various expressions of reciprocity which, like joint-commitments (Amit 2010), are individually understood and collectively produced (Anderson, 1979; Schivelbusch 1992). These expressions occur in response to a "range of imaginative materials" that drinking establishments "provide" for patrons, who are thus empowered to "engage in symbolic self-definition and the building of 'imagined communities'" (O'Carroll 2005, 53). Such "materials" may be inspired by symbols of ethnicity, politics, or other structuring systems of social identity (Kasmir, 2005; O'Carroll 2005). Often overlooked in studies of bar-based reciprocity, however, are the figures who initiate this "provision," namely, bar owners. These individuals are intimately involved in the production of identity and shared meanings, which, I argue, facilitates community solidarity within bars.

Along with opening (both literally and figuratively) places of "imaginative materials" to potential customers, bar owners, like their clientele, interpret the materials "provided" by their establishments and, moreover, relinquish partial control of these materials in response to patron input. These individuals, in other words, do not simply construct an environment and then sit back to watch patrons interpret this space; they are in continuous dialogue with clientele. Influence over imagined materials within the bar may be disproportionately distributed between owner and patrons, but it is, nonetheless, shared.

## Methods

The ethnographic methods employed in this study combined participant observation and semi-structured interviews. Of the fifteen bars located in downtown Thatcham, eight were selected as field sites. These establishments were chosen due to differences in their décor and size, apparent distinctions between their regular crowds (according to age, gender and ethnicity, among other factors), as well as the length of time for which they had been open. Other points of contrast, such as planned events (concerts, karaoke, dancing), drink selection and menu (some bars served food, others did not) also informed this selection process. For the purpose of recording complete sets of field notes, each bar was visited during different days of the week/weekend and at varying times of day/night. Fieldnotes were recorded, using an iPod touch, during observation sessions conducted at each of the eight bars on which this study focuses. Note-taking proceeded in accordance with Fife's (2005) two-stage strategy, which mandates that "general observations" be followed by "focused" fieldnotes designed to illuminate specific "patterns of behavior."

The "general observation" notes recorded during field observation were highly-detailed "sketches" (Emerson et al. 1995, 85-99) that attempted to document the "micro-level context" (Fife 2005, 72) of interaction within bars. These "sketches" concerned both the behavior of individuals and more concrete elements of bar atmosphere such as music, television programming, and alcohol selection. Focused fieldnotes, conversely, were based on "specific pattern[s] of behavior" (Fife, 83). Both general observation and focused notes were coded using behavioral categories based on "repetitive themes" relevant to this study's "theoretical orientation" and research goals (Fife 2005, 75). Categories ranged in content from *bartender engagement of non-regulars* to *personal artifacts as décor*, but all, in some capacity, related to the concept of "manufactured community." In analyzing focused notes in particular, emphasis was placed on important "linkages" (Fife 2005) presented by the distribution of particular codes.

For the purpose of developing a more complete, vocally pluralistic understanding of the expressions of community documented in fieldnotes, two semi-structured interviews (Spradley 1979) were conducted with each of the eight informants interviewed for this study. The semi-structured format granted a level of openness to informant responses, while also inclining such responses to address predetermined topics. All interviews were digitally audio-recorded.

Due to the fact that Thatcham bars, competing for business in a weak economy, must operate on a knife's edge, the owners of these establishments are generally wary of requests for their time made by unfamiliar names and faces. Entrepreneurs and salesmen trying to make a quick dollar by promoting vague membership services and other spurious investment opportunities are, unfortunately, common in the city. As such, the social-scientific aims of this project, as well as the anonymity that would be granted to all individuals and businesses studied, were stressed during introductions with potential informants.

In order to develop rapport with informants as quickly as possible, requests for interviews were always made in person. Because most owners drop by their establishments on a regular but sporadic basis, there was no standard protocol for meeting these individuals. During field-observation sessions, bartenders were often approached with questions concerning the availability of owners for an interview. In several cases, informants only felt comfortable scheduling interviews after becoming well-acquainted with the interviewer, a process that occurred over the course of initial site visits.

First interviews with bar owners relied primarily on several types of "descriptive" questions (Spradley 1979, 86-91). Comprising the majority of these interviews were "typical grand tour questions" and "mini tour questions" (Spradley 1979, 86-87), which requested that informants "describe" standard bar protocol and scheduling. More straightforward inquiries (*are you the original owner of this establishment?*; *how long has your bar been open?*) were also asked. To a lesser extent, first interviews relied on "experience questions" (Spradley 1979, 88-89), which asked informants to recount incidents in which certain circumstances arose (i.e. fights, beer shortages, well-attended events).

Following Spradley's (1979: 107-119) model for analysis, transcripts of initial interviews were scanned for "folk terms" that could function as "cover terms" or "included terms" with reference to a single "semantic relationship:" *X* (included term) is a type of *Y* (cover term). This process, called "domain analysis" (domain referring to the category of meaning signified by a cover term) was often complicated when *potential* subsets of semantic relation were uncovered (*A and B might be types of X*, *which is a type of Y*). In such cases, domains were deconstructed into tables accounting for multi-leveled semantic relationships. These tables were termed *provisional* "folk taxonomies" (Spradley 1979, 146-147). Within provisional folk taxonomies, *verified* semantic relationships were distinguished from those that required verification during second interviews. After these taxonomies had been completed, structural and contrast questions were developed to clarify remaining ambiguities. These questions were asked during second interviews.

"Structural questions" (Spradley 1979, 121-131) (*Are punks a type of hipster?; Is a neighborhood bar a type of dive bar?*) were used to verify the folk terms designed by informants during first interviews as cover terms or included terms, as well as to identify *new* folk terms and, by extension, new semantic relationships (Spradley 1979, 100-101). Similarly, "contrast questions" (Spradley 1979, 155-172) were used to define folk terms relative to one another. Rather than searching for a semantic relationship, however, contrast questions attempted to discover differences in the meanings of alike terms which, in many cases, shared a domain. Folk terms identified by virtue of contrast questions formed

a "contrast set": a group of terms within a domain organized according to their differences (Spradley 1979, 159).

Second interview transcripts were also scanned for folk terms, all of which either fit into existing domain analysis worksheets or folk taxonomies, or uncovered new semantic relationships. Following this process, finalized folk taxonomies were reviewed in search of notably similar domains or "levels of contrast" (Spradley 1979, 191). This process aimed to identify "cultural themes," described by Spradley (1979, 186) as "consist[ing] of a number of symbols linked into meaningful relationships." "Organizing domains" (Spradley 1979, 197), which systematize relatively large quantities of information and, as a result, often include several smaller domains, were also identified in taxonomies and expanded into themes.

The scope of this study was limited to eight bars largely due to time constraints. To gain a more comprehensive perspective on the social relationships facilitated by bar owners in Thatcham, further research concerning the remaining seven establishments (along with restaurants which remain open into later hours of the night) could be conducted. That said, the theoretical conclusions reached by this study regarding the process of community "manufacturing" are, I argue, applicable to all bars in Thatcham.

## Analysis: Negotiating Place

On October 31st, 2014, Thatcham's only punk-rock club and bar, The Crashing Umbrella, permanently closed its doors. By late September already, however, owner Tomás Coupe could forecast the fate of his business. An expensive juice bar permit that enabled underage individuals (that is, under the legal drinking age of 21 years old) to enter the club, as well as the inability of these patrons to purchase alcoholic beverages, had left the Umbrella in substantial debt. In order to maintain his commitment to an all-ages music venue, Tomás realized, quite ironically, that he would have to shut down his business. "I would get rid of the bar before I'd get rid of the all-ages" he told me, chuckling, "which is basically what we're doing." Patrons of the Umbrella, Tomás explained, shared a "common bond [to] youthful memories of [visiting the club] as underage for the music, as well as of growing into adulthood and [going there] to drink." By continually "reinterpreting" this collective "narrative" (Amit and Rapport 2012), these individuals, among whom Tomás counted himself, negotiated individual and collective identities. In so doing, they formed consociate relationships with one another. To refuse underage patrons at the Umbrella would have been, for Tomás, to effectively remove his establishment's basis for potential community formation.

While Tomás's situation is especially striking, the tension between profit and patron solidarity that ultimately forced The Crashing Umbrella out of business is a dynamic with which all Thatcham bar owners must contend. Many of these individuals rely on tightly-knit groups of core clientele to fill their establishments on a daily basis. To change elements of the bar space with the aim of cutting costs or increasing revenue is to risk alienating regular "crowds" and, by extension, dissolving bar-based "community." That said, there are drinking establishments in Thatcham that do manage to stay in business while facilitating the development of close personal bonds among patrons and owners. Not confronted by the uniquely difficult financial circumstances that ultimately compelled Tomás to close the Umbrella, the owners of these establishments conceptualize patron solidarity and profit as complementary objectives.

When Gary, for example, describes regular patrons at Nine Innings as being "like an extended family," continuing on to explain, "we go to each other's parties, we go to each other's funerals," he is not making reference to relationships that are, as the saying goes, "strictly business." The same can be said for Conall, owner of the Irish Pub, Garryowen's, who reveals, "We've actually had weddings here [at Garryowen's]. We've had funerals here… and christenings." It is patent that these owners conceptualize the bar space as something more than a business designed to yield revenue.

Conall, to this end, clarifies that he has always understood the Irish pub as a "meeting house…[in which] it's not about getting drunk." Gary, similarly, has emphasized his desire to "preserve" Nine Innings for the sake of maintaining a "home" for the establishment's core clientele. That said, there are innumerable elements of bar activity and atmosphere (ranging from conversation between owners and patrons to choices concerning décor) which embody both personal and professional objectives. Establishments such as Nine Innings and Garryowen's demonstrate that "meeting houses" and "homes" *can* turn aprofits–that, by virtue of their dualistic and, frequently, convoluted agendas, a bar may, indeed, "manufacture" community.

The expressions of community described by Gary, who sees relationships formed within Nine Innings sustained in life outside the bar, and Conall, who sees events discrete from standard bar activity occurring within Garryowen's, reveal a deeply personal connotation. These owners use "we" when referencing the understandings of community that have developed in their respective establishments because they not only *participate* in this development, but *experience* its manifestations as well.

Bar owners who connect with their patrons frequently do so through shared associations with "larger social formations" (Wilson 2005, 11). As such, these individuals often solicit certain patron "crowds" with whom they can, to some extent, identify. Paul Elston, manager of Waterfront Café and self-described "hipster," for example, recalls targeting a "music scene and an arts scene that you didn't really see out too much" shortly after he began to manage at Waterfront. Conall's military background and Irish heritage (which informs his notion of the bar as a "meeting house") have enabled him to become "very tight with the Coast Guard cadets" while also attracting a steady crowd primarily comprised of families and older men, most of whom are white. Perhaps most obviously, Tomás "come[s] out of the DIY punk hardcore community" for which his establishpunk hardcore and metal community," he noted, before more candidly reiterating "we try to cater to the crowd that we want in here."

Each of the eight bars in this study in some way bears the stamp of its ownership (or management). To this end, the ability of these establishments to target specific crowds must be understood as more than a process of elimination–than a simple identification of the social groups that "you [don't] see out" in Thatcham. It is, in fact, profoundly informed by the identities of owners, who project their personal tastes and personal histories onto their establishments. Bar identity and owner identity are not mutually exclusive entities, nor does one encapsulate the other. Instead, they overlap to differing degrees. The regular patron crowds that identify with each of these establishments implicitly identify with owners as well.

While it comes as no surprise that Conall is quick to assert, "I'm here [at Garryowen's] all the time…I know them all, I know the patrons," all bar owners in this study make a point to remain visible in their respective establishments. At The Crashing Umbrella, a live musical performance would frequently see broad-shouldered Tomás personally manning the door of his club. Sol Lachapelle, owner of rock'n'roll bar Harley's, also maintains a physical presence at his establishment, checking up on his patrons most nights and bartending every Friday. Beth Holiday, whose establishment, Flossie's, caters to a predominantly black and Latino crowd, bartends several nights a week and, like Sol, regularly stops by even when she isn't working. Gary, too, spends considerable amounts of time at Nine Innings, bartending every afternoon, and socializing with his patrons most nights. By remaining present within their respective establishments, these owners develop personal ties to patrons while simultaneously reasserting their authority.

Paul is at Waterfront almost every night, bartending each Monday, setting up shows on weekends, and remaining at the bar on slower weeknights to converse with regulars and address any potential "issues" (which range from broken ice machines to patron disputes). Although much of Paul's time at Waterfront is spent observing bar activity, there is one element of bar atmosphere to which he gives particular attention: music. Paul has long refused to install a jukebox in Waterfront, asserting "you want to keep…decent music that, like…hipsters or…cool people in general [who] like decent music are like, *alright, that's cool*." The regular crowds at Waterfront, however, have voiced musical suggestions with such persistence that Paul has recently developed a compromise. Today, patrons at Waterfront can select songs by way of a smart-phone application from a playlist of "decent music" that Paul has compiled. While keeping Paul's largely music-based conception of hipster identity palpable within Waterfront, this arrangement also affords clientele greater control over bar atmosphere. As such, it provides a strikingly concrete example of how the symbolic "boundary" of a community may act as both a "public face" (which, in this case, signifies a general notion of "hipsterness") and a "private, idiosyncratic face' (Cohen 1985)". Paul understands all of the music featured on his playlist to be "hipster" and, by retaining a consistent and vocal presence in Waterfront, shares this understanding with his clientele. Because song selection from this playlist is in the hands of patrons, however, differential understandings of hipster identity are not only accepted but encouraged. In response to patron input, Paul continually updates his playlist, reinterpreting the "imaginative materials" that he has "provided" (O'Carroll 2005).

Through such patron-management discourse, which may manifest either explicitly or implicitly, affect and commitment are distributed across both sides of the bar counter. To this end, owners walk a fine line. Each must maintain control over the barroom to an extent that reaffirms the identity of this space (i.e. hipster bar, Irish pub, neighborhood tavern, etc.), while also ensuring that patrons do not feel unappreciated or ignored. Gary, for example, reflects, "I just like keeping an eye on this place, and making sure that the music doesn't get turned up too loud, or there's not something stupid on TV." When asked about his contention that, "after five, six o'clock, there's no reason for a kid to be here," the owner even goes as far as to admit, "I can see people being upset about that initially, but I think if they think about it… they're gonna realize my side of it." That said, the owner also makes sure to acknowledge patron input, especially when this feedback conforms to his own holistic understanding of the Nine Innings tradition. Seeing, for instance, that patrons were "disappointed" by his decision to replace one of the standard Nine Innings taps with Foster's Lager, Gary quickly removed this new item (despite it being a personal favorite) and returned the beer selection of his establishment to its traditional iteration.

By managing concrete elements of bar atmosphere such as music or beer selection, bar owners ensure that, even when they are away from their establishments, these spaces will retain the "imaginative materials" (O'Carroll 2005) requisite for developing community. The walls of Garryowen's, for example, are covered by what Conall claims to be only a fraction of his "personal shit," most of which comprises Irish and naval artifacts. When asked about the concert posters and PBR memorabilia that meet the eyes of patrons from virtually every vantage point, Sol similarly explained, "Oh yeah man, all of this stuff, I brought it from home. This place is like my living room." Especially candid in illustrating the importance held by décor, music and even food in promoting shared understandings of the barroom as an extension of owner identity was Ron Daniels, who, with his business partner Silvia, co-owns the sports bar, Vertigo. "Everything on here, everything on the walls, everything that we play, everything we cook," Ron reflected, "it's us."

Certain bars, such as Flossie's, conversely, rely almost entirely on interpersonal interaction to foster a personalized bar experience. While Beth's own visibility has enabled her to develop a loyal following, she is also careful to hire bartenders who she feels will attract a regular crowd. Recounting her decision to hire a male bartender who had no prior experience, she asserted, "when the females come in, the men are gonna come in, so that's what you wanna hire…. I talked to a friend of mine yesterday…and she says, 'that was a good move, you hired a good looking man with big muscles who people like to look at!'" While this strategy for attracting regular patrons appears, at least foremost, designed to turn a profit, the relationships that Beth forms with her core clientele are by no means superficial. "There's a lot of guys that come in here at night that, if I say, hey [snaps her fingers], they'll have our back in a heartbeat," she revealed when asked about fights at Flossie's, adding, "a lot of them consider me like their mom." Despite describing her desire for patron regularity in terms of "bringing people in," a phrasing seemingly based in financial considerations, Beth clearly understands the *results* of such regularity in terms of the commitment and attachment to Flossie's that her regulars express by virtue of "having her back."

Regularity is, indeed, an important element of patron solidarity in Thatcham bars. While some of the relationships formed among bar crowds are close friendships or even familial ties, many more are consociate. Patrons who are encouraged to identify with one another by virtue of a continually reproduced "boundary" manifested as a unifying "public face" need not know one another intimately. They must simply visit a bar frequently enough to involve themselves in the "interpretation" of "narratives" (Amit and Rapport 2012) requisite for consociation and, by extension, to develop feelings of affect toward the establishment in question. By becoming part of a regular crowd, these individuals often understand their patronage as a form of "commitment" to the project of keeping their favorite bar in business.

Initiatives such as Paul's personalized jukebox facilitate consociation within bars by providing a platform for owners (or managers) and patrons to negotiate identity through the expressions of camaraderie and competition that so often accompany drinking behavior. Patrons of Waterfront, for example, frequently gauge one another's "hipsterdom" by virtue of their respective musical selections. But there exist a host of less obvious interactions that encourage consociate relationships to emerge within bars. By asserting, "I know ninety percent of the people's [patrons'] names, and what they're gonna have," for example, Gary reveals beer choice as an essential component of patron identity, and knowledge of this preference as grounds for personal relationships. Jenny Collingwood, owner of the newly-opened Barquentine, also feels that she has gotten to know some of her regular patrons well enough to predict their drinks, and views this familiarity as an important step toward consociation.

But is the model of a highly personalized bar in which members of a regular crowd may readily develop strong bonds with ownership *ideal*? Certainly, establishments such as Nine Innings or even Waterfront, which recently celebrated ten years in business, yield sufficient revenue to remain open. According to Paul, however, with a regular crowd delimited by a community "boundary" come serious drawbacks, both personal and financial.

Before managing at Waterfront, Paul booked bands at a gay bar called Longitude free of charge. At first glance, this role seems to embody the ultimate gesture of community–a financial sacrifice akin to that made by Tomás. Unfortunately, Paul explains, while bands which he brought to Longitude often enjoyed large audiences, it soon became apparent that "I was starting to really push [the owner's] gay crowd away by doing these shows… [they felt] a little ostracized." Rather than embracing the popularity of Paul's shows as good business for their place of congregation, the Longitude regulars perceived this trend as a direct threat to their community. Paul soon left Longitude to manage at Waterfront,

discomfited by the friction that he had unknowingly exacerbated. Comparable issues of crowd incompatibility and resultant exclusivity pervade Waterfront. "People take ownership of this bar because they love and they are passionate about it," Paul reveals, "which is great, but it makes it very difficult for new people to come in and really feel comfortable because they come in and everyone's like *oh, who's that*?" As with the example of Longitude, the community "boundary" that both brings patrons of Waterfront together and distinguishes this group from perceived outsiders is informed by a "public face" (Cohen 1985) based on stereotypes and other generalized symbolism regarding "hipster" identity.

The expressions of exclusivity prompted by this boundary, like those at Longitude, place Paul in a difficult position. Insistently including patrons likely to resist the "hipster" label risks challenging the intense feelings of commitment and affect that Paul's regular patrons have clearly developed. A wider clientele base, however, would also mean greater profit for Waterfront (if, in contrast with Longitude, this base could be sustained). Thus, while community and profit may be understood as complementary–insofar as the respective agendas driven by these objectives can coexist within drinking establishments–the continuous demand for *increased* revenue that Thatcham bars face often leads bar owners to interpret community "boundaries" as exclusive, rather than as insulating.

Because bar owners and managers are not socially isolated and, therefore, identify with the patron groups that visit their establishments (albeit to differing degrees), to attract a variety of crowds skillfully or even just successfully seems unfeasible. Perhaps wary of this limitation, certain owners resist suggestions that their establishments target certain patron groups, despite often implying that this is, indeed, the case when they are not directly questioned on the issue.

Tomás, for instance, was quick to assert, "I hope [The Umbrella] is known for a place where people of all walks of life can walk into, feel comfortable, have a better chance of making a friend than an enemy." In response to this statement, it becomes important to consider Creed's (2006, 44) contention that "When something is conceived of or labeled as a community, members' expectations of what community relationships *should* be like are potentially consequential, leading them to sever, break, or seek alternate social relations." While neither Tomás nor Paul rejected their regular crowds–a decision informed by both financial and personal considerations–each of these individuals does appear to understand a "diverse" crowd as indicative of the relationships that bar-based communities "*should*" embody.

Supporting this hypothesis are Paul's nostalgic recollections of the first Thatcham establishment for which he booked shows, a decommissioned firehouse-turned-bar called Shangri-La. This establishment, as Paul remembers it, "captured lightning in a bottle" by managing to attract "every kind of crowd" without compromising "a camaraderie that everyone really felt when they went there." Perhaps because Paul looks to Shangri-La as the gold standard against which all other bars should be judged, he seems to find it easier than Tomás to acknowledge expressions of exclusivity within his current establishment.

Especially intriguing is the example of Jenny, whose establishment, recently opened at the time of this study, had yet to attract a substantial regular patron base. "I like the fact that we have such a diverse crowd in here," the owner reflected, continuing "That's, personally… businesswise, I guess I would like to continue to have more Navy people come in. And more single females." Here, Jenny conveys a wariness of seemingly homogeneous patron crowds similar to that expressed by Paul, but also insinuates that "diversity" is somehow *in conflict* with profit. This is largely due to the fact that, rather than attracting multiple crowds, a feat which Paul had attempted at Longitude, The Barquentine

was attracting individuals and small groups who, collectively, Jenny perceived as comprising a single "diverse crowd." Most patrons entered the bar alone or, on occasion, with a date. The symbolic understandings requisite for a community "boundary" had yet to develop and, potentially, obscure the "diversity" valued by Jenny. The sort of generalized language and imagery associated with, for example, a "hipster bar" or an Irish pub could not be used to describe The Barquentine. Nevertheless, Jenny, like Paul and Tomás, understands patron "diversity," a concept as semantically tenuous as community itself, to be ideal on a "personal" level.

## Conclusion: Approaching "Manufactured" Community

This study addresses the capacity of eight bars in Thatcham, Connecticut to "manufacture" community. By exploring this potential, it is my intention to clarify how the bar owner, as an individual with disproportionate influence over the locus of community, figures into the manufacturing process. In so doing, I present a first step toward more holistic understandings of the relationship between local businesses and community identity in cities such as Thatcham. Future research on this topic could help clarify the extent to which communities formed within bars "frame" (Wilson 2005) external activity and, by extension, shape the distribution of social identity groupings on the urban landscape. From this angle, the issues of race and gender, discussed minimally here, could be more extensively addressed.

By presenting their establishments as highly personalized spaces and, in so doing, attracting crowds with whom they identify, the seven bar owners and one bar manager in this study encourage interpretations of community boundaries (Cohen 1985) based on stereotypes and other generalized imagery. It is important to recognize that, due to the calculated "provision" and reinterpretation of "imaginative materials" (O'Carroll 2005) by bar owners, recognition of these boundaries is *not* indicative of the extraordinary circumstances reviewed by Cohen (1985) and Turner (1969). Rather, such recognition consistently informs collective narratives, which, in turn, promote consociation. Through consociation, patrons, owners and staff participate in joint-commitments and develop feelings of affect-belonging (Amit 2010) that facilitate interpretations and expressions of community.

The "productive ambiguity" of bar-based community emerges from the "unevenness" (Amit 2010) that constitutes both joint-commitments and affect-belonging. In most cases, bar owners will inevitably feel more "committed" to the collective project of remaining in business than even their most dedicated patrons. Exceptions to this trend are infrequent and generally confined to unusual conditions, such as owners looking to sell or downsize their businesses. (Tomás's decision to close the Umbrella rather than alienate his underage patrons–a profound expression of commitment to the community formed in the club–is somewhat of an anomaly.) The distribution of joint-commitments among staff and patrons, however, is much more idiosyncratic. While staff members must inevitably recognize and express some form of commitment to the source of their income, they may not plan to remain at a certain establishment for more than a year or even a summer. Many patrons of bars such as Nine Innings, conversely, have been visiting their favorite watering holes for decades. Affect among owners, staff and patrons–the extent to which the bar enables these individuals to "feel at home" (Amit 2010)–depends on a number of factors, ranging from the amount of time spent within an establishment to music and décor. As seen in the case of Paul, reception to the input of patrons, especially new patrons, also factors into feelings of belonging. While this immense potential for variability results in a diverse array of social relations, the production of these relations through face-to-face interactions at the micro-local level of the bar produces strikingly similar expressions of camaraderie and security. That affect-belonging and joint-commitments can emerge both as Paul and his patrons debate musical selection and during weddings hosted at Garryowen's demonstrates the analytical versatility of "community."

The question of how bar-based community endures for striking lengths of time and among large groups of people, many of whom may only be casually acquainted, however, is where the "manufacturing" process comes in.

Far more concrete than the "uneven" solidarity that generates community within bars is the power structure that defines these establishments. Because bar owners wield disproportionate influence over bar activity–because it is these individuals who, ultimately, target certain crowds and strategize to promote feelings of both individuality and solidarity–community formed within their establishments must be understood as "manufactured." While manifestations of community formed within bars do not always yield a profit (i.e. The Crashing Umbrella), the process of community *reproduction* is dependent on a consistent flow of revenue, and vice versa. "Community," as Cohen (1985), Turner (1969), Amit (2010) and Amit and Rapport (2002, 2012) have acknowledged, is a frequently ephemeral expression produced by individual understandings of shared symbols, interactions and objectives. The power of "manufacturing" enables owners to ensure that, every night, renewed expressions of community will emerge within their establishments.

## Acknowledgements

I offer my thanks to Beth, Paul, Conall, Samantha, Gary, Sol, Silvia, Ron, Tomás, Jenny and Mel for their generosity and exuberance while participating in this research project. I would also like to thank my honors thesis advisor, Professor Anthony Graesch, whose mentorship has informed both my professional and personal development in innumerable ways, as well as my thesis readers, Professor Jeffrey Cole and Professor Christopher Steiner. Without the guidance and insight of these individuals, this project would not have been possible. Finally, I would like to thank my wonderful parents as well as my friends for their unwavering support.

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## ENDNOTES

1. In order to protect the privacy of those who participated in this study, all locations, businesses and business owners included in this article have been given pseudonyms. The city of "Thatcham" will not be found on a map of Connecticut.

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The Journal for Undergraduate Ethnography
Volume 6 | Issue 1
ISSN 2369-8721

# Food Scraps and Barn Chores: Bodies and Networks at Camp Treetops

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## ABSTRACT

Although bushels of research have been collected about organic farms, artisanal food production, and community in relation to food, there exists little knowledge on educational-productive farms, which are farms intended for children that balance farm/food education and productivity. Children are involved in all aspects of food production from planting seeds to composting, caring for animals to harvesting them, cooking to eating. Drawing on ethnographic research conducted at Camp Treetops in Lake Placid, New York, this paper examines children's bodily experiences on the farm. How does Camp Treetops' living philosophy—and the way it manifests itself in the practices on the educational-productive farm—affect children's relationships with food? I argue that in being displaced from their homes and transported to camp for the summer, where they experience a collection of sensory interactions within a network of human and nonhuman actants, the children undergo a transformation. Their bodily experience leaves them forever tied in a network to a piece of land. Further, the emergence of the model of the educational-productive farm at Camp Treetops implicitly critiques the distance marking the relationship between people and food today.

## Summer's Children

In 1951, a photographer named Barbara Morgan published a book called *Summer's Children*. The book contains photographs of camp life: children at a barn, children swimming in a lake, children riding horses, children making jam; children with counselors (see figure 1) and children with peers. The modern photographs, the majority of which are taken from the child's eyelevel, depict a childhood experienced at summer camp: dirty, carefree, whimsical. Accompanied by minimal text, the photographs speak for themselves (Barthes 2012).

**Garden Chores**

"Look So many Worms!"

"You are sure to find them wherever manure is spread. Worms are a sign of fertile soil."

"Here's the spot I 'll dig my worms for fishing"

**Figure 1** A photograph of a camper and his counselor in the garden. Taken from Morgan (1951).

They tell the story of a place where children can be children, revealing a particular notion of childhood characterized by specific emotions and activities. The book is a selection of photographs taken by Morgan over a multi-year period at Camp Treetops in Lake Placid, New York. While the book never references the camp by name, anyone who has been to Camp Treetops can confirm the setting of the photographs. The place has not changed much.

The book's introductory essays problematize the conditions in which the modern child is raised and, in so doing, criticize contemporary society. "Our civilization needs rebalancing," Morgan writes in her photographer's note (1951, 9). She echoes John Dewey's naturalist philosophy that nature, life, and mind should not be separated, and that this "separation has reached a point where intelligent persons are asking whether the end is to be catastrophe, the subjection of man to the industrial and military machines he has created" (1958, 296). In other words, modern society is characterized by a distance from the processes that are integral to our everyday, a problem rooted in industrialization.

Camp Treetops offers an answer to parents' concerns about their children growing up in today's society, if only for several weeks out of the year. "In city, on farm, and in village, mechanical devices have today eliminated useful jobs around the house for small hands as well as large ones. Camp can help train these hands and teach children that it is fun to make things," writes Helen Haskell, author of "Camp Life" (an introductory essay to *Summer's Children*) and director of Camp Treetops 1929-1969 (1951, 16). Making things, possessing knowledge of everyday processes, is essential to understanding the world and its components as whole, as pragmatist Dewey, Helen Haskell, and current Camp Treetops Director Karen Culpepper would agree. This notion implies that children's hands need training; that using one's hands is valuable in itself; that it benefits children; and that it's fun. We, as a society, lose something in not using our hands—our bodies—to

understand the processes that those mechanical devices have replaced, according to Haskell, whose influence on Camp Treetops is prodigious. Small hands are, indeed, valued at the camp.

Small hands are especially valued on the educational-productive farm. In harmony with the camp's philosophy, children are involved in all phases of food production from planting seeds to composting, caring for animals to harvesting them, cooking to eating. While it is just one program area of camp, the farm provides sustenance to the community in more ways than one. It fuels camp literally, but also challenges the children, teaching them what they—and their small hands—can achieve.

Borrowing concepts from the work of Bruno Latour on actor-network theory (ANT), I examine the farm at Camp Treetops as a piece of land with a multitude of human and nonhuman actants (Latour 1999a; Latour 1999b). I attribute agency to both kinds of actors, but intentionality only to humans. How does Camp Treetops' living philosophy—and the way it manifests itself in the practices on the educational-productive farm—affect children's relationships with food? I argue that in being displaced from their homes and transported to camp for the summer, where they experience a collection of sensory interactions within a network of human and nonhuman actants, the children undergo a transformation. The bodily experience leaves them forever tied to a piece of land, as part of a network.

Relations between actants affect the whole configuration of the network. For example, microbes had existed prior to their discovery in a laboratory, yet humans' relationship with the world changed after they knew of their existence. Like microbes discovered in a laboratory, the bodily experience of children in one micro-community, which is the network of the farm at Camp Treetops, "can displace society and recompose it by the very content of what is done inside [of it]" (Latour 1999b, 284). Inscribed deep inside the body, the experience of children at Camp Treetops blurs the distinction between inside/outside, micro-/macro-scales, and exists in a particular moment in time, revealing hidden depth in the adopted practices. Children leave having planted a seed with their fingers, seen and felt healthy soil with their eyes and toes, and dissected a chicken for meat using their hands and noses. These are experiences that today's children—and even their parents—most likely do not have in the "post-modern food condition," characterized by an increased distance from food sources (Sutton 2013, 308; see also Mason and Finelli 2007; Lyson 2004; Fitzgerald 2003). The bodily experience is not a means to an end, but stands by itself.

Although bushels of research about organic farms, artisanal food production, and community as constructed through food have been collected, there exists little knowledge about educational-productive farms. This study aims to help fill that gap, and as such should have value for food studies scholars, actor-network theorists, environmentalists, and progressive educators.

## Methods

I have spent twelve summers (of two months each) at Camp Treetops. I was a camper 2002-2007; kitchen assistant 2010-2011; and counselor 2012-2016. As a counselor, I specialized in farm and cooking activities as well as being the work jobs organizer, which entailed assigning counselors and campers their daily community jobs. During my summers as a counselor, I took field notes and photographs documenting the farm. I also conducted interviews during the summer and throughout the year with campers, administration, counselors, and farmers. I have observed, asked questions, and informally chatted with friends, family, and other human members of the network, talking about the farm and its history while harvesting carrots, eviscerating chickens, and socializing by a campfire. I have asked questions of the non-humans by touching, tasting, seeing, smelling, and listening. Having spent these summers at Camp Treetops, I have an

in-depth understanding of the camp and a level of access that outsiders could not have. In a sense, this study is therefore a kind of autoethnography, nourished by my own experiences. As this paper will reveal, the experience of being a camper and a counselor at Camp Treetops are extremely different. With this access comes potential bias, but also deep perspective.

In order to better situate Camp Treetops in the reader's mind, I first provide the history, philosophy, and organization of the place, followed by an ethnographic account and analysis.

## Camp Treetops: A Brief History

Camp Treetops was founded in 1920 by educator Donald Slesinger (Camp Treetops 2014). In 1926 Helen and Douglas Haskell joined the staff, bringing with them the ideas of John Dewey, who discouraged "an overly structured and competitive atmosphere," and instead encouraged natural curiosity and creativity (Camp Treetops 2014, 7). From its inception, Camp Treetops was a co-educational summer camp that said it did not discriminate based on religion, race, or gender.

In 1938, a sister institution was born on the two hundred acre campus: North Country School, a boarding school for students grades four through nine. Running from September through May, North Country School shares Camp Treetops' philosophy and emphasizes experiential learning. Camp Treetops and North Country School merged as one non-profit organization, North Country Treetops, in 1957. Today, Camp Treetops is a seven-week long program, divided into junior (ages 8-11) and senior (12-14) camps, costing $9300. In recent years, first-time campers have been given the option to attend a four-week session for $6800. Twenty-five percent of campers receive need-based scholarships. In 2014, at least ten parents worked at Camp Treetops, either as counselors or administrators, in exchange for a tuition discount. As of 2012, 5-10 percent of each summer's 150 campers came from outside of the United States; a third of the campers were from the New York metropolitan area; the majority of campers were raised in middle- to upper-class families; and most campers came from suburban or urban locations (Karen Culpepper, personal communication, May 14, 2012). Campers are discouraged from bringing name-brand clothing, make-up, and jewelry. This levelling strategy helps make up for discrepancies in family income from child to child. Focus is taken away from materialism and transferred to camp values. More importantly, those discouraged possessions are useless when children spend their days taking mud walks and camping in the woods.

The make-up of the Camp Treetops staff varies from year to year, but in 2014, of the 66 counselors, about 57 percent were returning counselors; 16 percent were returning campers who had never worked at camp before; and 27 percent had never been campers or counselors. There were ten international counselors. The counselor-to-camper ratio is one to three, guaranteeing campers personal attention that other camps can't offer. Mainly college students and twenty-something-year-olds, counselors are hired based on their skills in various program areas. North Country Treetops also employs a farm manager, a farm educator, two year-round farm interns, and three seasonal farm interns.

Camp Treetops has maintained a structural consistency since its inception, with former campers who return to visit commenting that it feels, looks, and smells just the same. Children still sleep in yellow canvas tents on wooden platforms, complete work jobs each day, participate in many of the same activities, and have no access to electronics, watches, or phones (and there is minimal electricity). Campers can communicate with friends and family via mailed letters, and children are allowed to receive one phone call on their birthday. Program areas that are intended to allow the children to use their hands and bodies include pottery, woodworking, crafts, nature, music, hiking, swimming, boating, and horseback riding.

## Camp Treetops: Philosophy and Mission

Although it is not often stated while camp is in session, a living philosophy informs almost everything that Camp Treetops does: the activities, political organization, meal customs, ringing of bells to mark time instead of allowing children to wear watches (though counselors must wear watches), near-absence of electricity, forbidding of technology, and one shower allowed per week. Just as the garden beds across from the shed continue to grow carrots, the seeds of pragmatists like John Dewey, naturalists like John Burroughs, and environmentalists like Rachel Carson continue to inhabit the soils at Camp Treetops. Preserving its philosophy, Camp Treetops maintains that children are missing something in modern life, and implicitly positions itself as a necessary step in achieving a specific kind of childhood. According to Camp Treetops, the child today is the same as the child of the 1950s, or even before industrialization: one who needs to be active, independent, and outside.

The implications of this philosophy (and the human intentionality its maintenance demands) are temporally emergent (Pickering 1999). Even though many of the values and routines at Camp Treetops remain the same, they take on different meanings at different times. Camp Treetops critiques modern society in a certain way depending on what is happening outside of the camp. When most children have cell phones at home, "unplugging" seems drastic. When children grow up playing video games inside, for example, the activities offered at camp seem overwhelming or challenging. The fingers trained to send text messages learn to plant seeds. These seeds derive their agency as actants in the farm network depending on their position in modern society, specifically, their typical absence from the hands of twenty-first century backyard-less city kids.

According to the philosophy, human-land engagement is intrinsically valuable, as it "expose[s] children to the cycles of nature and re-acquaint[s] them with our interrelatedness to and dependence upon all living things," something that is lost living in a city or suburb (Camp Treetops 2014, 9). The location and organization of Camp Treetops require children to become comfortable spending time outdoors: there are few opportunities to be inside; children are required to go into the backcountry on camping trips for days at a time, swim in the lake on campus six days per week, learn to build campfires, and work on the farm; and shoes are optional on camp property.

## Treetops is the Real World: Inside/Outside, Camper/Counselor, Illusion/Reality

The world of Camp Treetops is conceived of in a certain way, marking a clear inside/outside divide. In discussing the philosophy during staff training before camp, counselors are taught what belongs in the child's world: the clothing, conversations, and behaviors that are appropriate and those that are not. For example, children should never see electronic devices (which counselors are allowed to use privately), and they should not know about staff relationships or out-of-camp free time activities. As the Staff Notebook states regarding counselors' days off (one per week), "We can share with campers that we went on a hike or swam at Copperas Pond, but we wouldn't tell them about the movie you saw in town or the French fries you ate at McDonalds" (2014, 11). Thinking about the "outside world" would detract from the experience Camp Treetops aims to give children: unplugged, carefree, adventurous. Being reminded of the standardized McDonalds French fry would detract from the experience of removing bugs from potato plants and harvesting, washing, chopping, and frying the plant's underground nightshade on a griddle over a fire, then eating those fries next to that fire.

Camp Treetops' notion of the child's world is developed in Dewey's *The Child and the Curriculum*. He writes, "The child lives in a somewhat narrow world of personal contacts. Things hardly come within his experience unless they touch, intimately and obviously, his own well-being, or that of his family and friends" (Dewey 1906, 8). Camp Treetops aims to expand this world in a very particular way. The transition from camper to counselor is important in achieving a larger understanding of Camp Treetops. In "graduating" from being a camper to counselor, one realizes that camp is a constructed space.

The passage of time makes it more difficult to maintain Dewey's and the camp's vision of the child's world, as modern childhood, especially in the United States, seems to be constantly moving away from it. We can examine one way in which camp has made an accommodation to modern technology-driven society, through digital cameras (Pickering 1999). They are an exception to the 'no electronics' rule. Today, children often bring digital cameras with them to camp, which they are allowed to use after taking "camera safety," a training during which counselors ensure that the camera does not have the proper time set on it and that there are no prior photographs or videos on the camera. This would create an inequality amongst campers, according to the camp director. Ironically, perhaps, parents read about the philosophy on the camp's website. Characteristic of an ever-present inside/outside divide, Camp Treetops accommodates the habits of today's society by having a website, and even a weekly blog written by the director. Though its methods of advertising have been modified, neither the philosophy nor everyday life at camp has changed to accommodate information technology.

Perhaps unbeknownst to the children, plenty of work goes into framing their summers a particular way, the goal of which is a transformative and fun experience. A good summer is one that ends with campers taking home fully sanded wooden canoe paddles; having formed new friendships and acquired new skills; and appreciating the community through meaningful engagement. But knowledge of the work that goes into making these things happen is not supposed to be part of the child's world.

Camp Treetops once printed a postcard of a tie-dyed t-shirt drying on a clothesline. Handwritten letters read: "TREETOPS IS The REAL WORLD" (see figure 2). While, of course, Camp Treetops is deliberately quite far from "modern society" in its pursuit of the microcosm described in *Summer's Children*, for campers and staff, Camp Treetops does become its own world for seven weeks of the summer. According to current Camp Director Karen Culpepper, camp lasts seven weeks because this time allows for the development of a tight-knit community, for long-term projects to be seen through to the end, and for comfort to be achieved in an unfamiliar environment (personal communication, May 14, 2012). This time is necessary for the camp to fulfill its role in giving the children the experience of a particular childhood. Since it functions mostly independently from broader society, and has its own political organization, it's no surprise that friends have jokingly likened Camp Treetops to a cult. It can only exist through artifice. Camp Treetops may not be the real world, but for the campers, it is a real world. The experiences they take with them are real.


**Figure 2** A postcard distributed by Camp Treetops. Courtesy of Camp Treetops.

## No Watch, No Problem?

As a counselor, I am used to campers' attempts to bring the outside world in, to glimpse at my watch when they think I'm not looking. As a ten-year-old, I snuck a watch into camp. But now, when a camper asks, "Why can't I wear a watch?" I think: Because you don't need one here. Because you are being afforded the opportunity to live without worrying about the time or war or soccer practice; you're lucky. Revisiting this ingrained train of thoughts, I am aware of my aforementioned bias. I have continued returning to and I choose to write about Camp Treetops because I am deeply attached to it, to its philosophy. As an anthropologist, I also find it to be a fascinating microcosm for study.

When I recently learned that in the 1960s a copy of *The New York Times* was always available in the dining room for children's perusal, my understanding of the child's word was challenged; today, current events aren't often discussed at camp. This made me wonder whether the deliberate separation from the outside is necessary, or 'good'. Having presented Camp Treetops and its philosophy, I now turn specifically to the educational-productive farm, its fruits, its organization, and campers' place on it.

## The Notion of Harvest at Camp Treetops: A Vignette

Brigitte remembers a counselor gently rousing her from her slumber, whispering, "Time for garden harvest." She gets up, walks to the washhouse in her pajamas—cold, dewy grass tickling her bare feet—brushes her teeth and washes her face with the cold sink water, and changes into a t-shirt and shorts with a fleece on top to keep her from shivering in the cool morning air. Even though it's chilly now, by breakfast time it'll warm up. She knows the rhythms of the mountain weather. Other girls have gathered in the washhouse to get ready for their morning chores, too. She waits for her friend Ariana, and together they head toward the farm. Still barefoot, they walk-hobble down the gravel road, accompanied by the distant "hee-haws" from donkeys in the field. Ariana holds a pair of barn boots in her hand; her weekly chore is meat birds, and she'll have to put on proper shoes before entering the barn. Brigitte doesn't need shoes to work in the garden. After a couple of minutes, Brigitte peels off and waits on the garden rock for the rest of the garden harvest crew. Ariana continues to the barn.

Garden harvest begins. The eight campers from junior and senior camps, two counselors, and two farmers split into three groups sorted according to the plants to be harvested: rainbow chard, herbs, and carrots. When asked, Brigitte raises her hand to be in the rainbow chard group. She likes the colors and delicacy of the leaves, and as an older camper, she knows the farmers will appreciate her ability to harvest carefully, a skill the smaller children may lack. Using a small but sharp knife, she cuts off the largest leaves, as she knows she should leave the smaller ones to continue growing. Repeating the same cutting motion, the group moves down the row together. She is aware of the weight of the knife in her hand, the way her knee sinks into the soft soil when she kneels, the dirt that has collected under her big toenails. While harvesting, she and her fellow harvesters talk about how the chard should be used: Soup? Garlicky sautéed greens? A frittata? (see figure 3) They take the filled bushel basket to the scale by the shed, where they weigh and record what they have harvested. Then, they begin washing.

First, they fill two sinks with cold water from a hose; the first will be for the initial soak, the second for a rinse. Brigitte and the other campers take turns gathering chard leaves in their hands, picking bugs off of them, pushing them into the icy bath, swishing them around to release caked-on dirt, pulling them out into the cold air, placing them in the second sink, and finally laying them on the drying rack. Focusing on the task at hand, Brigitte is hyper-aware of the differences in temperature between the air and the cold water, the sensation of the water dripping down her arms, and the vibrant yellows, pinks, greens, and oranges of the leaves.

Brigitte, my sister, is now in her thirties, her years as a camper long behind her; but she is happy to recount this sensory experience, one that allowed her to know herself afresh. The cold water didn't feel pleasant, but knowing that she was harvesting vegetables for a meal for her friends and counselors produced pride, and she considered the movements meditative.

**Figure 3** Campers enjoy a farm vegetable and egg frittata breakfast in the camper kitchen. Author's photograph. 2014.

## The Notion of Harvest at Camp Treetops

At Camp Treetops, the word harvest is frequently uttered, and everyone at camp participates in harvesting. The word is used to describe the collection of vegetables from the garden and eggs from pasture; the slaughter of pigs, sheep, goats, and chickens; and the wintertime tapping of maple trees for sap to produce maple syrup, used year round.

The community at Camp Treetops participates in harvesting in multiple ways. First, there is the organized harvest of vegetables and spices in the garden. During work jobs time, campers, counselors, and farmers harvest vegetables each morning and afternoon for the kitchens, while chatting about the produce and work at hand. Then, there is the collection of eggs and milking of goats, which also occurs during work jobs. Children collect eggs from the laying hens' boxes, count, and wash them. Milking the goats is an acquired skill, with special attention required to avoid soiling the pail. She must be fed several times throughout the process to encourage her to stay still. Finally, campers and counselors harvest vegetables and spices to be used in the camper kitchen, a small, rustic space designed for educational cooking activities that utilize the produce of camp.

These harvested vegetables, spices, eggs, and milk are measured and weighed, the information recorded. This is, after all, a productive farm. The farm manager keeps track of the season's harvest in order to compare year-to-year farm yields, and the results of the harvest are presented to the Board of Trustees in writing (see figure 4). It is standard working farm procedure to record yields of production. However, beyond merely creating a record for reference or to ensure funding, it also helps children to understand tangibly the results of their work, expressed as pounds of produce or ounces of milk. Each time they note how many pounds of produce they harvest, the children must flip through a record of the previously harvested produce, comparing the productivity of the farm's seasons.

**North Country School & Camp Treetops**

**Farm 2014**

Food produced by the children for the children

Highlights of what the children of North Country School and Camp Treetops help to produce. They are intricately involved in every step of the process, from seed to harvest, farm to fork, kitchen to compost.

- Pork Production
  - o 16 Hogs @ 2,428 Pounds of Meat
  - o Valued at $16,864
- Poultry Production
  - o 299 Birds @ 1,654 Pounds
  - o Valued at $ 7,521
- Lamb Production
  - o 27 Lambs @ 549 Pounds of Meat
  - o Valued at $7,216.68
- Wool Production
  - o 392 Skeins of Wool 4 ounces/ 260 Yards Each
  - o Valued at $7,056
- Egg Production
  - o 30,400 Eggs
  - o Valued at $10,133
- Goat Milk Production
  - o 49.5 Gallons of Raw Goat Milk
  - o Valued at $594
- Maple Syrup
  - o 65 Gallons
  - o Valued at $3,640
- Vegetables
  - o 18,127.25 Pounds
  - o Valued at $65,403.39

**Gross Monetary Value/ CTT farm raw products**

**Total: $118,428.07**

"Eating is an agricultural act!" - Wendell Berry

**Figure 4** Camp Treetops and North Country School 2014 Summary of Productivity. Courtesy of Katie Culpepper.

Last year, a few of my co-workers and I recently visited Lake Placid for a long weekend, staying with Katie Culpepper, Camp Treetops/North Country School farm educator. All of us are food lovers who are passionate about farming and cooking. My omission of the word *foodie* here is intentional, because that does not properly label the type of individual who has had the bodily experience—Brigitte's experience, my experience—of working on the farm at Camp Treetops. We appreciate good food, but more accurately, we appreciate food that we have helped to grow.

We spent much of the weekend cooking, using produce from the farm: eggs for omelets, frozen tomatoes for soup, and canned pickles for snacking. We noticed, as we cooked, that we all referred to the eggs as "our eggs," the tomatoes as "our tomatoes," and someone asked if the pickles were made from "our cucumbers." In discussing this phenomenon, we realized that everyone—campers, counselors, cooks—at Camp Treetops uses the collective "we" in referring to produce. If the soup being served in the dining hall is made with kale from the farm, the white board that lists each day's menu says "our kale." If a stir-fry served at lunch at contains garden broccoli, the child sitting at the table points out to her friends and counselor that she harvested the broccoli that morning.

Haskell writes in "Camp Life":

> They can learn where the drinking water comes from and what happens to the garbage. As children increasingly understand what makes their place go, and see themselves as part of its functioning, they develop pride and self-confidence…the place becomes "ours." (1951, 14)

Camp *does* become our place, the children's place, through engagement with the land. This engagement involves understanding a network through physical labor, cooking, and tasting farm produce. It means understanding the links between a piece of land, seeds, raspberries, food scraps (pigs' food), compost, the mobile chicken coop, which is pushed to a new patch of

grass each day; and getting sustenance from salad in the dining hall, harvest, death, work, farm animals. The entire community partakes in this work, and many preconceived notions of how food is grown, should be grown, or who should prepare it are thrown out the door. There are no "ladies' jobs" or "men's' jobs" or "marginal activities" (Counihan 2013, 178). Of course, not all campers love working on the farm. Nearly all love to consume the raspberries growing on the roadside bush, but not all are easily enticed to weed its patch. Even so, everyone contributes in some way.

In 2014, one girl articulated a difference between the carrots grown and consumed at camp and those available at her local grocery store: "I love the carrots we grow here. They have a flavor that you really don't get anywhere else—maybe a tanginess or sweetness." This difference in taste may actually be present, as *terroir* links the taste to geographical and geological features of the agricultural land (Paxson 2013, 29). Or the carrots simply taste different when eaten directly from the ground—a little dirty, no plastic bag in sight—or the difference in taste is caused by the bodily experience associated with the carrots: sowing the seeds, watching them grow, harvesting them, touching the soil, moving among the plants. Children's interactions within the farm network can change their understanding of the carrot, and thus the way it tastes. Campers are encouraged to sample the vegetables as they harvest.

In discussing the produce of the farm at as something collectively produced and owned, the sense of community is reinforced, following Dewey's idea that in order for something to become part of the child's world, it must "touch, intimately and obviously, his own well-being, or that of his family and friends" (Dewey 1906, 8). All of the child's sensory experiences on the farm—the smell of compost, the use of muscles previously undeveloped, the collection of eggs—contribute to a sense of belonging to a network that is tied to a piece of land. Harvesting is woven into the campers' everyday.

**Figure 5** Campers harvest chives for garden sushi-making activity. Author's photograph. 2014.

## The Farm Today

*CARE FOR OUR FARM & GARDEN: Guiding Principles*

• Children will learn to care for an animal and know what it means to nurture another being.

• Children will begin to understand where their food comes from and participate in the process of growing and harvesting food.

• Children will gain a sense of the life cycle of plants and animals, and the interconnectedness of all organisms.

• By doing farm work, children will recognize the importance of their contributions to the functioning of our community.

• Time at the farm will help children develop a strong connection to the natural world and a future interest in protecting it. (Source: http://camptreetops.org/care-for-our-farm-garden/, accessed December 14, 2015)

The farm is central to Camp Treetops, and the associated work jobs in particular. It feeds the community, both directly and through the bodily experiences that tie the campers to the piece of land, and thus the farm network at Camp Treetops. Each week, campers and counselors are assigned a new work job that involves taking care of some part of camp (both on and off the

farm). About 25 out of 50 of these are barn chores, which require two to four campers each. Barn chores meet twice a day for forty-five minutes: once before breakfast, and once before dinner, while other work jobs only meet before dinner. All campers are assigned at least a few barn chores during the summer, guaranteeing their full exposure to the farm.

Another element of the farm work program is community morning, a weekly gathering in which all campers and counselors come together to complete one big task. This ritual could involve removing large rocks from the horse pasture, or spreading Camp Treetops fertilizer on a flowerbed, or slaughtering chickens (the topic of the next section). It is meant to remind the campers that they are part of a larger community, one that can complete a challenging feat by working together. The farm lends itself to forming human to non-human, food to food source, human to land, and human to human connections. According to Karen, making these connections is more important today than ever.

I have observed the farm change over the last decade. While there has always been a working farm at Camp Treetops, it has not always been seen as a place for children to play and learn. Now, children are excited to work on the farm, and especially excited to use the fresh vegetables from the garden to cook. The farm network is constantly evolving, "engaged in the play of resistance and accommodation" (Pickering 1999, 375). It encounters resistance from and must accommodate the weather, an actant which, of course, dictates what grows and how well. In 2014, an attempt to use rice paddies failed, even though individuals in nearby Vermont have had success growing rice. This was an important reminder of the agency of non-humans, which sometimes proves insurmountable despite humans' best efforts to incorporate and discipline it. There also is a constant movement of human and non-human animal bodies into and out of the farm: horses, pigs, turkeys, meat birds, laying hens, sheep, goats, llamas that recently died, campers, counselors, and farmers. For this reason, I examine the farm network as a particular moment in time, unstable, as Andrew Pickering suggests (1999).

The change in the farm program coincides with a moment when it seems people are gaining a renewed interest in food and its sources, as has been discussed in contemporary scholarship on local foods (see Vannini and Taggart 2014; Weiss 2011; Lyson 2004). This renewed attentiveness, I argue, comes from discomfort with a culture that maintains a considerable distance from food. Further evidence of this piqued interest in local food use has come in the form of grants and donations specifically for the farm program at Camp Treetops. In 2013, North Country Treetops was chosen to participate in Alice Waters' Edible Schoolyard Project, which aims to build an edible education curriculum with the garden and the kitchen as classroom. Katie (the farm educator) sees the improved state of the farm program today to be mainly due to the diligence of Farm Manager Tholen, hired in 2010. With a background in education, he wanted to make the farm not only productive, but instructive, bridging the gap between farm work and learning. Even though the farm does not produce enough food to entirely sustain the camp community, Camp Treetops makes an effort to eat everything it does produce and point this out to the campers, thereby creating a visible cycle: campers understand the link between the garden, their work, and the food that they eat.

## SYSCO′s Place at Camp Treetops: More Resistance

To supplement farm-grown produce, the kitchens order from local farms "whenever possible" (especially meats, cheeses, and apples), but they also buy from large food distributors SYSCO and US Foods (Katie Culpepper, personal communication, November 24, 2014). According to Katie, "We are always going to rely on food distribution companies—we simply don't have the space or ability to produce enough to sustain the large camp community" (ibid.). Foods that are ordered from large food distributors include sugar, rice, condiments, spices, chocolate, crackers,

bananas, oranges, marshmallows, potato chips, ice cream, and juice concentrates. While sourcing food from these companies does not maintain a closed, self-sustained cycle, it is inevitable. First, for the reasons Katie mentioned, and because there are certain crops that cannot be grown in the Adirondack Mountains, where the growing season is short, temperatures are unpredictable, and mid-summer frost is not uncommon. Second, children are used to eating a certain way; camp does adjust somewhat to today's post-modern food condition, where chocolate, for example, can be found virtually anywhere. Most counselors rely on coffee (and a coffee maker) to help them do their jobs.

Interestingly, one photograph in *Summer's Children* shows campers making blueberry jam, undoubtedly with blueberries from nearby Owl's Head Mountain; a boy holds a measuring cup as his counselor pours sugar from a package labeled Domino Cane Sugar. Clearly, sugar was imported into the world of camp in the 1950s, just as it is today. However, today, Camp Treetops often tries to use maple syrup instead of sugar. This reflects an effort to use as much from Camp Treetops' piece of land as possible. It also accompanies the trend of local eating that is fueling donations to the farm.

Using ingredients from the farm is something that can better be achieved in the camper kitchen, where campers and counselors make goats' milk ice cream, maple syrup, and egg yolks; weed salads (the same weed, purslane, that crowds the carrot patch at Camp Treetops is sold for a hefty penny to chefs at the Union Square Greenmarket in New York City); and kimchi. Processed sugar is banned in the camper kitchen, and activity participants are invited to think outside of the box in finding ways to use only farm-grown ingredients.

## The Chicken Harvest: A Brief History

As Camp Treetops harvests its vegetables for food, it also harvests its animals for human consumption. According to Karen, the chicken harvest had been an annual activity at camp for decades until the late 1970s. The reason for its discontinuation is unclear, but it was brought back in 2005. Before, it was called "chicken plucking" and campers of all ages participated. It was considered a regular farm chore "because that's what kids did on the farm," says Karen. "They just went out there with no big introduction, debrief, or anything like that" (pers. comm., May 14, 2012). In other words, the chicken harvest of an earlier era was not made into the educational activity it is today.

Greg Marchildon's earliest memories of chicken plucking start around age five. His parents met as counselors at Camp Treetops in 1963, and they moved to the campus in 1970 along with their two sons. Marchildon is the only person in Camp Treetops/North Country School history to have attended all possible consecutive years of camp and school; he was a counselor 1984-1987; and he has been a part-time counselor for the past seven summers while his two sons attended camp. He remembers the chicken harvest:

> I have early memories of being with my father and others at the barn chasing around chickens, catching them with my bare hands, and then bringing them over to the large wood block with the bent number ten tin can and handing them to my dad. He would slide the chicken's head through the hole and chop it off. (Greg Marchildon, personal communication, May 26, 2012)

Marchildon describes chicken plucking as normal farm work. But now, he labels the activity "an educational production" (ibid.). Whereas there was little discussion of the bird or the process before, today the chicken harvest is seen as an educational tool. This increased attentiveness may be due to a greater number of vegetarians attending camp and a general disconnect

from the processes that go into food production (Fitzgerald 2003; Striffler 2004; Mason and Finelli 2007). Other farm differences Marchildon notes between then and now include a large, mostly unkempt compost pile versus today's sophisticated system of composting in stages in several large garage bays, and a general feeling that things in the past were "less complicated" as compared to the complexities of modern life (personal communication, May 26, 2012).The chicken harvest is an important and positive experience for campers:

> I have talked to alumni who were here back in the day and they always ask me, "Do you still do chicken plucking?" That was their most memorable and transformative experience. Whatever it was for them, they remember it and, for the most part, think that it was a positive experience in their lives. (Karen Culpepper, personal communication, May 14, 2012)

The procedure of the chicken harvest has remained basically the same—the farm at Camp Treetops has always aimed to respect the chicken and act humanely towards it, which is reflected in the slaughter. Something embedded in this experience remains with those who participate.

## Harvest in a Moment

The chicken harvest occurs mid-way through the summer, in July, when the chickens weigh about five pounds. By this time, campers have spent at least a month seeing the chickens in the barnyard, smelling them, feeding them, providing them with water, and moving their coop. The chickens show their agency in the noises and smells they produce, their requirement to be moved to new grass, and the pace of their growth (in contrast to confined animal feeding operations, which attempt to rid chickens of agency through excessive amounts of food, antibiotic injection, and methods to speed up growth) (Striffler 2005, 46).

Only the oldest campers, the 13- and 14-year-olds, participate in the chicken harvest, both because Tholen believes that maturity is required to participate in the work, and also because there are not enough chickens for everyone at camp to help. The night before the chicken harvest, Tholen explains the process to the eligible campers, detailing the different stations and tasks, and emphasizing the importance of the event. "This process helps us to see what it takes for us to put meat on our plates," he said before the July 2014 harvest. Camp Treetops recognizes the food on a plate as something grown and produced by someone somewhere, so it only makes sense, pragmatically, that children understand the process as a whole. He reminds the campers that they are living on a working farm, and that camp's animals are raised as a food source—that is why it's called the chicken harvest. While, of course, the event involves the slaughter of an animal, it is still called a harvest because it involves taking something from the farm for the community's consumption, the same way campers take a vegetable for the kitchen. But this kind of harvest requires more reverence, or a deeper respect and honor, because the animals are "giving up their lives to help sustain ours," according to Tholen.

He answers questions and tells campers that they have the night to decide whether they want to participate in the "challenge by choice," as he calls it. He strongly encourages all eligible campers to try, and calls it a "once in a lifetime opportunity that will have profound effects on [campers'] lives, and maybe even [their] diets." A handful of children decide not to participate for various reasons—squeamishness or a vegetarian diet, for example. These campers thin the carrot patch with the younger campers. The vast majority of eligible campers choose to participate in the chicken harvest.

Later that night, the farmers gather the chickens and place them into the back of a truck. They are taken to the pasture where they will be slaughtered the following day, transported at night when

they are tired and less likely to get agitated. Their food is withheld for the 24 hours preceding the harvest, in order to reduce messiness and potential contamination during evisceration. Sometimes, their hunger causes them to peck at each other, an uncomfortable reality of the farm unknown to the campers.

In the morning, the 50 to 60 participating campers and 30 staff members gather at the pasture after normal morning activities; barn chores, breakfast, and tent cleanup still happen. Large plastic bags are available to cover human bodies. Various stations are set up with staff members helping at each, including the beheading, scalding, plucking, eviscerating, and rinsing stations. Counselors sign up for tasks ahead of time, and remain in one spot for the duration of the harvest, unless their help is needed elsewhere. The campers are encouraged to take one bird from start to finish, often two campers to a bird, in order to see the entire slaughter process, making the full connection between animal and meat to be eaten later that week. The 14-year-olds go first.

Before the harvest begins, Tholen demonstrates by taking a bird through each station while the campers watch. They are allowed to ask questions, but mostly they listen to Tholen quietly: an air of nervousness is palpable. After participating in the chicken harvest four times, it still shocks me when he beheads the first chicken matter-of-factly; his manner indicates that it's farm work. Still, it sits in juxtaposition to all of the verbal preparation he's done. The shocking nature of seeing a chicken beheaded again speaks both to an avoidance of death today, and also to the complexity of humans' relationships with animals (Fudge 2006, 99).

The campers begin at the beheading station. In front of them sits a tree stump with two protruding nails. Tholen stretches the chicken's head through the nails as a guide, and uses a meat cleaver to cut off its head in one swift move as the camper holds down its wings. The bird is considered dead after that initial cut, but it continues to twitch for up to a minute. To campers, this feels like the bird is protesting; however, Tholen explains, the chicken can no longer feel anything after the head is detached from the body. In order to keep the line moving, the campers relocate to a grassy patch near the beheading station, where they continue to hold the still-warm chicken until it bleeds out and its reflexive nerve impulses stop. This shows respect for the animal—the chickens do not run around with their heads cut off, as the slaughter of chickens is something to be treated with solemnity at Camp Treetops, reinforced by the use of the word reverence. Sometimes the dead birds twitch out of the grasp of the children, and counselors need to help them readjust their hands. The bird has agency. Even the dead bird has agency. It stains cheeks with salty tears, and splatters arms and lips with blood.

Once the chicken is ready, the camper brings it to the scalding station, where it is dunked two or three times in a large pot of near-boiling water to loosen the feather follicles. This is one of the smelliest stations, as the mixture of heat, water, dirty feathers, and chicken carcasses creates a cloud of stench. Then, at the plucking station, it is tied upside down by its feet with a rope, and campers pull off the feathers by hand. The feathers are composted. The chicken is then taken to the evisceration station, where it is dissected. Images of the anatomy of the chicken are laminated and placed on the tables, informing the campers of what they will see. Campers use filet and paring knives to cut open the chicken and remove its innards, elbow deep in the carcass. Loppers are used to cut off the chicken's feet. All body parts and innards are composted, although sometimes the farmers or neighbors request certain parts of the chicken, like the neck, to make stock.

Finally, the chicken is rinsed, bagged, weighed, and sent to the kitchen to be cut up and barbecued for an outdoor supper several days later. The cooks often help with the final station of the chicken harvest.

Throughout the process, children react differently. Some campers cry. Others take photos for Facebook, to be uploaded after camp. Few quit. The experience brings together unlikely pairs of children to complete the harvest of a single chicken together. Vegetarians surprise Tholen, sometimes volunteering to take more than one chicken through the entire process. Vegetarians, as well as those who eat chicken, feel that it is important to see the transformation from chicken to meat.

Afterward, Tholen holds a debriefing session for campers to ask questions and reflect on the experience. He announces that the largest bird harvested was five and a half pounds, the smallest around two; each bird is different. This session shows that the chicken harvest has impacted the children, and that they have thought about their participation. After the chicken harvest in 2013, one boy commented, "I often think of meat as clean and perfectly prepared. Now I will think of the process that goes into it." Like the earlier comment from a camper on the difference between the Camp Treetops and the grocery store carrot, this reaction highlights the camper's understanding of an inherent difference between the foods that he has helped to produce, and those that he is used to, marked by his presence in its production, its life. Campers find this experience important, saying that they feel that they better understand where their food comes from as a result of the process.

Other campers grapple with the chicken harvest in a different way. One camper could not stop shaking the night after the harvest, saying, "I like animals. I don't want to kill them." Sometimes, reactions like these lead to a change in diet to vegetarianism. (The camp nurse checks with campers' parents to see if they are OK with their children becoming vegetarian.) Other children feel more proud of eating meat, now that they know where it comes from. And sometimes those who already were vegetarians choose to try the chicken that they have helped to slaughter—this is encouraged.

## Harvest in Photos: The Author′ s Photographs from 2013 and 2014

Above: Covering chicken's eyes

Above: Beheading Below: Compost

Above: Tears

Above: Scalding

## Analysis and Conclusion

When asked what the educational-productive farm at Camp Treetops is ultimately working towards, Katie says:

> A huge part of our meal every day is being ignored. Where is SYSCO getting the staple foods they deliver to us weekly? Food conversations that go beyond just our farm, our bubble, are really important. Even though we are making an impact through our little community, we also want the children to be aware of food as a global issue. (personal communication, November 24, 2014)

While the occasional conversation comes up about the factory farm, the unhealthiness of junk foods, or animal rights, it is not a part of the Camp Treetops program itself. The child's world at Camp Treetops does not involve thinking critically about the production of the plastic-wrapped chicken found in the grocery store in New York City. Rather, in following the camp's philosophy and belief in progressive education, it exposes children to a model. They experience food through all stages of life and death: they raise chickens, nourish them, give them space to breathe, hold them down while their heads are chopped off, put them into a boiling pot of water, pull off their feathers, scoop out their insides, and eat them. During seven weeks of the summer, the farm at Camp Treetops becomes their farm. Indeed, they are exposed "to the cycles of nature and re-acquaint[ed]…with our interrelatedness to and dependence upon all living things" (Camp Treetops 2014). If the Slow Food Movement is "against the homogenization of taste that fast food symbolizes," then Camp Treetops is against the fragmentation and un-whole nature of the processes that provide humans with food today (Leitch 2013, 422).

Intentionally or not, Camp Treetops participates in acts of "'deconcession': practices that respatialize and reconfigure food-based assemblages of materials, institutions, practices, representations and experiences by way of reduced reliance on the

dominant system of distant food supply" (Vannini and Taggart 2014, 3). By being displaced from their homes for seven weeks, getting thrown into a farm network of humans and non-human actants, and undergoing a transformation that leaves their bodies with the sensory experiences discussed throughout this paper, children are imbued with "fresh sources of power for modifying society" (Latour 1999, 268). They forge a special relationship with food that directly emanates from the land. They do not take with them "the whole farm, the smell, the cows, the willows along the pond or the farmer's pretty daughter" (Latour 1999, 261); rather, they take with them bodily experience, which stands by itself as a source of power and resistance to the outside (post-modern food condition) from which Camp Treetops so clearly tries to differentiate itself.

Campers leave forever tied to a network through their bodily experience within the farm. Campers could choose to use the bodily experience in order to raise chickens on their New York City rooftops, as one former camper did; or they could run to Starbucks for a Frappuccino as soon as they leave camp, as many do. But that is another topic for another paper.

## Acknowledgements

I'd like to thank my advisers at the University of Chicago: Dr. Judith Farquhar, for introducing me to actor-network theory, teaching me how to intertwine field notes with philosophical and theoretical texts, and asking the difficult questions that brought this ethnography to life; Jessica Robinson, for guiding me in my studies of ethnography and human-animal relations; Madeleine McLeester, for helping to shape my ideas and keeping me on track; and finally Dr. Alex Blanchette, for piquing my interest in food/animal studies and encouraging me to pursue what started as a reflection of the chicken harvest during my first year at UChicago. At Camp Treetops, I would like to thank Karen Culpepper, Katie Culpepper, Brigitte Gordon, Greg Marchildon, and Mike Tholen for spending hours answering my questions, on the phone and farm; and, of course, the city kids who were willing to get their hands dirty in 'our' soil.

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