EDITORIAL board

TABLE of contents

Being Special:
Nostalgia through Special Rates Areas and Community Improvement Districts in Cape Town Suburbs

Zarreen Kamalie

University of Cape Town, kamalie.zarreen@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This paper explores how memories and nostalgia inform the rationale of implementing Community Improvement Districts (CIDs) or Special Rates Areas (SRAs) as a means of crime prevention and urban maintenance in two formerly 'whites-only' Cape Town suburbs; Rondebosch and Mowbray. Through an exploration of the remembering, the maintenance and the resuscitation of an idealized past in a suburb that remains predominantly white after years of racial and economic exclusion, this paper interrogates the role of long-term resident nostalgia in post-apartheid South Africa in maintaining spatial apartheid. Using Svetlana Boym's (2001) framework of nostalgia, particularly 'restorative nostalgia' and 'reflective nostalgia,' to interpret the memories of residents interviewed, this paper argues that it is nostalgia for an idealized past and a remembered specialness that sustains mentalities that give rise to spatially exclusive SRAs and CIDs. In this paper, public and social media discourse analysis and resident interviews allow us to understand residents' memories and discussions around crime and urban degeneration and homelessness in Rondebosch. The purpose of this paper is to contribute to questions about spatial exclusivity in residential spaces in the post-apartheid era, particularly in a city that retains the legacy of spatial apartheid.

Keywords: crime, nostalgia, specialness, restorative nostalgia, reflective nostalgia, Special Rates Area, Community Improvements Districts, homelessness

The "new" South Africa, born in 1994 from a violent history of apartheid,[1] has become known worldwide as a success story, largely thanks to Nelson Mandela's legacy. Indeed, it is often called "the rainbow nation," a term coined by Archbishop Desmond Tutu to describe the social landscape of South Africa as a multiracial and multiethnic society living together in harmony as one nation (Spinks 2001, 32). The city of Cape Town, more specifically, is often heralded as a melting pot of racial and ethnic groups. However, Cape Town and the rest of South Africa has an entrenched history of colonial and apartheid laws that dictated access to housing, school, and public space according to race, income, or gender. Some of the better-known laws, including the Group Areas Act of 1950, the Natives Land Act of 1913 and, the lesser-known Vagrancy Act of 1834, are direct causes of what is known as "spatial apartheid", allocating and forcibly moving people of the same racial group in specific areas around the country. To this day it has been challenging to have true integration because the majority of the country's population remains in these areas despite the removal of these laws (Spinks 2001, 8). Two decades after the official end of apartheid, Cape Town remains unintegrated in terms of residential areas and schools. The city still reeks of spatial apartheid and especially in its suburbs, as is seen in the map based on the 2011 census (see figure 1). In the map, we see that a stark majority remains of each racial group in specific areas that were historically assigned to said racial group. The field site of this research project, the suburb of Rondebosch and its neighboring suburb Mowbray, remain predominantly occupied by white people.

As a result of European colonialism and later apartheid, space in South Africa has always been a site of sociopolitical contestation (Ross 2010). Space and specialness are intertwined in this project: habitus is inscribed in the Rondebosch residential area, constructing both "the sense of 'place' and the sense of one's 'place' in a social hierarchy" for white South Africans who have benefitted from colonialism and apartheid in South Africa (Bourdieu 1984, 468; Dovey 2002, 268). In post-apartheid South Africa, race, class, and access to economic capital still largely inform one's habitus, which in turn affects one's degree of access to certain spaces (Bourdieu 1984). This is where 'specialness' comes in. I take the idea of 'specialness' from the establishment of 'Special' Rates Areas (SRAs). A Special Rates Area (SRA) is "a defined area where the majority of property owners decide upon and agree to fund supplementary and complementary services in addition to those normally provided by the City" (City of Cape Town, 2015). According to the Special Ratings Area by-law of 2012, "any owner located within the area of jurisdiction of the City [of Cape Town] and who owns property within the proposed special rating area, may lodge an application to the Council for the determination of a special rating area". This means that an SRA needs to be initiated by a community or any property owner in the area, rather than the City (City of Cape Town 2012, 4). My use of 'specialness', therefore, plays with the idea that people (namely white South Africans that are financially secure, raised in the apartheid era) are used to a particular kind of treatment and service from an organized body similar to the state's service delivery system, because they consider themselves 'special'.

Nostalgia and memory are important aspects in the maintenance of exclusive residential spaces like the predominantly white suburb. Nostalgia and heritage are cornerstones for the Special Rates Areas (SRA) and Community Improvement Districts (CIDs) operating in Rondebosch and Little Mowbray, as well as maintenance and preservation forming a significant part of their agenda. These CIDs seek to restore and maintain a particular 'charm' or 'character' that is found in the nostalgic rhetoric of longtime residents in Rondebosch and Little Mowbray. As I will show, residents mobilize memory and nostalgia as a response mechanism to dealing with perceptions of danger and urban degeneration.
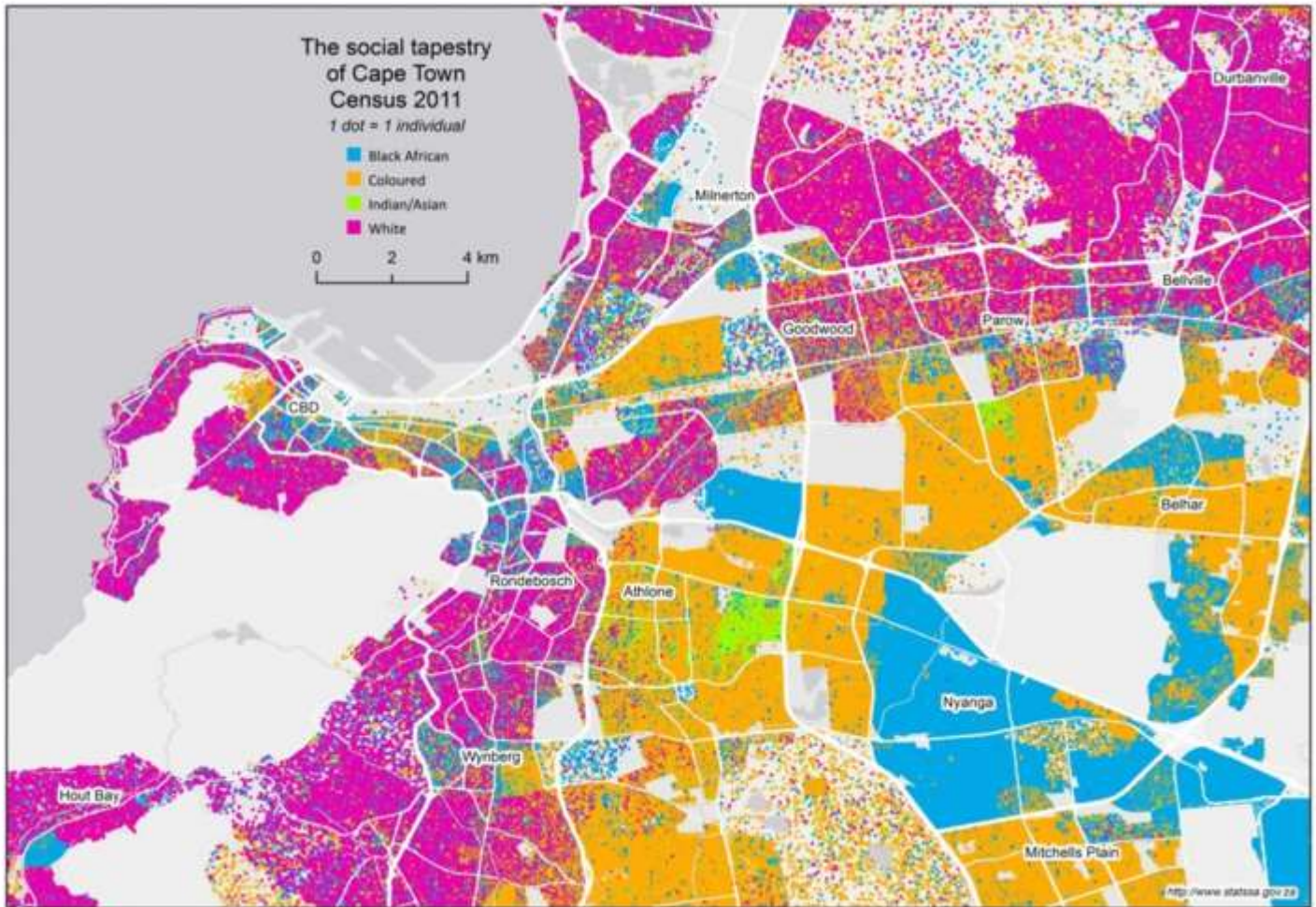
Figure 1 Theil's index of inequality used to depict the social landscape of Cape Town according to race. This is an appropriate visual representation of how spatial apartheid has hindered social integration in Cape Town.

In this paper, I engage with CIDs and SRAs, and their principles and practices when operating in predominantly white suburbs that were residential areas for 'whites-only' under the Apartheid Group Areas Act of 1950. CIDs and SRAs have gained notoriety for supposedly advocating for urban regeneration and market stimulation for the benefit of their fee-paying residents, while simultaneously polarizing neighborhoods and perpetuating the legacy of uneven service delivery across residential spaces, especially in the city of Cape Town (Miraftab 2007, 20). The Groote Schuur Community Improvement District (GSCID), which has been operating in the Rondebosch, Mowbray and Newlands area since 2010, and the Little Mowbray and Rosebank Improvement District (LMRID), which has been in operation since July of 2016, were established on the basis of eradicating "crime" and "grime" in the form of increased surveillance, property and area maintenance, and dealing with the homeless.

"Grime" is used in this context by the GSCID and LMRID to talk about garbage on the streets, unkempt streets or public facilities, and informal settlements by the homeless in the area. While SRAs and CIDs play into the discourse around security, crime prevention, and urban regeneration, their operation in these spaces is also reliant on the financial capabilities of the property owners who are expected to pay a monthly levy in exchange for maintenance and beautification services. These institutions function as long as residents are able and willing to pay. This says a great deal about the relationship between economic standing and the access to land for residence and public use, especially in the context of a city still affected by spatial apartheid.

Drawing on accounts from five women from two suburbs, Rondebosch and Mowbray, I engage with themes of memory and nostalgia through Svetlana Boym's framework of 'reflective nostalgia' and 'restorative

nostalgia' (2001). I argue that it is through the nostalgia and memories of their childhoods in segregated suburbs that enabled a comfortable life, which sustain and encourage the establishments of CIDs and SRAs in formerly white suburbs. There is a sense of loss and disappointment that comes forth as 'restorative nostalgia' (Boym 2001) in the purpose of SRAs and CIDs. It is a longing to restore the prioritization of white needs in the form of a public space that they can claim first. Certain residents of Rondebosch and Little Mowbray are willing to financially contribute towards SRAs and CIDS because it aligns with their needs and desires as residents in the suburb.

While theft, house burglaries, and incidents of drug use occur in Rondebosch and Little Mowbray, the crime rate in these suburbs is much lower than in lower-income areas, especially with a significantly lower rate of more violent crimes like murder and rape (Crime Stats SA 2015). Yet, residents of these suburbs remember growing up with little to no anxiety about crime, so I argue that there exists a nostalgia that grapples with the desire to maintain standards that were set in an era of exclusion. The purpose of this paper, then, is to interrogate what it means to create inclusive living spaces while wishing to keep the privileges afforded to wealthy residents alone. If we have residents that remember a suburb that was safe and inviting without the presence of people of color, what standard is being reset in a time when spatial apartheid is finding new forms to replicate and sustain itself? Are CIDs and SRAs what Rondebosch and Mowbray need, and how do residents justify this establishment? What factors and considerations are being put forth when residents agree to the operations of CIDs and SRAs? These are the questions that are to be answered in this paper.

Methodology: Rethinking "traditional" research methods

Online ethnography and the question of access

I approached this project with a sense of perceived familiarity, thinking that since the discourse of the fearful suburban white was so rampant on social media, I would be able to

recite my participant's fears back to them, or that because I knew what it meant to drive by these homes with high walls that I would know the person nestled securely behind them. At the same, I gauged the topic with caution, because I came to the realization that the research participants could not be homogenized, in spite of the prominence of a singular narrative on social media. There are many aspects of this encounter with the walled house from which one could extrapolate arguments around spatial exclusivity, residential discrimination, and racially charged security discourses. However, I wish to consider the nuances of studying experiences and understandings of security in the context of social media, Community Improvement Districts (CIDs), and Special Rates Areas (SRAs). This will become important later, when I discuss the maintenance and reproduction of the historicized legacy of spatialised value in this city.

I had intentionally chosen to do my fieldwork in Rondebosch, my place of residence for the last four years, because I wanted to challenge myself, as an anthropologist, to seek the substance behind the mantra they taught us in first year; make the familiar strange. Heike Becker, Emile Boonzaier and Joy Owen (2005), along with Angela P. Cheater (1987) touch on citizen anthropology and the concept of 'anthropology at home'. Anthropologists who do ethnography in their own society are said to transcend the paradigmatic dichotomy of "regular/outsider" and "native/insider" anthropology that is largely determined by reproduced ideas of "bounded cultures" (Cheater 1987, 124). However, I was only acquainted with the Rondebosch suburbs in as far as I would pass them when running or see them from a car. Not knowing anyone who lived in the walled houses of the Rondebosch and Mowbray suburbs, I resorted to Facebook.

If the goal and role of anthropologists is to gain trust in their field site and among their participants, I had to find a way to familiarize myself with the suburbs of Rondebosch before actually going there. I realized that the suburbs were not a friendly space for outsiders; or rather, for outsiders who are not looking for work, and even then, their presence is met with suspicion. Instead, I took to social media. I

joined a Facebook group called 'Rondebosch Community' in June, a few months before starting my fieldwork as a means to get to know how residents in the Rondebosch community felt towards issues around their safety and security. These Facebook groups are typically managed by one or more person(s) who have the authority to regulate content, allow or remove members, and even shut down the group. Online ethnography (Rheingold 1993; see also, Gatson 2010, 247) can be characterized as having the same tenets of 'traditional' forms of ethnography but with an extended reach, creating a "more permeable and less physically bounded" site (Gatson 2010, 247). Howard Rheingold's *The Virtual Community* (1993) explored the multiple and connected online and offline places and spaces in which his community existed (Gatson 2010, 248). With this method I was able to access a kind of membership that I could not attain by virtue of not being a homeowner or long-term resident as my research participants are. This group also allowed me to explain myself and recruit informants for interviews.

Interviews: A conversation with a purpose

Interviews serve as a primary source of research and qualitative data that are, to an extent, independent from the researcher's own biases and subjectivity. James Scheurich (1997, 61) quotes Lincoln and Guba (1985, 268), who explain interviewing as a "conversation with a purpose." The purpose of the oral history interviews I conducted was to give background to the comments and complaints on the Facebook groups I was observing. I wanted to know what led to the perceived need for a CID or an SRA, and interviews provided participants with an "opportunity to tell [their] own story in [their] own terms" (Anderson and Jack 1991, 11). In terms of ethical considerations, I made sure to only meet in sites where interviewees felt comfortable. Although I told them that I would prefer to see their homes, given my initial research topic, I always left the option open to meet in a more public place first. Before beginning the interview, I made sure to ask for verbal consent and told them that they had the option of retracting their consent if ever they were unhappy with what was being produced. The participants in this study are all women, since an overwhelming majority of the

respondents were women. I also made sure to let the women know when and if I was beginning to veer away from the initial topic of material responses to the threat of crime, for instance fences, walls, barbed wiring and alarm systems. I realized early on that many residents with these security measures might meet my project with suspicion considering the awareness around scams and crime syndicates in the area.

The questions would start off with an introductory set up, usually 'how long have you lived in this house? And did it always have the wall/fence outside?' 'Have you ever had any break ins? How have your security systems made you feel safer since installing them?' The answers would vary, with some of their answers surprising even those interviewed. "I'm really quite strange in that way" or "I think we might be unique that way," they would interject when they disclosed the way they regularly left a door open without thinking, or kept a dysfunctional alarm for years without worry. Their engagements with their security systems went against the dominant narrative of neuroticism and paranoia. Eventually, however, our conversations would make their way to their memories of living in the Rondebosch suburb during apartheid. Through these narratives, I found the complexity and nuance of responses to crime and security threats.

Theoretical background: Theorizing specialness and suburban nostalgia

Themes in this paper span from social distinction to spatial exclusivity and more specifically, how these are justified through nostalgia, memory and continuity, and how they manifest in discourse and practice around security in formerly privileged areas. The themes of memory and nostalgia are critical to explain how and why specialness is maintained, and what this means for the research question regarding continuity as a response to crime and urban degeneration in once glorified exclusive spaces.

Charlotte Lemanski has written about residential responses to fear and how they factor into the implementation of Improvement

districts and gated communities (2006, 787); Lemanski carried out her research in Silvertree and Muizenburg, two historically white residential suburbs in the southern suburbs area of Cape Town, (2006, 789). Lemanski concludes that it may require several post-apartheid generations to challenge the "fears and mindsets 'embedded' in people's 'institutional and social practices" (2006, 787). This is essentially where my research picks up, ten years later, to suggest that these 'embedded institutional and social practices' are the desire and nostalgia for specialness.

Under the laws of apartheid, certain social groups were classified as being more 'special' than the rest. This classification would go on to shape an entrenching legacy, creating a small but "dominant class", as Bourdieu would say (1984, 260). Rondebosch, as a place formerly determined as 'whites only' and therefore 'special,' can be described as a "relatively autonomous space whose structure is defined by the distribution of economic and cultural capital among its members" (Bourdieu 1984, 260). This essentially means that by nature of benefitting from a legacy of structural privilege, residents, particularly the wealthiest of them, are able to exact a kind of agency separate from the city council in order to retain its economic and cultural capital, to maintain its 'specialness' amongst their own. As a result of being used to this treatment, the white middle class seeks to regain a space of distinction. Distinction, in this case, is determined by those who are familiar with the rules of value and prestige and can identify something, be it art, music or architecture, as being aesthetically valuable (Bourdieu 1984, 53-56). Rondebosch, with its European colonial landmarks, well-maintained and policed suburbs and other surroundings, is deemed 'prime property' and holds socioeconomic value.

The social product of a shared social space, in this context, is the shared nostalgia that residents of Rondebosch grapple with in the post-apartheid era. Stephen Legg references Boym's (2001) definition of nostalgia in the context of space and home as "the longing for a home that no longer exists – or never existed" (Legg 2004, 100). For Boym (2001), restorative nostalgia "ends up reconstructing

emblems and rituals of home and homeland in an attempt to conquer and spatialize time" while reflective nostalgia "cherishes shattered fragments of memory and temporalizes space" (49). Boym (2001) defines nostalgia as "a romance of one's fantasy" (xiv). The word 'fantasy' alludes to the imaginary component of that which is being longed for. In this case, the 'fantasy' is the reproduction of the past in spite of the present. SRAs and CIDs like GSCID and LMRID recycle nostalgia to establish practices that seek to restore Rondebosch, its surrounding areas, and areas that share a similar history to it, to a state that resembles colonial and/or apartheid Rondebosch. While Boym's work centers on post-Communist Eastern Europe, I apply her paradigm to the post-colonial and post-apartheid setting of Rondebosch to think through these ideas of the romanticized colonial era. Not only has her work been cited by other South African scholars to work through similar questions, but her paradigm fits the ways that white South Africans speak about the apartheid past, due to their benefitting from the system.

Overall, the aforementioned works will feature prominently in this thesis to put forth the argument that SRAs and CIDs mobilize and manipulate public desire for continuity in their residential areas, as means of addressing resident security concerns. Throughout this paper, I argue that GSCID, and the up and coming LMRID, have an agenda based on the maintenance of exclusive suburbs by upholding a standard deemed to have economic value. Rondebosch and Little Mowbray are prime real estate areas due to the capital brought in by white South Africans who benefited from apartheid. It is a continued desire for these suburbs' residents for this status quo to be maintained, and as a result the actions of GSCID and LMRID is justified by nostalgia and a desire for a continuity of specialness.

The making and remembering of specialness: Reflective nostalgia and collective memory among research participants

From maintaining the facades of Victorian-era homes to putting up walls to replicate a sense of safety, these elements make visible the white

middle-class habitus of Rondebosch and the practices of residents who have inscribed a sense of belonging onto the landscape. I engage with how residents reflect upon this, and how this narrative makes its way into discussions around crime and security, and practices of GSCID and LMRID. The five women I interviewed are all long-term residents of Rondebosch or Little Mowbray, each having stayed in the suburb for at least eight years either after moving or having grown up there. The first two that I introduce together are Sheri and Alice, who both came from the United Kingdom originally and relocated to South Africa during the apartheid years. They exercise reflective nostalgia in the ways that they describe their experiences of apartheid in terms of a perceived sense of security and ease of living. Next are locals Simone, Janet, and Lillian. Simone and Janet had grown up in Rondebosch, though Janet moved to Little Mowbray when she got older. Lillian is originally from a northern province in the country and moved down to Cape Town many years ago. The following sections are parts of their stories, and show the variety of ways that nostalgia and memory resurface and shape their needs and desires of living space.

Britons overseas: Sheri and Alice

By 1990, there were 223,205 'Brits' living in South Africa (Flanagan, 2014). I met with two British women who have lived in South Africa for at least two decades; one lived in the Western Cape since the early nineties but had a history of visiting regularly, and the other had lived all over South Africa since she married a South African man. Both of the British women reside in Victorian homes, and have a clear fondness for living in Cape Town. Reflective nostalgia takes on a different form for these women because they are foreigners, and as a result, have not taken on the same feelings of reflection as participants that are South African. As white British women, however, they too enjoy a degree of privilege, and have the same access to privilege that other white South Africans do, on account of colonial and apartheid legacies.

Alice is the only participant who lives outside the Rosebank/Rondebosch, Mowbray area but was part of the Rondebosch Community Facebook group. Despite living outside of the designated field site, I was intrigued by how intent she was to draw attention to the crime in her own suburb, despite my call to residents in Rondebosch and Mowbray alone. She lives in an old Victorian home, with a low fence and a small front garden. The façade remains, while the inside has deteriorated with damp, dry rot, only to take on a new character through the vivid blue and orange interior of her kitchen. She lamented the dry rot and the dilapidated nature of the home, but excused them as 'charms' and 'quirks' of living in a Victorian home. Her neighborhood is scattered with many such homes, a clear and defining feature that draws residents. Alice has lived in South Africa for many years, having moved around the country and finally settling in Newlands, a small but beautiful suburb famous for its international rugby stadium. Alice responds to her perception of crime rates in South Africa during her time in the country with a sense of absolution; shifting blame to the apartheid government alone, she links the rate of crime to the education crisis that plagues South Africa's poorer populations.

> When I came here, it was apartheid still and I didn't think about...I didn't think beyond the family circle. And we didn't have the crime we have nowadays...and...that's partly the fault of the apartheid government in that they didn't educate the people. For me education! If we can educate people they will get better jobs, they will learn not to...have so many children. Population reduction! That's what we need!

Alice employs what Melissa Steyn calls "white talk" (2005, 120). This can be understood as "a set of discursive practices that attempts to manage the intersectional positionality of white South Africans to their greatest advantage, given the changes in their position within the society" (Steyn, 2005, 120). White talk also features frequently in the narrative of the CIDs operating in Rondebosch and Little Mowbray, especially in the ways that homelessness is addressed, which is explored further in this paper.

Sheri had been one of the last few to reach out. Her home is a large salmon-colored Victorian house: two stories with big long windows that do not have burglar bars. As we sat down, Sheri began to ask and make sure that I am indeed a student from UCT. Sheri explained that her husband had had his doubts, but that she personally could not see what harm I could do - "I said, it's not like I'm going to give her the security codes!" she said, recounting an earlier conversation with her husband. But she had to be sure nonetheless. Sheri had been coming to Rondebosch for years on account of her grandparents. She and her family would visit when she was young, and then she started coming through to South Africa on her own as a teenager. When asked about her experiences and memories of Rondebosch, Sheri described the area as "completely safe."

Walls and fences: Simone, Janet, and Lillian

Simone and Janet both grew up in Rondebosch, and have spent most of their life either in the area or in surrounding Mowbray. Simone has lived in her home on Campground Road for eight years, having moved to the suburb after a traumatic home invasion in Hout Bay. Simone grew up in Rosebank during the sixties through to the eighties. She went to Rustenburg Junior School, and lived with her grandmother whose house is now currently the Rosebank Progress College. Janet, a crèche schoolteacher, is settled in Little Mowbray. Janet remembers a sense of freedom and a lack of anxiety regarding their safety and well-being. Lastly, I met Lillian, who has lived in Rosebank since 1982. She had been very involved in the neighborhood watch, and security is very important to her. Her view of security however, is not limited to simply high walls and fences - Lillian is invested in the revitalization of public space and dealing with 'vagrancy' with a "hands on" approach. She is also vehemently against the implementation of the GSCID.

> I feel [angry about] the SRA, where four people are now in control of my suburb. We don't need an SRA for our area; it's not an area that is downtrodden and needs upgrading. I'm beginning to feel that rage that people under apartheid must have felt, that powerlessness that you've now landed with this system. That's now imposed on you.

There is an unmistakable irony in comparing SRAs to apartheid policy, given that SRAs principally seek to reform previously advantaged areas under apartheid to some sense of former glory. Lillian's comment, I would argue, shows the kind of complexity in compliancy and contestation, when one both opposes the institution but manages to uphold its principles because of a genuine disengagement with the history of the area. By sharing a particular habitus and having benefitted from the apartheid-era suburb, they are able to reproduce 'specialness' through collective memory that constitutes the "shared social frameworks of individual recollections" (Boym 2001, 53). With Alice's comment about her ambivalence towards apartheid and Lillian's offhand comparison between the GSCID and apartheid, we see how their habitus enables a disassociated look back at the conditions that apartheid created. Without having experienced the oppression of the regime themselves, they can only imagine the circumstances in the past and recreate a scenario that is best suited to their narrative.

In the following sections, I draw on the interviews with these five women to explore themes around a perceived loss of a charming childhood setting, in spite of its place in a violent segregationist regime. I include a published article on a British colonial era horse trough named 'the fountain', and its nostalgic presence in Rondebosch, and examine the discourse of the GSCID when it had to be removed (Van Dyk 2016). In addition to the nostalgic rhetoric, there is also a degree of 'white talk' in the article. Secondly, I look at themes around collective memory in a community's past and its continuity, while also looking at the narrative of homelessness in the GSCID's agenda and residents' interviews. Taking part of the conversations with the women, along with public statements issued through the news or GSCID's own website, the rest of this paper weaves a tapestry of the different forms that nostalgia takes in the setting of this suburb.

Loss of charm and character: Reflective vs. restorative nostalgia in specialness

Since the fall of apartheid, there have been many studies on the loss of political and social power by South African whites. More recently, however, authors like Melissa Steyn (2008; 2012) and Sarah Nuttall (2001) have chronicled various ways that white South Africans have navigated this new socio-political landscape. I contribute to this literature by arguing that one way this occurs is through the implementation of SRAs and CIDs for public and residential spaces in previously advantaged and presently privileged spaces. These institutions are, principally, a nostalgic response to a continually changing landscape.

The GSCID acknowledges and builds upon this sense of belonging through a narrative that suggests a "loss" is currently being experienced by white residents of Rondebosch. It is the loss of heritage, space and power that prompts residents to lament a history that romanticizes their sense of belonging and ownership. This was echoed in public media in 2016, when News24 released an online article titled, 'Character Disappearing,' whereby a resident mourned, "the disappearance of the charming character this area was once so well known for" (Van Dyk 2016). The article recorded a recent discussion between a concerned resident from the Rondebosch area and Anthony Davies, the CEO of the GSCID. The topic of the article was the "ongoing deterioration of the Rondebosch Village", the beginnings of which were with the disappearance of 'the fountain' on the corner of Belmont and Main Road (Van Dyk 2016). 'The fountain' was one of the better known landmarks in the area, before its removal following a motor accident that saw a reckless driver crash into the structure (Jeranji 2015). Although referred to as 'the fountain', it was actually an ornamental trough for watering horses (Bull 2016, 57). Manufactured in England, and brought to South Africa in 1891, 'the fountain' was also the first electric lamp post in South Africa (Geldenhuys 2014, 267). As an ornamental monument marking the British colonial presence in Rondebosch, 'the fountain' was one of the subtler markers of this legacy.

When a roadside accident led to the destruction and removal of 'the fountain', GSCID CEO Anthony Davies issued a statement on how it had great sentimental and historical value, and that its destruction caused the residents of the area great disappointment; he went on to say, "It [kept] us humble because when we look at it we see how far we have come from. Everybody liked it. Horses used to drink there before the cars came so it's so special." Taking into account the history of Rondebosch and Mowbray during the colonial era and the apartheid era, it is important to consider how residents respond to what they deem to be degeneration and 'loss of charm and character'. They appear to subscribe to the idea that in order for security to be instilled and maintained, the 'safest' option is to revert to or resuscitate the glorified past. This understanding of prestige and value grows out of the romanticism of colonialism, which was effectively a period of conquest, subsequent forced removals and socio-demographic rearrangements in the name of 'separate development', a social development plan laid down by Henrik Verwoerd. It established racially bounded spaces created with the direct intention of prioritising the development needs of one racial group over others (Beck, 2014, 136). Today, when residential spaces can no longer be 'separate', they can instead be 'special'.

Sheri's accounts from her early life are interesting in that her decision to move to South Africa was partly shaped by positive experiences that were made possible through coercive and covert systems that were put in place on the basis of the dream colonial topography. Sheri grew up in London, England, but regularly visited South Africa on account of her South African grandparents who resided in Rondebosch.

> It never crossed my mind that it wasn't safe…sometimes I'd visit my grandparents without my parents. I was a teenager, and I would walk to a pub with friends when I was a teenager. At night. I mean, I would do that in London, and I wouldn't think it'd be any different here.

For Sheri, Rondebosch is characterized as a space of familiarity – even in the way in which

she reminisced about how, as a teenager visiting her grandparents, she would walk to the local pub in Rondebosch "because that's what [she] would do in London, and [she] wouldn't think that it'd be any different here". The likeness that she draws between Rondebosch and London, in terms of freedom of movement, ignores the fact that the former is only made to be like the latter through the exclusion of the majority of its population. It means the reproduction of place in a foreign space by pushing out those who were the original inhabitants and recreating the colony through architecture and monuments that reference the colonial power.

Alice moved to South Africa when she married a South African; she has been here for about forty-three years but has lived in Cape Town for eighteen of those years. Having lived in Johannesburg, in a small holding with about half an acre of property with paling fences that were really high (courtesy of her husband), she remarked that "I'd never really felt insecure there" nor had she when she lived at a game farm "in the bush", as Alice put it. Alice often employs 'white talk' when speaking about crime in her neighborhood. Her 'white talk' can be considered a form of reflective nostalgia in the way that white people in South Africa reflect on, complain about, and lament over what once was, until they create new narratives through which to voice their concerns.

Alice's concerns with crime are not unfounded considering the mugging she had experienced a year before. She told me how it affected the way she moved around in her neighborhood afterwards: "[For] ages afterwards I had a kind of paranoia about walking in the street. I had used to walk to Riverside almost every day, but I stopped that. I won't walk that route anymore...but we're still not as bad as Johannesburg [laughs], or at least I tell myself that." It is a common phrase among white Capetonians - "not as bad as Johannesburg"; it says that no matter how bad crime gets in Cape Town, it is still 'better than Johannesburg'. This rhetoric is part of what Steyn calls, 'white talk'. Alice's 'white talk', even as a non-South African, also comes through when she deems the solution to crime to be education and "population reduction", echoing

a common discourse around the reason behind crime in South Africa among the white middle class. Alice's 'white talk' becomes part of her reflective nostalgia as well since the place she lived was not crime ridden and dangerous. In her case, she is able to recall a time when she felt safe much of the time.

While Alice approached the topic of security with 'white talk', Simone told me of how she fortified her home following an attack on her and her husband in Hout Bay. When Simone and her husband, Ian, moved to Rondebosch the first thing they did was raise the walls of their home. Simone said:

> When we moved in, I was very afraid because the house is one story and we were attacked when in a double story. Previously, there has been a door/gate in the wall in the backyard that led to the common and we closed that and put electric fencing there too. We replaced the gates...we elevated the walls and electric fencing and this really upset the neighbors, especially this neighbor here [motions to her front wall]. She wrote me a letter, saying, 'how can you make this place look like Alcatraz! This is a gentle little suburb in Rosebank and we don't have housebreaks and this is a cul-de-sac'. I kinda felt a bit bad but we needed it. We [she and her husband] both like open spaces and hate burglar bars ...so we use beams...yes we're quite open but we've put in all the state of the art security features.

This was about ten years ago, and in that time, "the gentle little suburb" had now taken on a character of fortification all along the road. That distress that we see from Simone's neighbor years ago shows the role of memory and nostalgia even from individuals outside of my own fieldwork. This neighbor displayed their own form of nostalgia in the way in which they were so taken aback by the changes in their suburb, and through Simone, I witnessed her own reflection on the interaction.

While not necessarily with the intention of actively creating an exclusionary space, these women perpetuate a narrative that can be mobilized by others to establish an SRA or a CID. By simply reflecting on what once was, without considering the means by which it was possible, there cannot be any moving away from the ineffective ways that white suburbia engages with crime in exclusionary forms. While there was some acknowledgement of the past, there is very little to no engagement with my participants' own complicity in the making and perpetuating of a racially and economically exclusive structure. Instead, the response has been to retain the mechanisms that reinforce their specialness. We see the convergence of deeply embedded appreciation of European architecture and the collective memories of the white middle class who have both gained and lost – and how they are trying to maintain some sense of what they had without really seeming to know how to do so.

(Dis)continuity of community: 'Grime' management and recollections of the homeless

The GSCID and LMRID's 'crime and grime' narrative, and its agenda to get rid of the two, is based on the idea that an unkempt public space, be it a rundown park or broken pavement, attracts illegal activity because of the implication that it is forgotten and goes unnoticed by the authorities. In turn, with these spaces being less frequented by the public because of criminal activity, criminal activity contributes to the degradation of public spaces. Homelessness and vagrancy, for instance, happens to be one of the issues at the intersection of "crime" and "grime", categorized as "grime." Here, I draw on GSCID's approach and narrative towards homelessness and vagrancy, as well as the responses from the women I interviewed, to discuss the conflation of homeless people with "crime and grime."

When asked about the presence of the homeless, the women had various memories of their place in the suburb previously as well as opinions on how best to navigate around them. Janet, who grew up in Rondebosch and later moved to Mowbray, laments the state and standard of living that enabled her children to roam around freely. She is also quite passionate about the reclamation of public space, and it was through my conversations with her that I began to be able to draw the links between a sense of loss and a sense of wanting to recreate, though not being able to reconcile that nostalgia with the realities of the past.

> Author: So I mean, it sounds like people are finding ways in which to reclaim a sense of place that sort of mimics what the might have used to be in the past, and being aware of and taking into account things like homelessness, because I mean, I dunno how many homeless people were around when you were a child…
>
> Janet: Uhhh…no. No…not…many. No. No.

Homelessness and vagrancy are suggested to be part of urban degeneration and dilapidation. This perception informs how people remember their childhoods without the presence of the homeless. The absence of the homeless in their memories also convinces residents like Janet that there was little to no crime in their recollections. As part of the maintenance agenda, GSCID and LMRID approach the homelessness issue with an attitude of getting them out of the public eye, rather than finding a sustainable solution through integrating them into the community. When I left Janet's home, however, she sent me a message saying that she was mistaken in saying that there were no homeless people. The message went as follows:

> Hi Zareen
>
> My memory was not serving me well yesterday. I do remember lots of street people when I was in primary and high school and a student as well. Particularly along R'bosch main Rd. Meth drinkers and a bands of street children who were glue sniffers. They would sit at traffic lights and beg. Lots of unruly behaviour after hours. When I was a student living in Vredehoek there were lots of street people and they were far more intrusive than they are now!
>
> Janet

Yet she had been quick to denounce the presence of homeless people the day before. While anyone can forget things, especially after many years, it was interesting to consider that the romanticized image of Rodenbosch might be so engrained in Janet's mind that she has begun to recreate it. If the same were true for other residents, it could help explain why they feel crime has increased in the years following 1994. Boym (2001) explains that one of the dangers of nostalgia is that it "tends to confuse the actual home and the imaginary one" (xvi). In this case, we see how Janet had become accustomed to reflecting on the past as a better time that she went as far as forgetting the negative aspects that are currently being promoted as new. News articles that speak of "restoring character" also give the impression that homelessness and vagrancy are new to Rondebosch and as a result are responsible for the degeneration of public space that once was pristine and glorious. Robert Fishman (1987) asserts, "that exclusion is routinely at the very core of utopias" (4). If we were to elaborate on this, then I would say that the character and charm of Rondebosch was fundamentally built upon the exclusion of marginalized peoples such as the homeless. In 2015, GSCID released as article titled *Homeless Hinder River Projects* (GSCID 2015). The focus of the article was the concern of GSCID's top members over the state of the river as a result of the homeless people, for example: "the biggest issue we encounter is the damage caused by the homeless people living along the river bank. They set up temporary shelters at various spots along the river and use the river itself and the river's edges to do their ablutions" (GSCID, 2015).

Lillian spoke at length about different aspects of safety and security she took into account. One of these aspects was how and why she engaged with people who live on the streets; the homeless, or "vagrants". When I first met Lillian at her home, she had explained to me how she became involved with them:

> I got interested in investigating absolutely everything along Main Road. Because I felt that GSCID was doing nothing. All they were doing was moving people out of the way. And self-promoting, but they actually

are not doing anything. So through being with these people I learnt that the most important thing they need is water to drink, and we won't provide water fountains because we don't want homeless people in our area. They come to the Liesbeek River and we don't want them there because they're dirty and scruffy, but actually they need to wash their clothes and they want to wash their bodies.

Lillian would like to refurbish the Alma Park, reopen the ablutions block and create a kind of public space that is useful and accessible to 'vagrants'.

> Author : I was looking at the park you're wanting to—
>
> Lillian: Oh, transform!
>
> Author : Yeah, and you said something about an ablutions facility
>
> Lillian: Yes, there's a little building at the bottom, that was an ablutions block but it's locked, and the social worker has the key. But we need an ablution block there. And it needs to be maintained by the city because every other day we have soccer games... it would be fabulous place for the homeless to wash their clothes and...I've said I'd be happy to monitor and manage it from, say, 8-10...There are all these potential little projects.
>
> Author : Do you think that people in your neighborhood could object, and cry 'what if it turns into a squatter camp?'
>
> Lillian: Oh, they see a squatter camp on every corner! (laughs)

When I had mentioned Lillian's idea to Sheri, her response was critical:

> Umm... it kinda depends on if it becomes their place to live, and if it does, what's to stop it from becoming a squatter camp or an informal settlement? Because you

can't have an open space and expect people to live on bench, or something like that. So, and then it becomes not an open space for everybody. I think if you want to do something, then make a shelter. Find someplace that can be used as a shelter...Otherwise, I don't think it'll remain a park...in the same way that the subway didn't remain a subway [starts laughing]...it very quickly became a little shanty town. In the space of about a week [laughs].

Another aspect of understanding restorative nostalgia is to "distinguish between the habits of the past" versus "the habits of the restoration of the past" (Boym 2001, 42). The actions of Rondebosch residents mimic and replicate the spirit of the colonial era in the way that property owning residents feel that they have ownership of public space in their suburb by way of owning a house there. There existed a series of Acts dedicated to the policing of vagrancy during the colonial era, such as the Vagrancy Act of 1834 (Crais 1992, 140). What is left is a suburb that normalizes the exclusion of poor people of color in "their" public spaces. The Vagrancy Act constitutes a 'habit of the past', but as was argued, it still finds its principles and practices reproduced to create 'habits of the restoration of the past'. Part of the habit of restoring the past is the idea that there is something to be learnt from it. The fault lies in thinking that it holds all the answers, leaving little room for the unconventional when it comes to ideas of modernity and progress in shared living spaces. For Lillian to transform a public space that is meant for Rondebosch residents, irrespective of whether they actually use it, into a space for a marginalized yet very present population in the area goes against the 'values' that restorative nostalgia would champion. Sheri's response that the park could likely turn into that which resembles a 'shanty town' or 'squatter camp', both of which are infrastructural symbols of poor black populations in South Africa, shows that there does indeed exist a desire to retain a particular image that is separate and devoid of the ills of the past.

Conclusion

Ultimately, we see that the basis of these community organizations is the upkeep of standards set in place by a racially and economically exclusive legacy. There is little room for fluidity, which can be seen through the conservative understandings present among local residents and CID and SRA officials of what it means to be part of the community. Part of being a long-term resident in these affluent suburbs is being able to engage with the collective memory of being a beneficiary of the apartheid system. The nostalgia of Rondebosch and Mowbray long-term residents is supported by those who collectively identify the change in their suburb as degradation from what was once prestigious. These sentiments are then taken on by SRAs and CIDs like GSCID and LMRID, to become the principles and practices upon which these organizations operate.

There exist similarities in the ways the women I interviewed remembered Rondebosch, especially Simone and Janet, who had grown up in the neighborhood, but each participant had their own angle and interrogated the past in their own way. Instead of generalizing, I have attempted to present these accounts as anecdotal and use these narratives as a lens through which to explore the making and remembering of specialness based on their experiences and memories of apartheid era suburbia. Through this, I was able to understand how and why people reminisce and the degree to which certain narratives are perpetuated by SRAs and CIDs like GSCID and LMRID.

Unlike Lemanski (2006), who approached the topic of SRAs and CIDs from the standpoint of spatiality and urban planning, I attempted to investigate the motivations and rationale behind these institutions. There is still much to be explored around CIDs and SRAs operating in other Cape Town suburbs, especially suburbs going through this transitionary period in post-apartheid South Africa. In the meantime, however, this paper can function as a starting point for my own extended research at the intersections of whiteness, spatiality and memory. The purpose of this paper has been to shed light on the unsustainable rationale of

these organizations. In potential future research, either for myself or someone else, I would like to see SRAs and CIDs engaged with holistically. This paper does not serve to provide solutions for combating crime, but rather to put forth alternative ideas for understanding community and what this means for security. Hence, there remains room and need for exploration into the competing ideas for the future of suburbia in South Africa.

Endnotes

1. Apartheid was a system of institutionalized racial segregation and discrimination in South Africa that existed between from 1948 to 1994. Apartheid can be characterized by petty apartheid where public facilities such as beaches and toilets, or social events were racially segregated, and grand apartheid, which dictated housing, land allocation, schooling and employment opportunities by race (Beck 2014, 135).

References

Beck, Roger. 2014. *The History of South Africa*, 2nd edn. California: ABC-CLIO, LLC.

Becker, Heike, Emile Boonzaier, and Joy Owen. 2005. "Fieldwork in Shared Spaces: Positionality, Power and Ethics of Citizen Anthropologists in Southern Africa." *Anthropology Southern Africa.* 28(3&4): 123 - 132.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1984. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste.* London: Routledge.

Boym, Svetlana. 2001. *The Future of Nostalgia*. New York: Basic Books.

Bull, Esme. 2016. "In Memoriam Fontis Ad Orbem Spinarumi, 1891-2015." *Cabo*, 2016(1). 57-59.

Crais, Clifton C. 1992. *White Supremacy and Black Resistance in Pre-industrial South Africa: The Making of the Colonial Order in the Eastern Cape, 1770 - 1865.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Crime Stats SA. 2015. "Provincial Statistics: Western Cape". Accessed October 15. https://www.crimestatssa.com/province.php?ShowProvince=Western+Cape

Dovey, Kim. 2002. "The Silent Complicity of Architecture." In *Habitus: Sense of Place,* edited by Jean Hillier and Emma Rooksby, 267 - 280. England and USA: Ashgate Publishing Ltd.

Fishman, Robert. 1987. *Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia*. New York: Basic Books.

Geldenhuys, Preller. 2015. *Geldenhuys Genealogy: Descendants of Albert Barends Gildenhuizen*. Everton: Just Done Productions.

GSCID. 2016. "Groot Schuur Community Improvement District". Accessed November 8. 2016. http://www.gscid.co.za.

_____. 2015. "Appeal to Restore Rondebosch Village Character." Accessed November 16. 2016. http://www.gscid.co.za/appeal-to-restore-rondebosch-village-character.

Jeranji, Tiyese. 2015. "History Smashed Into Pieces." *News24.* Last modified 2015. Accessed November 8, 2016. http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/Local/Peoples-Post/History-smashed-into-pieces-20150824-3.

Lefebvre, Henri. 1991. *The Production of Space*. Translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith. Oxford: Blackwell.

Legg, Stephen. 2004. "Memory and Nostalgia." *Cultural Geographies*. 11(1): 99-107.

Lemanski, Charlotte. 2006. "Residential Responses to Fear (of Crime Plus) in Two Cape Town Suburbs: Implications for the Post-Apartheid City." *Journal of International Development.* 18(6): 787-802.

Lincoln, Yvonna S., and Egon G. Guba. 1985. *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Beverly Hills: SAGE Publications.

LMRID. 2015. "Little Mowbray and Rosebank Community Perception Survey." Accessed November 10, 2016. http://lmrid.capetown/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Little-Mowbray-Rosebank-community-survey-summary.pdf.

Miraftab, Faranak. 2007. Governing Post Apartheid Spatiality: Implementing City Improvement Districts in Cape Town. *Antipode* 39(4): 602-626.

_____. 2012. "Colonial Present: Legacies of the Past in Contemporary Urban Practices in Cape Town, South Africa." *Journal of Planning History* 11(4): 283-307.

Rheingold, Howard. 1993. *The Virtual Community.* Cambridge*:* MIT Press

Scheurich, James Joseph. 1997. *Research Method in the Postmodern*. London: Falmer Press.

Spinks, Charlotte. 2001. "A New Apartheid? Urban Spatiality, (fear of) Crime, and Segregation in Cape Town, South Africa." *Destin: Working Paper Series*. 01-20. 3-33.

Steyn, Melissa. 2001. *"Whiteness Just Isn't What It Used To Be": White Identity in a Changing South Africa.* New York: State University of New York Press Albany.

_____. 2005. "White Talk": White South Africans and the Management of Diaspora Whiteness. In *Postcolonial Whiteness: A Critical Reader on Race and Empire*, edited by Alfred J. Lopez, 103-119. New York: State University of New York Press.

Steyn, Melissa, and Dan Foster. 2008. "Repertoires for Talking White: Resistant Whiteness in Post-Apartheid South Africa." *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *31*(1):25-51.

Van Dyk, Gary. 2016. "Character Disappearing" *News24*. Accessed November 8, 2016. http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/Local/Peoples-Post/character-disappearing-20160829.

Cultivating Empathy and Community for Adults with Disabilities: Germany's "Die Lebensgemeinschaft e. V." of Sassen and Richthof

Nicolas Gedigk

Vassar College, nigedigk@vassar.edu

ABSTRACT

Sassen, a German rural community, cares for mentally disabled adults with the purpose of providing them with the empathy, freedom, and community that other institutions often fail to provide. Through participant-observation and interviews, this study examines the ways in which this isolated community does not deny disabled individuals of their humanity. Sassen has full-time, live-in caretakers that care for their own surrogate family of disabled residents, creating an empathetic, and personal community. Through its isolation from society and its live-in staff, Sassen goes beyond ensuring their residents' survival and provides them with the freedom and empathy to engage in romantic relationships, belong to a family, and have a sense of purpose through their jobs that help sustain their community – to live and not just survive.

The question of care for the mentally disabled highlights the broader values and principles of a society and culture. In considering care for their mentally disabled members, societies address questions regarding what rights and liberties they should or should not be afforded and how they will fit into a world that requires individuals to possess certain cognitive abilities and independence. For four weeks in the summer of 2016, I lived, worked, and conducted fieldwork in a unique community for mentally disabled adults (called villagers) in rural Hessen, Germany called Sassen.

Sassen's fundamental philosophy is based on the perception that mentally disabled adults not only need, but also yearn for the lifestyle of any other adult. I studied how this community provides its villagers with makeshift families that emulate the support and empathy of an effective and loving family unit. The community expands notions of kinship beyond the tradition of the nuclear family by creating familial ties between previously unrelated individuals. Caregiving in Sassen is therefore not incentivized by financial reward, but more by feelings of duty and empathy to family members who require care (Allen and Ciambrone 2003, 208). By blending work and home life together, having live-in employees establishes a much more personal atmosphere, rather than the professional ambiance that shift-based care engenders.

Sassen is by no means the first community to use a model of family-based care for the mentally disabled. In the small Belgian town of Geel, families have been taking mentally ill individuals (called boarders) into their homes and caring for them. Instead of trying to heal or cure their mental disorders as institutionalized care does, the people of Geel simply try to

provide them with as typical of a life as possible by living, working, and playing with them. To them, this treatment preserves their dignity as humans (Eckman 2016) in that the boarders lead social lives, develop genuine personal relationships with others, and develop a sense of purpose – all of which remains not easily achievable in institutionalized, shift-based care. Previous studies on older, similar communities have demonstrated the effectiveness of family-based care for the disabled. Based on findings by Henry R. Stedman (1890) who inspected a community that used family-based care rather than institutionalized care, placing mentally disabled adults in a more domestic and natural environment increases their well-being far more effectively than institutionalized care (Tuntiya 2006, 323). Additionally, in a case study of Geel, Goldstein, Godemont, and Crabb (2000) suggest that the community's integration of the mentally disabled helps break down the dehumanizing stigma against mentally ill patients by acknowledging and appeasing their human needs rather than limiting the scope of their care to food, shelter, and hygiene.

As dictated in the Social Model of Disability, most Western societies tend to deny their impaired members agency in their own lives in order to protect them from a society that is not designed for them. Such denied liberties include the right to engage in romantic and sexual relationships, to pursue work and careers, and to move freely beyond the confines of their living space – in essence what makes us *human*. This institutionalized denial of such liberties and fundamental human experiences is what disables them, not their mental or physical impairments (Morris 2001, 1-3). Therefore, due to Sassen's incorporation of the Social Model into their model of care, I refer to the villagers as disabled in the context of disabling institutions, practices, and social statuses, and hegemonic stigmas against people with mental impairments. I use the term 'impaired' only in reference to the physical or cognitive abilities and needs of specific villagers. The village of Sassen thus reevaluates notions of humanity by establishing a safe communal living space, separate from society, that *enables* the mentally impaired to exercise the free will, agency, and rights to a greater social purpose and belonging that, at the time of its founding

in 1968, normative German society and the rest of the world denied them (Müller 2008, 7). It all began when "die Lebensgemeinschaft e. V.", the organization that established Sassen, was set up.

History of "Die Lebensgemeinschaft e. V."

Influenced by Rudolf Steiner's philosophy, in the 1960s, a group of German intellectuals – Dr. Wilhelm zur Linden, Hanno Heckmann, and Ruth Lossen – began to hold regular meetings to discuss alternative ways of living, along lines suggested by Steiner's philosophy. One day, Dr. zur Linden invited his colleague, Dr. Karl König, to one of these meetings. In the 1940s, König had founded a small village community in Scotland for children with mental disabilities after he fled from Nazi Germany (Ahrens 2008, 9). This community was based on Steiner's philosophical principle that every human possesses a healthy soul regardless of any illnesses or developmental impairments that may or may not be present (Hart and Monteux 2004, 68). The goal of König's community was to nurture the soul of disabled children through education and community. After König's presentation about this community, Hanno Heckmann was inspired to dedicate his life to working with the disabled community.

Along with his colleagues, Heckmann in 1965 founded the organization "Die Lebensgemeinschaft e.V." in 1965. In an effort to gain more experience in caregiving for adults with mental disabilities, Heckmann worked in Lehenhof, another community that König founded based on the same principles as the one in Scotland; it was the first of its kind in Germany. Eventually, Heckmann worked in a community for mentally disabled children in Bingenheim, Germany. At this community, there was a group of eighteen year-olds who were no longer allowed to receive care in the community because they were no longer minors. They had to either return to their parents or go into a psychiatric ward. Realizing that there was no place in Germany that cared for *adults* with disabilities in the same way as König's community had, Heckmann decided to found his own. In early January of 1968, Heckmann met Kurt and Doris Eisenmeier,

intellectuals who were eager to apply the ideologies of Rudolf Steiner to the needs of disabled adults. After exchanging ideas one evening, they agreed to work together to found communities for mentally disabled adults whom they would call villagers. These villagers would be put together into makeshift families run by abled house parents who would live in houses with them. Over the course of that year, Heckmann and the Eisenmeiers had founded the village of Sassen in the countryside of Hessen with the help and dedication of their friends, volunteers, and private donations. Hanno Heckmann became the house father of Sassen's first family (Yong 2014). Although his family only had only sixteen villagers, Sassen eventually grew to have fifteen families, and a few miles away another village called Richthof was founded in 1977. Today there are 250 villagers living in Sassen and Richthof – 130 in Sassen and 120 in Richthof – and 150 employees.

For the summers of 2014, 2015, and 2016, I worked in Sassen as an intern. In 2016, I conducted fieldwork alongside my duties as an intern. My responsibilities included tending to the various needs of villagers, working in the garden and household, and facilitating free time with the villagers. One of my most important tasks, however, was adapting to lifestyle and mindset of this unique community.

Modern Day Sassen

Daily Life and Routine

Like any other community, Sassen has daily routines and a specific lifestyle that keeps it running smoothly and reflects a community-focused mentality. Sassen was founded to cultivate a lifestyle that reflects Rudolf Steiner's anthroposophical vision: a way of life that perpetuates an image of humanity that reflects a more caring, selfless, social, and freer side of human nature. Sassen was founded in order to create a safe environment for mentally disabled adults of all levels of ability to live as freely and autonomously as possible without the expectations, dangers, and requirements of modern society.

One long paved road leads into Sassen from the nearest town, Schlitz. When I returned to Sassen in the summer of 2016 and drove along

that road leading to the village, I saw wide landscapes with cows until I eventually arrived. It all looked the same as always: the quaint, large houses scattered across a vast property connected by paved paths; the little shop in the center that sells toiletries, food, coffee, souvenirs, and various household objects handcrafted by villagers in the woodshop, ceramics studio, and weaving studio. On the southern side of the village, the farm housed the cows and chickens that were tended to for milk and eggs, while on the north side, the garden workers harvested various fruits and vegetables for the entire community. In the center of the village was a large pond that villagers sometimes swam in. Sassen is surrounded by farmland and forests that are popular places for strolls.

There are fifteen family houses in Sassen, and around seven to twelve villagers live in each house along with their respective house parents. House parents are fulltime employees who live in the family houses with the villagers and raise their own children (if they have any) there as well. Usually a married couple or a single parent, they are provided with their own section of the house for office space, and bedrooms for themselves and their children to which no one else has access. For all intents and purposes, this house and Sassen is their home, engendering a surrogate family for the villagers, as well as for the house parents and their children themselves. Each family eats breakfast, lunch, and dinner together, goes on field trips, and essentially does what any other family would. Some families have fulltime employees who commute into work each day to help around the house with cleaning, cooking, and caring for the villagers who need help showering, brushing their teeth, shaving, and putting on their clothes. However, most families rely on interns for those types of caretaking responsibilities. Interns are typically young adults and teenagers who stay with a family for either a few weeks for a high school internship or for up to a full year.

On a weekday morning, breakfast is served at 7:30AM in all houses. Everyone wakes up however early they need to in order to be ready for breakfast. Interns wake up around 6AM in order to help some of the villagers get ready, as well as help set the table and prepare breakfast. Villagers who can get ready independently have their own specific duties, such as loading the laundry, emptying the dishwasher, cutting the loaves of bread, and setting the table. After breakfast, everybody goes to work at 9AM. There are several types of work in the community, such as household work, ceramics, woodwork, weaving, baking, gardening, and farming. At 12PM, the villagers return to their respective houses for lunch and then take a midday break until they go back to work from 2PM to 5PM. After dinner at 6PM, the villagers can choose to relax, take a walk, play games, or attend an event that the village plans each evening, such as concerts, dances, drawing classes, and other activities. On the weekends, villagers do not go to work, but help around the house with the family – tending to the garden, cleaning the house, or going on a walk. It is also common to go on a day trip to go to a nearby town, eat at a restaurant with the family, and walk around the shops. In the evenings, families like to play games, watch a slide show of one of their recent trips, or a watch a movie. While everyone is actually free to do what they like, villagers, interns, and house parents alike tend to spend time with each other and participate in most group activities.

There are two organized times for vacation per year: two and a half weeks in the winter over the holidays and five weeks in the summer. These vacations give villagers the opportunity to visit their families back at home, take time off from the workshops, or go on a trip. Villagers have three options during the vacations. They can either visit their parents, siblings, or guardians, go on field trips to other places in Germany or neighboring countries (organized through "die Lebensgemeinschaft"), or stay in Sassen or Richthof mixed into various vacation groups. What each villager does during vacation time largely depends on his or her family situation and physical and cognitive ability. Some villagers do not have families that will take care of them during the vacations. Sometimes their parents are too old or have passed away, and sometimes not all villagers are in contact with their home families. In such cases, Sassen organizes many vacation groups that go away to places like the Black Forest, the

Bodensee, the Netherlands, or even Italy, and also groups that stay onsite in the community.

These vacation groups consist of villagers from various families from both Sassen and Richthof and are led by coworkers. House parents tend to take this time as their own vacation. The able-bodied villagers often go into the vacation groups that leave the community. This allows them to have experiences outside of the village too. Those unable to participate are put into onsite vacation groups; however, some able-bodied villagers stay in Sassen or Richthof out of choice too. These groups undertake day trips to nearby places, like the zoo or aquarium, the theatre, and other events. Two circus performers run a clinic in Sassen every summer, teaching villagers clown tricks and dancing. Many musicians also come during the summer to perform for the vacation groups.

For the first two weeks of my stay in the summer of 2016, I stayed with Julie's family for the third time. Julie is a single house mother whose oldest children have already left the house, but she has one daughter – Sandra, a high school senior – still living in Sassen. Ten villagers live in this house. In the summer of 2014, I had only spent three days in the house getting acquainted with the type of work for which I would be responsible before the villagers all went on vacation and were scattered into various vacation groups. In the summer of 2016, however, I spent three weeks living there, working in the household, and caring for two villagers, Erik and Lars. In the mornings, I would wake up around six o'clock to shower myself, and then wake up Erik, shave his face, wash him in the shower, pick out his clothes for the day and help him get dressed. Afterwards, I would proceed to do the same with Lars.

Humanity, Freedom, and Security

The villagers of Julie's family cover a wide spectrum of physical and cognitive abilities and therefore have varying degrees of responsibility and freedom. When I first met Jonathan in 2014, he was standing right outside of the house, quite relaxed and minding his own business, smoking a cigarette. Julie told him to go show me around Sassen's beautiful property, and he proceeded to introduce himself and welcome me to the community. His

demeanor and the fact that he was smoking led me to assume that he was coworker, not a villager; I did not think that villagers would be permitted to smoke. As we walked through the village toward the pound, I was met with a surprise. A woman with a speech impairment, whom I correctly identified as a villager, approached Jonathan and kissed him on the lips. Not only was I wrong about Jonathan being a coworker, but I now found out that villagers were not only allowed to smoke but also be in romantic relationships. The woman's name was Katja, and she was Jonathan's girlfriend.

It had embarrassingly never occurred to me before that moment that the villagers would possess the same emotional and sexual needs and desires as everyone else; it was quite naïve of me to think otherwise. Most people have lived their lives largely amongst abled members of society and do not have an in-depth understanding of the disabled community, engendering a disconnect between abled and disabled individuals. At lunch one day, an intern, Sophie, even recalled her boyfriend's extreme awkwardness, discomfort, and shyness when visiting Sassen. Both my naïveté and her boyfriend's discomfort reflect the lack of interaction between the disabled and abled in society and the lack of education about social perspectives of disabilities. With little interaction between these two spheres, the abled frequently fail to recognize the humanity in disabled individuals whose behaviors fall outside the predetermined societal norm. By essentially reducing the disabled to their impairment rather than placing their personhood at the forefront of their identity, the abled perpetuate an attitude that sets the disabled apart as outcasts and discredits them as dependent and incapable beings (Tregaskis 2004, 7).

As a result of this perception, the abled tend to cast them into devalued social roles, deem them as burdens of society, or neglect their needs as human-beings. This stigmatization marginalizes and dehumanizes them by leading to their loss of autonomy, freedom, and access to essential human experiences in institutional settings. This attitude is cyclically reinforced in that the abled typically are not exposed to institutional and public spaces which encourage

or enable the mentally disabled to enjoy such freedoms (Race *et al*. 2005, 509-511). Therefore, when we think about the type of care that should be given to disabled individuals, we think about what needs must be fulfilled in order for them to merely survive – food, shelter, and hygiene – and once those needs are fulfilled, our minds rest at ease. We do not, however, think about what needs must be fulfilled in order for them to be human – to *live*, rather than just survive.

That is when I began to see more of what Sassen provides for the villagers. Sassen reevaluates notions of humanity to *include* the disabled community. It integrates both the theory of Social Role Valorization (SRV) and the Social Model of Disability into its social structure and philosophy. As in the Social Model approach, Sassen puts the villagers' personhood rather than their mental and physical capabilities at the center of care (Hughes 2011, 508). Sassen acknowledges their needs as human beings to have genuine relationships and agency in their own lives, thus combating the damaging stigmatization they tend to face. Along the lines of SRV, the community gives its villagers meaningful social roles regardless of physical and mental capabilities. Rather than being discredited as incapable, each villager is assigned routine responsibilities which help sustain the community (Gibson 2006, 190; Wolfsenberger 2011, 436). Sassen refuses to give in to the dehumanizing stigmatization that leads the abled to neglect the human needs and value of disabled individuals. Thus, by providing the villagers with a safe space to exercise freedom and agency, this community humanizes them in a way outside society does not. Living here has forced me to ask myself, "Why shouldn't they be allowed to have romantic relationships? Why shouldn't they be allowed to smoke a cigarette or have a beer?"

Sassen, however, does not just let the villagers do whatever they please. While the community acknowledges their human needs and desires (as in the Social Model approach), it must and also does acknowledge the role that cognitive ability plays in decision making and one's personal physical health (as in the Medical Model approach), striking a balance between

the two (Hughes 2011, 509). The impairments of some villagers increase the risks of alcohol or cigarettes, so that must be taken into consideration, as well as parental consent. In the case of smoking, typically the villagers arrive in Sassen already possessing the habit; hardly ever do non-smoking villagers ever express interest in smoking. Regarding relationships, parental consent from both parties are required in order to ensure that each person in the relationship is comfortable, safe, and consenting. Nonetheless, despite the acknowledgment of the risks of providing the villagers with too much agency, security does not take saliency over freedom in the community.

Certainly, there are risks of letting villagers go on walks alone, smoke, drink, or engage in romantic and physical relationships. It would of course be safest to keep all of the villagers under constant supervision. Instead, house parents believe that the villagers should have as much freedom as possible within their individual needs. For example, a villager named Ulrich used to be very independent. He was allowed to take walks on his own around the village, and his house parents did not worry about him. However, once he started developing Alzheimer's, he began leaving the village at random moments throughout the day. His degeneration was gradual, so his house parents had to feel out how much freedom they could trust him with. His house parents cautiously monitored him and eventually stopped letting him take walks without supervision. Evidently, Sassen acknowledges both the role of individual cognitive ability in decision making and the need to have agency and human desires fulfilled in one's life by creating a safe space, separate from the outside world, where such freedom can be explored.

Lifestyle vs. Work

Although the mentality behind Sassen provides such amazing personal care and community for its villagers, I initially could not help but think about the sacrifices the house parents have to make in order to make this possible. Julie is on the job 24 hours a day, seven days a week until she retires. The first time I came to Sassen, I had a very difficult time adapting to the new environment because I knew I would be on the

clock throughout my stay in the community. I could not go home after my shift was over because there were no shifts – nor did I ever have a day off in my five weeks working there. Unlike me, however, Julie does not get to go home and relax after five weeks of work; her work technically never ends.

Once I began working for Mark in 2014, he made me realize the mistake in my mentality about this type of work. He sat me down and told me not to think of my role as a job, but as a lifestyle. He warned me that if I perceived it as a job, it would be the longest, most painful five weeks of my life; essentially a never-ending shift. If I perceived this as a lifestyle, however, then the weeks would fly by. Objectively, the job was not difficult work. I had to shower, clean, and change the villagers' clothing, which only takes half an hour. The rest of the day, I would go on walks with them, go to events with them, and most importantly, bond with them. There was a lot of drinking coffee or tea and eating cake involved in this job. However, I always had to be present if something went wrong with one of the villagers. If I constantly waited for free time to do whatever I pleased, the job would become unbearable because that free time would never come. Essentially this community was a place in which people live together in nice houses on a beautiful farmland property, help those who need it, and work together in workshops in order to help out the community and provide the villagers with a sense of purpose. By understanding this mentality, I could finally enjoy living in Sassen.

Mark, in a conversation we had had after dinner once, emphasized the name of Sassen's organization: "Die Lebensgemeinschaft e.V.", which translated means, "the Living Community". In order to prevent abuse in the workplace (such as overworking employees and mistreating villagers), over time the German government has demanded workers from homes like Sassen to keep detailed records of everything that happens each day for each villager. Sassen, however, barely keeps such records, arguing to the government that they are not a working community, but a living community, as the name suggests. House parents cannot perform their job very well and cultivate a loving, empathetic environment if

they are cooped up in their offices, documenting every hour of every day.

Furthermore, the community in its very nature blends work and home life in a way that makes it difficult to distinguish the two. Going to the garden and working from 9AM to 12PM, for example, may be considered work; however, emptying the dishwasher for the entire family could either be construed as work or merely a household chore to keep the house tidy. Everyone has their own responsibilities in the household that could be interpreted as work or as simply helping out the family or the community. House Mother Julie argued that it would be ridiculous if she had to record how many minutes it takes Erik to load the dishwasher, Thomas to dry the dishes, or Leah to prepare sandwiches for dinner. In the outside world, going grocery shopping, cooking, cleaning, and cultivating a loving environment for the family is not considered work, but ways in which families function outside of the workplace. In Sassen, however, a house parent's home is their workplace and vice versa. Employees do not perceive work and home life as two distinct entities. Unlike shift-based work, being a part of Sassen is a way of life that builds the bridge between work and home life, engendering a lifestyle that liberates one from working in order to enjoy eventual free time, or as a means to an end. It allows one to live as an end in itself and remove the stresses of an undesirable work life.

Retired house mother Caroline had worked for "Die Lebensgemeinschaft e.V." for almost forty years, and she contrasted her time in Sassen with a shift-based home she had worked in previously. At her old job in northern Germany, the care recipients also worked, but not onsite. Caroline and her coworkers dropped them off at various industrial work sites in the morning and picked them up in afternoon. On weekends, instead of coming back to the community, the residents were picked by their respective parents, brought home, dropped off at work on Monday morning again, and then picked up by Caroline and her coworkers. Essentially, the employees at this home would only see the people they were meant to take care of in the afternoons, evenings, and quickly in the mornings from Monday to Thursday each

week. Furthermore, the shift-based work meant that each respective employee saw them even less than that.

While telling me this over a cup of coffee one afternoon, Caroline complained about the individualistic atmosphere and mentality, as well as the lack of empathy, that comes as a result of shift-based care. The atmosphere at her old job was very professional and impersonal. Coworkers did not necessarily try to befriend one another, nor did they make a strong, sincere effort to engage with the residents they were caring for. In every common area, there were televisions to keep them busy, unlike in Sassen where common technologies such as televisions and internet were quite limited and restricted. According to Caroline, the moment work becomes shift-based, the employees' mentality becomes one that separates work and personal life distinctly, thereby altering the nature of the relationships between coworkers and residents. When care recipients switch caretakers every few hours, the relationship remains an impersonal, professional one in which trust on the side of resident and empathy on the side of employee does not form in the same way that it does between house parents and villagers in Sassen. Based on Caroline's experience, the sentiment of the care that shift-based work provides seems to be one of necessity and work as a means to an end rather than empathy and genuine personal care for the individual.

When caregiving is only financially incentivized, care recipients feel more like a burden rather than human beings. Employees often have a harder time getting care recipients to comply because of the lack of trust and continuity in their relationships (Allen and Ciambrone 2003, 215). When caregivers for mentally disabled adults work eight-hour shifts at a time, they merely need to tolerate any lack of cooperation until they are free to go home, be with their loved ones and friends, and enjoy their free time; however, house parents in Sassen cannot escape to their separate personal lives because their role as caregivers is their personal life.

They have to foster their relationships with the villagers and allow trust to build – to figure out what unique needs each individual requires

to be fulfilled in order to feel safe and comfortable enough to comply. If a villager is particularly reluctant to cooperate or even hostile, it can become disruptive to others in family. However, it is important to recognize that such behavior is often indicative of either a lack of trust between caregiver and villager or of a neglected need or discomfort experienced by the villager. As a result, it also becomes in the best interest of house parents and everyone involved to take a more personal approach and get to *know* the villagers and let the villagers get to know *you*, as opposed to simply tending to their basic needs of food and hygiene. The more time you spend with villagers, the easier it becomes to establish not only trust, but also a friendship, which makes tasks like bathing and cleaning much more pleasant and easier to undertake for all parties involved. In essence, reciprocal closeness, trust, and respect is essential to the villagers' acceptance of care (Allen and Ciambrone 2003, 214). By facilitating this inseparability of practical and emotional labor through live-in care, Sassen achieves a level of caretaking incentivized by familial empathy and duty rather than money. Furthermore, this model gives villagers agency in their own caretaking by making the relationship between caregiver and care-recipient one of reciprocity and dignity (Aronson and Neysmith 1996, 65-67).

There were a few days in a row where a villager named Klaus would scream and bite his finger very frequently, and we did not know why. Not only did this indicate his unhappiness, but it also drove other villagers to act out, and disrupted all of our sleep at night. Klaus does not talk to people directly, but thinks aloud in often confusing, random, and repetitious statements. After careful observation, I noticed that his bowel movements were irregular and that his frequent random mumblings mostly referred to his bowels. We concluded that he had stomach aches, so we altered his diet slightly. Sure enough, he stopped talking about his bowels as they became more regular. I was only able to discern this, however, because I was the only person taking care of him for a longer period of time. If his caretaker were to switch every eight hours, they might not be bothered by his screaming or not even notice his irregular bowl movements and mumblings.

Working in Sassen only weeks at a time once a year has made the importance of continuity in relationships between care recipients and caretakers all the more obvious. In the summer of 2016, I was responsible for Klaus and Ben. I had taken care of Klaus for five weeks straight two summers before, but had never even met Ben before. On my first day back, I encountered no issues getting Klaus ready in the morning, although we needed to get used to each other again. He had a look of confusion on his face when I woke up him up and was initially hesitant to get out of bed; however, I knew exactly what to do when getting him ready in the morning. He does not shower on his own, but he likes to take the shower head and play with it. He brushes his teeth on his own, but will not do it until someone puts tooth paste on the tooth brush for him. He does not dry himself off very well, but will stubbornly insist on taking the towel. Because I was familiar with him already, I knew to let him have his fun with the shower head, put tooth paste on the tooth brush, and indulge him with drying himself off before I do a more thorough job. Otherwise, he would not comply. At the beginning of my first summer with Klaus, I took his towel to dry him off after a shower, but he started tugging on it. I resisted and tugged back because I knew he could not dry himself properly. Eventually, I learned to accommodate him, and everything went much smoother from then on. Because of our previous acquaintance, I had a smooth transition into the summer of 2016; however, despite that, he initially demonstrated hesitance because he had been used to his house father as a caretaker for most of the last six years, not me, and required time to adjust to having me as his primary caretaker. Although I had taken care of him before, whether or not he remembered me was unclear. I merely knew him well enough to ensure his approval of my level of care.

I had a rocky start with Ben. On the first morning, he walked to the toilet and sat down. I waited until he stood back up, and I looked into the toilet to see if he had defecated. He had and so I helped him wipe. Once he was naked getting ready to step into shower, however, he defecated onto the floor. I immediately sat him back down on the toilet and cleaned up the mess. The next day, when Ben stood up from the toilet and there was nothing in the toilet bowl, I lightly pushed down on his shoulders, encouraging him to sit back down on the toilet. Sure enough, after a few minutes he began to defecate and there was no mess. Eventually, I learned how to care for him best like I had with Klaus two years before. For example, Ben liked to hold my hand on walks and would be upset if I did not, unlike Klaus who liked to walk alone ahead of the group and would get agitated if I coddled him too much.

Routine and continuity are very important to the villagers. They need to know whom they can rely on, trust, and look to for help. While the continuity of a few weeks at a time has helped me develop trusting relationships between villagers and myself, my absence during most of the year resulted in limitations of my ability to calm them down on a bad day. When I first stayed with house mother Julie, I was originally supposed to help Erik get ready in the morning. When I walked in the first few days, he refused to get out of bed until I called over Julie and she sternly ordered him to get out of bed if he wanted to eat. Knowing full well that she was the one actually in charge, he reluctantly got out of bed. Julie knew that his stubbornness would not change in the short three weeks I was there in 2015, so she reassigned me to Jakob who is much more compliant and trusting.

If caretakers were to switch on a daily basis or every few hours each day as it does with shift-based work, then villagers would not know who they can rely on at any given time. Trust between villager and caretaker would develop much more slowly and would lack a personal touch. According to Caroline, caretakers at her old job had lots of issues controlling the residents as a result of the inconsistency and lack of empathy in those relationships.

Of course, issues found in traditional institutional settings cannot only be attributed to their shift-based labor model; certainly, there are shift-based caretakers who develop close, trusting relationships with care recipients as well. However, live-in care helps encourage and facilitate those types of relationships more organically and easily. Furthermore, Sassen incorporates *multiple* practices – not just live-in care – into its model which help eliminate other

issues found in traditional institutions. The community assigns the villagers meaningful social roles and provides them with agency and freedom. Thus, this combination of Social Role Valorization and the Social Model in *addition* to the familial and personal touch of live-in care allows Sassen to further empower and humanize the disabled community (Allen and Ciambrone 2003; Hughes 2011; Wolfsenberger 2011). While shift-based labor models are not solely responsible for all issues found in institutional settings, traditional institutions tend to fail to incorporate these other important enabling practices, too.

Empathy and Kinship

Sassen has overcome such issues of inconsistent relationships between workers and villagers by providing the villagers with live-in house parents, engendering new notions of kinship. Because villagers are unable to care fully for themselves as adults, Sassen provides the villagers with a surrogate family that will endure throughout their adult life, even when their guardians or parents can no longer care for them. These surrogate families become as real to them as their families back home, for they spend most of each year in Sassen – eating meals, working, and spending free time together in Sassen. Living together in these initially makeshift families eventually engenders a real familial atmosphere in which villagers and house parents alike feel as comfortable, connected, and communal as any traditional family would. In some cases, in which a villager no longer is in contact with their family back home, their family in this community becomes their only one. In regular shift-based homes, once their parents pass away, many disabled individuals lose much of the empathy, love, and emotional connection that their home life had provided. However, Sassen is indeed a place they can call home, a place where they have family, love, and empathy – not just a place where they are being kept to survive.

House Parents, Parents/Guardians, and Villagers

While Sassen provides its villagers with care that emulates the love and empathy they had at home, these surrogate families can create tension between the guardians and house parents of villagers whose families still remain in contact with them. After a villager spends years in Sassen, it becomes ambiguous who actually knows the villager better and who knows what is best for that villager – the house parents or the biological parents. The guardians – often parents or siblings – sometimes claim to know the villager better than the house parents because they grew up with or raised them during their formative years; however, just like in the abled community, mentally disabled individuals change as they grow older, as do their needs. Their house parents who have spent many years with them are present as these changes occur, while their guardian only sees them a few weeks per year at most.

Many parents fail to see that living in a community is very different than living at home with family because one needs to be able to share attention much more than in a small family. The biological mother of former villager Hans – a villager whom I took care of my first summer in Sassen – was adamantly involved in her son's life, welfare, and treatment, claiming to know exactly what Hans needed and how he should be treated. It became very quickly clear that Hans not only desired a lot of attention, but required it in order to feel content. One morning on our daily strolls around the farmland, Hans and I walked arm in arm as we always did, and Klaus walked ten yards ahead as he always did. Since Klaus does not react to verbal commands, I had to run up to him and hold his hand so that he would stand still once the distance between him and the rest of group became too big. Upset that I left his side, Hans started sprinting right past me. In effort to catch him, I ran after him and stopped him as I did with Klaus. Clearly angry, Hans hit me across the face and started kicking me. Other times when I tended to other villagers, he would throw his mug on the ground and throw a fit. By its very nature, a community is about sharing attention and giving it where and when it is needed. At home, his parents could give him all of the attention he desired; however, I as an intern, as well as any other coworker, could not possibly provide him with constant attention when other villagers needed their food to be cut or needed to go to bathroom.

Nonetheless, Hans' mother disapproved of Sassen's treatment of her son. We eventually learned that Hans liked to take out his frustrations on the pictures and books in the room in which he was staying – a room that belonged to another villager who was on vacation. Once, he cut himself accidentally on the glass of a picture frame he broke. We took everything out of the room in order to prevent him from hurting himself and continuing to destroy another villager's belongings. Upon asking Mark recently what happened to Hans, he told me that Hans' mother took him out of Sassen. In preparation for his stay one winter vacation, Mark removed everything from his room except for the bed. Upon arrival, Hans was hesitant to leave his mother's side once he realized that he was meant to stay there. As a result, his mother felt uneasy about leaving her son unhappy and asked to see his room. Upon seeing the bare room, she accused Mark of inhumane treatment and took Hans back home. She had expected that her son would receive the *same* familial treatment as he had back home. While Sassen does provide familial support, the families reflect different notions of kinship. They are very large and communal, unlike Hans' family, where he was an only child. Hans was accustomed to individual, one-on-one care, which Sassen, as a community in which attention must be shared, could not provide.

There are also cases in which the surrogate family with which a villager is provided becomes the only family that a villager can rely on. Maia, a very small, elderly villager with Down Syndrome, was supposed to spend just one week at her sister's house in the middle of the summer vacation. Maia requires a lot of care, including showering, changing diapers, and brushing teeth. Extremely excited, Maia jumped up and down laughing when her sister came to pick her up. Expecting her to come back a week later, we were surprised to see her dropped off alone in a cab just a few days after she had been picked up. After asking Mark about this incident, he said it was unfortunately not uncommon for a villager's family to send the villager back early because they could not or did not want to deal with the trouble anymore. I could not help but feel incredibly upset by this incident, though. Maia cannot speak and is very small; she is defenseless, and her sister had left her alone in a cab with a stranger. Maia cannot even rely on her sister to fulfill her needs. Sassen is the one place she will always be provided with care; thus, in cases like these where a disabled individual does not have a reliable family to fall back on, it is vital that communities like Sassen provide them with empathy, care, a true sense of belonging, and a new family.

The Role of "Die Lebensgemeinschaft e.V." and its Future

"Die Lebensgemeinschaft e.V." of Sassen and Richthof has given back to the disabled individuals what modern society has taken away from them: their humanity. The modern world has developed without considering the human needs of those with disabilities. We marginalize them as something other than human and isolate them to an existence that merely consists of survival. Rather than acknowledging them as fellow members of the human race with the same abstract emotional needs that separate us from other animals, society uses their cognitive differences as an excuse to disregard the existence of those needs.

Inspired by Karl König's original Camphill community in Scotland, Sassen provides them with this purpose (Hart and Moneteux 2004, 70). The families, the workshops, and the community give them something to live for: love, empathy, friendship, and family. Every villager's job serves the greater community in some way. The gardeners and farmers harvest vegetables for the families to eat. The woodshop, ceramic, and textile workers produce furniture, dishware, decoration, and fabric for the community to use and for the shop to sell to members of mainstream society. The household workers help maintain a clean living space and cook the food. Everyone's role helps sustain this community. Sassen allows the villagers to express their humanity in a safe space. "Die Lebensgemeinschaft" – this *living* community – not only gives them a greater sense of purpose, but also the freedom to have human experiences, to listen to music, to create art, to play a sport, to love, to laugh, and to belong.

It is a true testament to the employees of Sassen to have made this community possible. They refuse to believe that the image of humanity that modern world issues paints truly reflects our nature. As long as their idealism endures, so will their community. In Mark's opinion, the moment they stop believing in the community, it will all fall apart. The cornerstone of the community's ideology is one that *requires* idealists: everyone should give what he or she can, no matter how much or how little, and everyone should receive what he or she needs, no matter how much or how little. Similar to Karl König's vision of the ideal Camphill community, coworkers and villagers alike work and receive varying amounts based on what they can do and what they ask for or require. Obviously, a villager unable to carry out basic tasks will receive more from the community and give less in return (Christensen and Heyer 2004-2005, 27).

This also applies to coworkers. Mark comes from outside the country, and takes his family to his home country once a year; however, he also acts as a substitute for house parents whenever they need a few days off for various reasons. Therefore, their strong communal mentality does not take salience over individuality, but nurtures it. They acknowledge everyone's unique needs and do their best to fulfill them. Reflecting a communist-like mentality, questions of abusing the system arise. Indeed, there are always people who abuse such a system and profess more needs than they actually have – workers who take many days off or steal from the food supply, for example. However, as long as workers give enough back to the community, such abuse is forgiven. For example, as long as the family dynamic and welfare of the villagers are not harmed in any way, house parents can take "unnecessary" days off every once and a while.

The idealism to see beyond the minimal abuse of this system is vital to the survival of the community. Once jealousy and petty comparisons of work effort bleed into the ambiance of the community, workers will fail to see the greater result of their work and feel that it is not the worth the effort anymore. Because the house parents of Sassen and Richthof continue to trust in humanity's kindness and selflessness rather than the individualism and materialism we often see in modern society, they are able to do what the mainstream society has failed to do: to create a community that not only gives disabled individuals their humanity and freedom back, but also believes in the goodness of that humanity, and provides help to all who need it.

Conclusion

In providing mentally disabled adults with surrogate families that emulate the loving, empathetic environment of their biological families, and in some instances even become the only family villagers have left, Sassen's model of care demonstrates the importance and effectiveness of alternative forms of kinship. In their classic works on alternative forms of families, anthropologists like Carol B. Stack often refer to the rigidness of mainstream society's accepted notions of kinship, which are mostly limited to the idea of the nuclear family (Stack 1975, 126-127). In her account of personal kinship networks in low-income African-American communities, Stack debunks stereotypical conceptions of unstable kinship structures in black communities. Unlike in the nuclear family, personal kinship patterns in the black community in which Stack studied extend well beyond the biological parents of the child. While the majority of mothers raise their own children and have extremely strong bonds with them, their kinsmen often "anticipate the help they may have to give to young mothers and the parental responsibilities they may have to assume toward the children of kinsmen" (Stack 1975, 48). Stack finds that these kinship networks – unlike commonly perpetuated stereotypes – are extremely stable and effective among poor blacks because the challenges of poverty remain constant and severe (Stack 1975, 54).

Barbara Myerhoff demonstrates another form of kinship that exists outside of mainstream society in her classic account of culture among Jewish seniors in Venice, California. Myerhoff attributes the strength and resilience of the Jewish community to the kinship that they feel with another through their common history of persecution and suffering (Myerhoff 1978, 217-219). Upon the death of one of the Center's members, the

kinship that existed between Jews at the Center became clear in the mourning rituals that followed. One person pulled out the hem of her dress, another laid a scarf over a mirror, and someone else poured a glass of tea into a saucer – all of which are Jewish mourning traditions. The death was heavily discussed by all members of the Center as a proper Jewish death, in the community amongst fellow Jews rather than in a hospital with strangers (Myerhoff 1978, 214). Although the Center members were not biologically related to one another, they all mourned this death as if a member of the family had been lost. This form of kinship is rooted in history and culture rather than the mainstream conception of the nuclear family in which kinship is typically limited to parents and their children; and yet, it proves to be as emotionally sincere and powerful as conceptions of family.

It is vital that future research continues the work of such anthropologists as these on alternative forms of kinship, their legitimacy, and the importance of their role in providing those excluded by mainstream society with the community and empathy that all humans yearn for. Mentally disabled adults do not quite fit into mainstream conceptions of family, but that does not mean they do not need or yearn for the love and community that kinship provides. Acknowledging this need, Sassen highlights the ways in which society's limited conception of kinship allows its non-normative members to fall through the cracks, often left to institutional care that fails to engender a personal atmosphere.

Society too often sets rigid standards of normativity that marginalize members who fail to meet those standards, whether it is mentally disabled adults, low-income African-Americans, or elderly Jews. Along the lines of the works of Stack (1975) and Myerhoff (1978), future research should seek out other communities on the fringes of society and shed light on more alternative forms of kinship that need to be legitimized in greater society because humans need family – and that comes in all different forms.

Acknowledgements

References

Aronson, Jane and Sheila Neysmith. 1996. "'You're not just there to do the work': Depersonalizing policies and the exploitation of home care workers' labor." *Gender & Society* 10(1): 59-77.

Ahrens, Friederike and Axel Müller. 2008. *40 Jahre Die Lebensgemeinschaft e. V.: Vereinigung von Freunden und Angehörigen behinderter Menschen*. Sassen, Germany: Die Lebensgemeinschaft e. V. Sassen und Richthof.

Allen, Susan and Desirée Ciambrone. 2003. "Community care for people with disability: Blurring boundaries between formal and informal caregivers." *Qualitative Health Research* 13(2): 207-226.

Christensen, Janelle and Katharina Heyer. 2004-2005. "Camphill Communities in disparate socio-legal environments: Negotiating community life for adults with developmental disabilities in Germany and the United States." International Institute for Sociology of Law, University of Hawaii.

Eckman, Meghan. 2016. For Centuries, A Small Town Has Embraced Strangers With Mental Illness. NPR. Northeast Public Radio. http://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2016/07/01/484083305/for-centuries-a-small-town-has-embraced-strangers-with-mental-illness, accessed January 16, 2017.

Goldstein, Jackie, Marc Godemont, and Jennifer Crabb. 2000. "Community factors, violence, and the mentally ill: A case study." 108th Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association at Washington, DC. http://faculty.samford.edu/~jlgoldst/violpstr.pdf.

Hart, Norma and Angelika Monteux. 2004. "An introduction to Camphill Communities and the BA in curative education." *Scottish Journal of Residential Child Care* 3(1): 67-74.

Hughes, Rhidian. 2010. "The social model of disability." *British Journal of Healthcare Assistants* 4(10): 508-511.

Morris, Jenny. 2001. "Impairment and disability: Constructing an ethics of care that promotes human rights." *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy* 16(4): 1-16.

Myerhoff, Barbara. 1978. *Number Our Days*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Stack, Carol B. 1975. *All Our Kin: Strategies for Survival in a Black Community*. New York: Harper and Row

Race, David, Kathy Boxall, and Iain Carson. 2005. "Towards a dialogue for practice: reconciling Social Role Valorization and the Social Model of Disability." *Disability and Society* 20(5): 507-521.

Tregaskis, Claire. 2004. *Constructions of Disability: Researching the Interface between Disabled and Non-Disabled People*. London: Routledge.

Tuntiya, Nana. 2006. "Making a case for the Geel Model: The American experience with family care for mental patients." *Community Mental Health Journal* 42(3): 319–330.

Wolfsenberger, Wolf. 2011. "Social Role Valorization: A proposed new term for the principle of normalization." *Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities* 49 (6): 435-440.

Yong, Sun. 2014. *Wie Alles Begann* [videorecording, 90 min.]. Sassen, Germany: Die Lebensgemeinschaft e. V.

"Of Course, I am a Human Being, Too": Nationalism and Contact in the Republic of Turkey and State of Israel

C. Phifer Nicholson Jr.

Wofford College, phifer.nicholson@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the secular and religious nationalisms in the Republic of Turkey and State of Israel as experienced by ethnic and religious minorities in both locales. This ethnographic work focuses on the embodied experiences of individuals in their religious, political, and social entirety, seeking to delve into their lives as an oft-neglected or feared group, and explore their contact (or lack thereof) with members of the majority culture. Semi-structured interviews revealed historical and present-day structures created and maintained through avenues such as media, education, literature, language, and politics that seek to define and separate groups that do not fit the prevailing nationalistic narratives. This is exacerbated by negative contact that is generally oriented around political disagreement and conflict. However, in some cases, positive intergroup contact served to facilitate fundamental changes. Therefore, despite its limitations, contact has the potential to not only reduce prejudice, but also inspire lives of political and humanistic engagement that can undermine the "single stories" stigmatization propagates.

Keywords: nationalism, contact theory, Turkey, Israel-Palestine

"A Racist, Sick Country"

Conversation, shouts, and laughter filled the atmosphere of the non-profit organization in downtown Haifa as I sat in the side office to hear Karim's thoughts. As with almost every conversation I had the privilege of sharing with religious and ethnic minorities in Turkey and Israel-Palestine, I was confronted with surprising, sometimes harsh realities. Karim is a masterful storyteller, and relayed his Palestinian family's tumultuous history in the State of Israel with many smiles and creative flair, yet serious sobriety.[1] His tone took a dark turn as he said:

> This is true in Israel. Everyone is your enemy unless he is of 'your kind.' It's a sick, racist mentality. You can't call it anything different than that. The more that you live in Israel, the more you understand the truth is not nice. It is what it is…it could be nice for some. And Israel is a racist, sick country. And our mentalities…we are raised like that.

Introduction: Nationalism and Contact

In stories like Karim's, it became clear that the nationalisms of the Republic of Turkey and the State of Israel are created and maintained through avenues like media, politics, military, family, and language. Nationalist ideologies like this privilege groups that fit their conception of "an imagined political community," forging spaces where homogeneity is desirable and difference is disdained (Anderson 1992, 6). They point to long histories, or, in the words of Benedict Anderson, "cultural artifacts," be they the fragmented Ottoman past of the Turks or the tortured existence of Jews as a minority group under the National Socialists (Akçam

2014; Anderson 1991, 4; White 2013; Tessler 2009). These two nation-states now are engaged in a constant battle for identity and safety. For example, in Israel novels that explore the nuances and difficulties of Jewish-Arab romance are banned in high schools, while Turkey aims to define its nation "as a singular, unitary nation that is under continual threat from within and without (Or Kashti 2015; White 2013, 59).

Of course, ideologies like Turkish nationalism and Zionism are far from homogenous; they are nuanced, diverse ideas that come from individuals with many political leanings. However, the structures of power and privilege in both locales tend towards militarism and fear. For example, in Turkey, "The orthodox Kemalist vision of the nation imagines solidarity as unity of blood and race…accompanied by intense fear of dissolution of racial unity and thereby national unity (White 2013, 3). Similarly, during the elections in March 2015, Israel's Prime Minister Bibi Netanyahu stated in a video message on Facebook, "The right-wing government is in danger. Arab voters are going en masse to polls. Left-wing NGOs are bringing them on buses…with your help and with God's help, we will form a nationalist government that will protect the State of Israel" (Harkov 2015).

Through these kinds of beliefs and discourses, barriers are erected between people in both locales – be they religious, ethnic, or national – that serve to stigmatize those who do not fit the prevailing definitions of power, safety, and being. The literature of contact theory, with its focus on the effect intergroup contact has on the reduction of prejudice, is therefore an important body of literature to engage with. Gordon Allport's *Nature of Prejudice*, first published in 1954, is one of the earliest explorations of contact, and has become a foundational text. In it, he defines prejudice as, "an antipathy based upon a faulty and inflexible generalization…[that may be] felt or expressed…[or] directed toward a group as a whole, or toward an individual because he is a member of that group (10). Through an analysis of literature including studies on desegregation in New York Housing projects, Allport concluded that contact reduces prejudice when four conditions are met: (1) equal status between groups, (2) shared goals,

(3) intergroup cooperation, and (4) support of law, authorities, or custom (Allport 1954; Pettigrew and Tropp 2006, 752).

To him, these conditions were essential. However, in a sweeping quantitative meta-analytic test of fifty years of diverse contact research, Pettigrew and Tropp argue that Allport's conditions "*facilitate* contact's reduction of intergroup prejudice," but that "mere exposure" between groups also tends to positively affect prejudice (2006, 753 and 766; emphasis mine). Therefore, they propose the data, "conclusively show[s] that intergroup contact can promote reductions in intergroup prejudice. Moreover, the meta-analytic findings reveal that contact theory applies beyond racial and ethnic groups to embrace other types of groups as well" (Pettigrew and Tropp 2006, 768). They conclude by pointing out out that future research ought to focus on possible negative effects that limit the efficacy of contact, such as intergroup anxiety, authoritarianism, and normative restraints (Pettigrew and Tropp 2006, 767).

However, other key studies have identified limiting factors and even negative effects of intergroup contact. For example, an ethnographic study of Indigenous-White relationships in a Canadian mill town revealed that, although positive contact alleviated "old fashioned prejudice " (e.g. crude language or desires for segregation), under the right conditions it may fail to eliminate "group position prejudice" (e.g. sense of superiority as a White, and subsequent rejection of reparations) (Denis 2015, 230). Here, the author argues this is partly due to subtyping, where individuals "who disconfirm stereotypes are viewed as exceptions that prove the rule" (Denis 2015, 222). Furthermore, experimental evidence has shown that positive contact with dominant groups can undermine marginalized groups' engagement in collective action against systemic inequalities if the dominant individual expresses disagreement with the cause or the disadvantaged individual reports high levels or positive contact (Becker et al. 2013; Saguy et al. 2009). In short, these studies suggest that simply eliminating prejudice in response to injustice may not rectify the underlying inequalities that so characterize human societies.

Most research on contact is grounded in experiment or survey. Therefore, something that distinguishes this article is its ethnographic approach, which is rooted in the words and stories of those who live outside the nationalistic definition. I introduce the reader to these people, their stories, and the implications of their stories for both the possibilities and limitations of contact theory. Further, I undertake a broader humanistic engagement with the sometimes metaphysical interactions between people that – when they take place – can serve to undermine and even shatter boundaries forged through years of separation, xenophobia, and suffering. This study contributes to the body of literature exploring the nature of intergroup interactions and adds empirical experiences to the effects that contact (both positive and negative) may have on them. Finally, it explores the forces that serve to limit contact's potential.

I accomplish this by first introducing my ethnographic methodology and the locations of the study. Then, I share two vignettes that will serve as the foundation of these case studies, and subsequently let the stories of my friends paint their picture in a discussion concerning nationalism, fear, barriers, frustrations and, ultimately, subversion. Finally, I conclude with some words concerning their experiences, and the implications they possess for human identity formation and interaction.

Methodology

The relationships from which these stories were gleaned were established in the fall and winter of 2015-2016, at which time I conducted ethnographic field research among ethnic and religious minority communities in Istanbul, Turkey and Haifa, Israel. The goal of this project was to discover if (and if so, how) interpersonal interactions shape the conceptions people possess of the Other, a relation that is often one "of power, of domination, (and) of varying degrees of a complex hegemony" (Said 1978, 5). I chose to focus on the minority experience, for members of minorities are almost constantly made aware of their status, are in steady contact with people of the majority culture, and are often the voices least heard due to the dominating influences around them.

For this study, I conducted seventeen semi-structured interviews, each about 45 minutes to an hour long (see Appendix for interview questions). All the names I use in this paper are pseudonyms, unless I am referring to public figures. The pseudonyms are Arab, Armenian, or Kurdish names to reflect the culture of the individuals they refer to. I interviewed seven people in Istanbul: six Armenians (four female, two male; teachers, a priest, and a doctor) and one Kurdish man (a tour coordinator). I conducted ten interviews in Haifa with Israeli Arab citizens of the State of Israel: seven women and three men who were teachers or workers in a local non-profit organization; six of them were also students at the University of Haifa.

Figure 1: The neighborhood of Tarlabaşı, Istanbul. Photograph by author.

Istanbul is a bustling modern city of approximately 14 million people. It is rich in history and unique in its cultural mosaic. Most Armenians (40,000-70,000), Greeks (2,000-3,000), and Jews (17,400) that remain in Turkey reside within its limits. Ethnic groups tend to live in communities near one another. For instance, Armenians usually reside in neighborhoods such as one called Feriköy. I lived in an apartment in the neighborhood of Tarlabaşı, a neighborhood characterized by minorities such as Kurds, Arabs, and Africans, and made most of my contacts in the Armenian community through a priest I had met during

an academic trip with Wofford College in January 2015. I met other minorities, such as Kurds and Syrians, through contacts with local churches. In total, I spent a month in Istanbul in the fall of 2015

Haifa is the third largest city in the State of Israel, and is the largest in the north. Within its limits, there are approximately 277,000 people. It is lauded as one of the few "mixed" cities in Israel, with an Arab minority making up about 10% of the total population. This demographic is largely localized in the lower city in neighborhoods like Wadi Nisnas, Halisa, and Abbas. Haifa is built up around Mount Carmel, and as one climbs the mountain, the Jewish population rises, as well as socioeconomic status. During my time in Israel, I studied at the University of Haifa and interned at a local non-profit organization, and I met all my Arab interviewees through contacts established at these locations. In total, I spent four months in the State of Israel and the Palestinian West Bank.

Before delving into the case studies, it is worth spending a moment of reflection on my positionality within the study. As mentioned above, I established most of my contacts either through local faith communities I had met on a previous academic trip or through my studies/internship while in Haifa. As such, my interviews in each location were different based on how the contact was established. For instance, in Turkey, many of the interviewees were members of an Armenian community that is generally insular and wary of outsiders given their historical and present realities. However, I knew one priest, and spent my first few days sipping tea with him and discussing topics like politics, faith, and his young (very feisty) husky. We fast became friends, and he soon connected me to various people in the community. Since the recommendation came from a well-regarded referee, individuals were more than willing to participate. Then, I formally interviewed him on one of my final days in Istanbul. I found it to be a remarkably deep conversation as we had established a warm, trust filled connection. This was much the same for my conversation with a Kurdish man I met in a local church community; we spent much of the month swimming together in the Sea of Marmara and exploring Istanbul. When the

time came for an interview, he knew he could trust me as a friend to protect his identity, and we therefore covered topics like the Turkish ban on the Kurdish language (for which he was imprisoned and tortured as a younger man) and nationalistic school curricula.

Since I spent a longer period of time in Haifa, I had more opportunities to establish connections with the local Palestinian community. During my internship, I ate and worked alongside media coordinators, social workers, the residents, and the founders of the non-profit. We would take trips together to deliver Christmas presents to local schools, and put on programs in orphanages a few towns over. At the University, I spent time making meals, wandering the national forest, studying, and walking down the mountain to attend plays with my friends (internationals, Palestinians, and Jews). Therefore, in both of these facets of my experience, the interviewees were individuals I had established relationships with personally, or had been referred to by someone I knew.

Of course, I was still an outsider. My Arabic was workable to the extent of establishing rapport, and in Hebrew I managed nothing more than simple greetings. Some locals would think I was of American Lebanese or Jewish origin given by fair skin and beard, but after a few probing questions my lack of familial ties to the region became clear. As such, every conversation would have been influenced in some way by this fact, but I sought to mitigate its effects through engaging as faithfully as I could with the local culture. Furthermore, in each conversation, I stressed that there were no right or wrong answers, I was not conforming to a specific agenda, and I was simply there to hear their story. These stories powerfully touched me and influenced the focus of this essay.

Case Study 1: Istanbul

The muggy air was thick with smog and sunlight, and I had to move quickly through busy sidewalks as to avoid being late. I was on my way to one of my first interviews arranged

Caption: Figure 2: Facing north, looking down at Haifa's lower city from the famous Baha'I Gardens. The neighborhood of Wadi Nisnas is just west of where this picture was taken. Photograph by author.

by the Armenian priest I had reconnected with a few days before. The man with whom I was to speak, Goryoun, works in the medical field. I had met him during my first visit to Istanbul when he spoke to our Wofford group about the state of minorities in modern-day Turkish politics. I was anticipating this meeting mightily; at that time, he had struck me with his humorous, genial demeanor and serious knowledge of the history and current state of minority communities in Turkey. I knew I stood to learn much from him.

I finally located the building after passing it a couple of times, and made my way off the bustling streets of Istanbul up a flight of stairs. After a few minutes of waiting in the mercifully air-conditioned office, I sat down with Goryoun and his curious assistant; she was interested in discussing some of these topics for the first time was well. We sipped Turkish tea in its famous hourglass-shaped glasses, and a lighthearted, yet soberly illuminating, conversation began:

> I grew up in Istanbul, but my ancestors are from middle Anatolia. My parents could not speak Armenian; couldn't go to an Armenian school. I believed that my grandparents couldn't either, until one day I heard my grandmother speak our mother tongue. I was shocked, "why did you not teach my mother or me?" Her response, "We did not want your mother to have an accent." It was a strategy to be in Turkey. Propaganda forbade the speaking of our language, and they chose to raise their children so that they would not be betrayed as Armenian. Furthermore, when I was growing up, Armenian history was banned by the board of education. Things have changed, but slowly.

He continued on to describe some divisive realities in the Republic of Turkey as it stands:

> Today, Christians and Muslims are identified on their identity cards. This is a way for discrimination, for the police can use that and oftentimes tie Christians in with the United States and anti-Turkish ideas.

> People think that to be an Armenian is not very good, and [Armenians] are therefore encouraged to change. To change yourself to "be Turk," assimilated. There exists an idea of the "Ideal Turk," which is made up of a special race and [a more cultural form of] Sunni Islam. There is also a fake history, and people have begun to be aware [of it]. However, recently fighting has broken out in the east again. Someone in the government said, "it is probably not a Kurd, but an Armenian," [essentially saying] "Kurds could not do this, only the 'bad society,' which are Armenians, could do something like that. [It is an] Armenian trick." It is shameful for the government to turn people [like this].

Our conversation continued on for an hour, spurred on by his assistant's intermittent inquiries and astounded reactions, and Goryoun's own gregarious personality. Tea abounded, laughter colored our language, and other people were called into or just stopped by the office to offer their stories. We seemed to have created a kind of "identity bubble" where all were able to freely discuss and question the backgrounds of each person, and the boundaries that color the Turkish mindset. I then asked a probing question concerning his experiences as an Armenian in daily life, to which he replied:

> I am a doctor and a teacher, I have no accent, and my name is easily confused with Turkish names. Therefore, I am generally not identified as Armenian right away. Furthermore, when I teach, I wear no cross that betrays my identity as an Armenian. Despite all this, when I interact with people, I do not hide who I am. When they learn, their first reaction is very interesting.

"Oh, really?", he said, in a surprised voice for effect. Then, Goryoun moved his hands in space one above the other, leaving a thick gap of nothingness between them and continued:

> These two words are worth a thick book of social meanings and

explanations. They mean that, "you are a good man, or you are a skilled man...how could it be?" For, to be an Armenian is to be worse than an enemy, it is used as a swearing word, [equated with] traitors.

Case Study 2: Haifa

Near the end of my semester at Haifa, I was close to exhaustion. Class work piled up, and last-minute interviews were at the forefront of my mind. My project had taken me from the Bosphorus to the Mediterranean, and my next interviewee, a teacher named Asma, had helped me process many of the nuances of the conflict, the emotional weight of distrust spurred by recent clashes between Israelis and Palestinians, and the stigma-laced rhetoric that colored political and media discourse. Her story was one that I had begun to piece together, but the opportunity to hear it in full was a prospect that both excited and humbled me. I settled into the now-familiar office, where pictures of the old city of Akka and other sights of what I had begun to call, "the Unholy Holy Land," adorned the walls:

> [My Palestinian background] means to me that I was born to parents who came from Palestine; they were kicked out and my mother was able to go back to Jerusalem until '67, but after 1967 she wasn't. They are both considered refugees, so that comes with a certain experience having grown up in a home that was very bitter about the situation. For instance, I grew up hearing about the big home my grandfather owned [in Palestine], which is still standing. I did not see a picture of it until I was older and somebody in the family found a great picture. Everyone in the family now has an enlarged picture of that home in their living room.

I then steered the conversation towards Asma's lived experience as an Arab Palestinian citizen of the State of Israel, asking her if it is hard to be who she is where she resides. She continued, without missing a beat:

> Of course it is hard [to be Palestinian in Israel]. Just open the news. I don't have to open the news; I have Haaretz [a local news outlet] popping up on my iPhone. The parent of the guy who did the shooting the other day [in Tel Aviv] was now arrested. And another person is...I don't know what...a soldier hurt in the West Bank. This is a very political place, and you can't get away from being Palestinian. It's very hard because it isn't a place that is sympathetic at all. At all, if you ask me. Just open the news every morning and listen to it in Hebrew and how they speak. Very, very, very unsympathetic. So it's very hard.

As Asma's past continued to unfold before my eyes, I could feel myself empathizing with her story. As I sat there, soaking in the responses I was hearing to my questions concerning personal identity, story, and struggle, I began to see just how deep one's national and ethnic identity can run, and the power it possesses when instilled by family and solidified through experience. After I asked her a question concerning her interactions or friendships with Jews, something astounding unfolded before my eyes:

> Definitely, loads and loads. I am surrounded by Jewish friends and I live among Jewish people. But I can't really talk about that unless really going further. Where I came from growing up in Libya and Egypt, there were no Jews. The Jews were only the enemy. They were only the Satan, horrible people who took our land and made us refugees....so I have been going through a really long process over the years. I have gone through a long process.

She then carried me along the journey that led her from Egypt, Libya, England, and America to the chair in which she currently sat, a Palestinian professor in an Israeli university:

> I can remember being unable to see a Star of David without cringing. I can remember going the other way when I was eighteen walking outside

a department store in London after seeing a Jewish family with a kippa and all that. Just turning the other direction because I didn't want....I had a bodily reaction. Heart palpitating and such. I can't even explain what was happening to me. It wasn't hatred. I was just very upset. I can trace it back to 1986 when I was at Georgetown University for the summer and was in class with a student who was Israeli. Then the teacher asked us to write a paper about the Arab-Israeli conflict together. It was my worst nightmare. I don't know if I had interacted with Jews at that point. But definitely never an Israeli, a "worse Jew," as some might say. Yet, if I had never met him and realized that he is a father and I am a mother, to see that you can have coffee together and sit together, to connect...I began to see that the human needs to meet. I think one of the worst things to do is to put up walls. Walls only make people wonder what is on the other side and make stories about them. You need to meet them. People need to meet. People are thirsty, they are curious.

Finally, she allowed me to see how these years of experience had culminated to influence her day-to-day life in this deeply divisive place:

> [All of this] doesn't mean that I don't react when some right-winged, strongly Zionist statements are made. But, I can also see the human being behind them...I have to live here with people of different opinions and political stances than me, so I have to keep working on expanding my heart to include all of them. It's a daily challenge.

Unity, the "Ideal," and the Other

The fact that nationalistic ideologies color the prevailing attitudes and discourses of both Turkey and Israel became apparent early on in the interviews collected. They permeate media, literature, and politics. These ideas influence the thought processes of individuals. Even though its rhetoric and ends (be they religious or secular) may be disparate, nationalism is, in many ways, assumed as the central unifying identity.

Dr. Goryoun conveyed that the "philosophy of the 'Ideal Turk...[which] tried to create a new society with a faked ideal...[is localized around a] special race, and [cultural] Sunni Islam." Fadwa, a student at the University of Haifa, when asked to define what "Palestinian" meant to her, said, "It means I don't belong to the flag of Israel. It is a Jewish state and I am not Jewish...I always have felt Palestinian, and never a part of the state of Israel." The frustration at her exclusion from the national identity was felt in the forceful, urgent tone she spoke with. Another student, Nadir, when elucidating his antipathy towards making generalizations based on national and religious identities, stated, "[take] Jews, for example. Judaism is a religion and also a nationality."

This lens can cast a new light when one considers the ethnic definitions of "Turkishness" and Zionism. They are constructed systems of thought, rooted in collective (sometimes fabricated) historical experience, that serve to build a homogenous understanding of race and religion. They, and the people who embrace (or unknowingly benefit from) them, are far from monolithic, and encompass a wide diversity of ideas and orientations towards the Other who does not fit the prevailing nationalistic ideology. However, I do hold that these beliefs may lead to the results revealed by a recent Pew research study in Israel, which indicated a forty-eight percent strong or simple agreement with the phrase, "Arabs should be expelled or transferred from Israel" (Cooperman, Sahgal, and Schiller 2016).

In light of these imagined boundaries, the themes of fear, besetting danger, and enemies "within and without" the national borders continually surfaced in these conversations. At one point, Karim remarked:

> The people's mood in Israel is controlled by politics and the media. You can watch the news, it only speaks on one of two things: [1] The conflict, the

internal Israeli-Palestinian conflict and [2] enemies outside, like Iran, Daesh [ISIS]. All the "bad guys."

He observed that this two-fold, yet remarkably singular focus served to shift the public conscience away from other problems like Israel's shaky economic situation and drastic rises in what he called "non-democratic values," instead offering, "the only thing in focus is terror and more terror and more terror." In Istanbul, a Turkish priest named Father Avedis remarked:

> Sometimes you feel bad because you notice that you are not accepted. You have that feeling sometimes…you will see that to use the name Armenian is to speak about "vital enemy," whereas none of the Armenians are engaged in such kinds of problems. Because there are some problems and someone wants to find a solution by inflection, by seeing Armenians as the enemies of this country…

In both locations, therefore, those who do not fit the nationalistic narrative may become scapegoats when threats, whether real or perceived, arise. These threats possess a unique power to unify groups under one banner, as observed by Karim, who said, "Americans felt more American when 9/11 happened…it [nationalism] was a unifying identity."

Learned Fear

I began to see that conflict and fear create an atmosphere where one can never truly feel safe. Enemies are constantly surrounding you, your family, and your way of life. The nationalistic voice becomes louder, calling the groups to unify in light of these threats, and those that happen to fall outside of a specific definition of ethnicity, race, and religious/ historical origin become objects of fear that cannot be trusted. Another Arab student, Nawal, reflected this reality in very straightforward terms when asked about the general perceptions Jews possess of Arabs according to her experience, "[Arabs are] not trustworthy. Not at all. We [Jews] don't care

how nice you can be; you will never fit in with us, and we will never like you." The distrust of these potential "enemies within," was a pervasive theme in my research and another study with Palestinians conducted in Tel Aviv (Lamont et al. 2016, 267). This "learned fear" can lead to violence, and even cause one to lash out against the wrong target; as Nadir observed, "Many Jews think that all Arabs are out to get them. For instance with the incident…where they smashed a guy's face because they thought he was Arab but he was not. He was a Mizrahi Jew, of Iraqi or Moroccan background. Just looking like an Arab is dangerous here."

These realities lead to the beginning of an interesting discussion as to how this fear and fervor is created and maintained in these locales according to interviewees' experiences. One of the key examples that surfaced at both locations was education. Khalil, another worker at the non-profit in Haifa, said of the Israeli education system:

> You see in Jewish schools that they always talk about Zionism, the Shoah [Holocaust], and so on. But, in the Arab schools you are not allowed to even talk about the Nakba [catastrophe], even though it happened to you and your relatives.

Therefore, the national curriculum is often oriented towards the collective history of the majority culture, even to the length of silencing the historical narrative of twenty percent of the state's population. I witnessed a poignant object lesson in this disparity of language and narrative when walking with friends through a park in the Hadar, a neighborhood halfway up Mount Carmel in Haifa. My eyes moved towards a low-set black monument, and I froze. The words I read: "Haifa Liberation 1948" in English, Hebrew, and Arabic. This could not be farther from the "Nakba" that was 1948 (the creation of the State of Israel) to the Palestinian people, and provides a kind of metaphor for the education system of Israel as well. Further, in Turkey, a Kurdish man named Seriyas stated:

> When you look at the Turkish education systems, it is an amazingly high nationalistic and

racist curriculum that tells them that Greeks and Armenians are the enemy…[in which they] teach the kids a one-sided false history to beware of those enemies that betrayed them

In fact, Başak İnce has shown that the Republic of Turkey's civic education, as recently as 2010, consistently "define[s] the nation as a union of language, religion, race, history, and culture, where the orthodox understanding of religion especially has begun to be counted among the basic characteristics of the nation. By doing this, hatred against non-Muslim citizens and people belonging to different sects of Islam is supported." Furthermore, these textbooks are not characterized by critical thinking, and serve to "create a phobia of 'the enemy' in the minds of young people. Unlike in previous periods, however, the texts warn not only of external enemies but internal ones" (İnce 2012, 124). Dr. Goryoun pointed to this reality when he said:

> Recently fighting has broken out in the east again. Someone in the government said, "it is probably not a Kurd, but an Armenian," [essentially saying] "Kurds could not do this, only the 'bad society,' which are Armenians, could do something like that. [It is an] Armenian trick."

He was visibly frustrated when speaking, betraying exasperation and exhaustion at this fact: tiny minorities like Armenians are labeled as traitors by a public that has likely never met them.

These stories indicate that the structure of education in both Turkey and Israel reflect a perception of threats and differences that is interpreted through the lens of nationalism. This perception is maintained through obfuscation, altered history, or even silence. It works to orient the minds of youth toward the identity believed superior and necessary for survival. Language becomes an eraser or a sword, and power systems are put in place through words that maintain control over the Other.

Language, Military, and (un)Shared Stories

While at the University of Haifa conducting research, my eyes were opened to an interesting reality. After a few months there, I had begun to learn the markers of Jews and Arabs (e.g. olive-drab military uniforms for Jews and Palestinian Kuffiyehs for Arabs). The Israeli school system until university is segregated, as the government supports two separate school systems for Jews and Arabs (Lamont et al. 2015, 200). As such, one could imagine that attending university would be a prime opportunity for intergroup interactions to take place. Still, during my walks to class, I began to observe that Jews and Arabs rarely grouped, associated, or simply "hung out" with each other. One of the interviewees, Nawal, confirmed my suspicion. More interviews revealed that, alongside education, two other important realities were reinforcing the boundaries between these young people in the Jewish State: military service and the Hebrew language.

Both the Turkish and Israeli military play unique roles in the formation and maintenance of the national identities of both states. However, the interviews revealed some interesting differences in the military's influence on the minority experience in both locales. The Turkish/Armenian example I will save until later, while Israel-Palestine I will address here.

When asked if she had any Jewish friends, Nadia, a student at the University, said:

> No…some I guess I learn with. But, I don't have any common ground with any Jewish students here. [Our relationships] don't get very personal. Most are older, usually twenty-three to twenty-four, because they serve in the military, take time off after their service [before entering university]…

Another student named Leila remarked, "[Jewish students] are so much older than us. They are twenty-five and older."

After high school graduation, every Jew, both male and female, is obligated to serve in the military (thirty-two and twenty-four months, respectively). Arabs (except for Druze), however, serve only on a volunteer basis and generally opt out of military service, for to serve is generally viewed as a deep betrayal to their people and the Palestinian cause. Also, Arabs and Jews often take a "gap year" before entering university, with Arabs generally arriving on campus at the age of nineteen and Jews twenty-one and up. Therefore, the life experiences of these students sitting together in classes and the same coffee shops are drastically different. Every Jewish student spent the last two years or more serving in the military: going through physical training, drill, and possibly working in violent areas of conflict between settlers and Palestinians in the occupied West Bank. Different stories are shared. Inside jokes, shared military language, and, as Nadia said, similar experiences within Jewish circles lowers the amount of "common ground" students from these two groups share. This doesn't even take into account the antipathy many Arabs feel towards the military as a result of the occupation of the West Bank, frequent confrontations with Gaza, and the like. Therefore, the expressly nationalistic military requirement in the State of Israel serves not only to separate Jews and Arabs for a couple years of service, but also for years after in university and beyond, as some jobs make army service a pre-requisite, regardless "of its relevance to the work performed" (Lamont et al. 2015, 238).

The Hebrew language operates as another barrier to interaction. In the late 19th century, Eliezar Ben Yehuda championed and pioneered the Modern Hebrew language among the Jewish immigrants to Palestine, which is now the first language of every Jew in Israel (Tessler 2009, 67). It is therefore a key facet of the Zionist movement and, by extension, the nationalistic bedrock of Israel. This is especially important in light of Israel's Arab minority, whose first language is the Palestinian dialect of Arabic. After commenting on the problem of military service, Nadia continued, "I also find it very difficult to express myself in Hebrew. It is hard to go deep. I don't deliberately limit myself, but it just happens...I try and try, but

there is a barrier." It seemed that her experience was one of frustrated communication. Another student, Nur, commented, "My relationship with the Jews in psychology class is not as strong because my Hebrew is not strong. When I start to speak, I start muttering." When asked if she has Jewish friends, Leila answered:

> I don't have Jewish friends, because my Hebrew is too bad. Sometimes I think that the Jewish people don't interact with us because they feel there is a line between Arabs and Jews. I mean, they talk to you, and if they approach me and I am able to talk to them, then great. But, my Hebrew is bad. I'm really bad.

In short, these three individuals found a pre-existing barrier to connection in the Hebrew language. I was astonished by some of the Arab friends I made who, at the age of nineteen, were fluent in Arabic, Hebrew, and English. Still, most Palestinians were not confident in Hebrew. Also, it is rare to find a Jew who speaks Arabic and, in conversation with Arabs, I found that Jews who speak Arabic are often distrusted, as it is (often correctly) perceived that the reason a Jew in Israel learns Arabic is because they served in military intelligence. Therefore, the Modern Hebrew language has served to bolster the nationalistic ideology of the Jewish State. Further, it widens and deepens the gaps between members of the majority and the ever-increasingly invisible Other.

"Oh, Really?"

Thus far, I have demonstrated that the deep-seated realities of the nationalistic ideologies that color the Republic of Turkey and the State of Israel are pervasive; they are created and maintained through education, media, political discourse, language, military, rewritings of history, and more. Fundamentally, these barriers are erected to maintain purity and power through defining differences between individual human faces, even if, phenotypically, they are essentially the same (Lamont et al. 2015, 196). Yet, despite all of the barriers that exist in these societies to prevent meetings, "different" human faces do meet. The language

of contact theory lends a helpful hand in analyzing these interactions.

As mentioned earlier, the interviews in Istanbul revealed an interesting relationship between the Armenian minority and military service. Although the military is a powerful proponent of the nationalistic ideology of Turkey, minorities like Greeks, Jews, Kurds, and Armenians are obligated to serve in the military after finishing high school at eighteen. This time therefore becomes one of the only opportunities for many Turks encounter these tiny communities, generally localized in major cities like Istanbul and Ankara. One young Armenian teacher, Aghavni, when asked about any positive changes she had seen in Turks after meeting them, said:

> None personally, my friends are not people that I meet the first time. They already have Armenian friends and say, "I know you." But my friends in the military have told me something about their time. They have always said, people [Turks] said, "Oh, you are Armenian? We didn't know you are like us!" My friends and I think that this is because they came from families that talked bad about Armenians, or because in school, history lessons generally show that Armenians are our [Turks'] enemy. But when they meet us, they say, "Oh, you are like us!"

Another teacher, Nazeli, recounted, "When my husband was doing his military service, he had this friend who didn't know he was Armenian for a certain period of time. When he did find out, he said, 'No way, you can't be an Armenian.'" Therefore, obligatory military service in the Republic of Turkey can actually enable the face-to-face meeting of identities that might otherwise never connect. It is worthwhile to note that, in the case of the Turkish military, all four of Allport's conditions – equal status, shared goals, intergroup cooperation, and support of law – are met. The context of the military is, in fact, similar to the earliest studies on contact, which were conducted in the U.S. Merchant Marine and the Philadelphia police force (Brophy 1946; Kephart

1957). Therefore, the "facilitative" nature of his conditions is illustrated in this case (Pettigrew and Tropp 2006, 553).

A characteristic of these encounters the interviewees pointed to is the surprise that Turks exhibit after meeting Armenians. In the words of Father Avedis, "If we sit next to each other, you will not be able to notice who is Greek, who is Armenian, who is Jewish, who is Turkish...because we are all belonging to Anatolia." That is, there are no easy physical differences with which one can distinguish "origins," for each group possesses a long history in the same land. I kept hearing the word "mixer" when locals (Turks and otherwise) would refer to Istanbul's diversity in particular. Father Avedis continued on to say, with a measure of artistic flair, that when people realize he is Armenian, it is as if:

> [They] are looking at you as a person from space, you are a lion...those persons are looking at you as if you are a lion. Coming from space. "Really, you are Armenian? Are you serious?" Of course, I am a human being too.

Avedis gave the same emphasis to the acute moment of encounter and realization that Goryoun did. That is, the, "oh, really?" moment, and Goryoun's assessment that:

> These two words are worth a thick book of social meanings and explanations. They mean that, "you are a good man, or you are a skilled man...how could it be?" For, to be an Armenian is to be worse than an enemy, it is used as a swearing word, [equated with] traitors.

This acute moment of shock and surprise points to the undermining, and even reshaping, of the ethno-nationalistic barriers so reinforced in Turkish society.

Of course, this analysis cannot assess whether subtyping takes place in these above interactions; that is, after Turks have this moment of surprise, whether they subsequently rule out the encounter as one where "the exception proves the rule". For, instead of exploring majority group opinions and prejudices, this study focuses on the

experiences of historically marginalized groups (Denis 2015, 222). This is why I shared Asma's story above. As can be seen, she grew up in a reality that, for understandable reasons, cast the Jewish people, especially Israelis, as "the Satan, horrible people that took our land and made us refugees." The Other, the Jewish people, were rendered invisible to her world. This was accentuated by the reality of the refugee camp; no Jews ever resided or entered a place like her home. Her upbringing, with stories like that of her grandfather's beautiful yet unreachable home, cast the only vision of them.

This changed when she moved from the Middle East to London, where this contact with the Jewish family at the department store spurred a kind of, "bodily reaction. [With my] heart palpitating and such." The mere sight of this family resulting in a literal physical reaction. Then, when required to work with an Israeli in a class concerning the Arab-Israeli conflict (Asma's self-described "worst nightmare"), her first true interaction with her people's "enemy" helped her realize, "that he is a father and I am a mother, to see that you can have coffee together and sit together, to connect..." This, among other key encounters, led Asma to believe and truly live out this phrase: "the human needs to meet." Furthermore, she has oriented her life around a path of compassionate listening, where you learn to "explore your own responses" to a myriad of stories, beliefs, ideas, and the people behind them. In this case, Allport's conditions again facilitated a change.

What is truly remarkable, however, is the response she had. One story Asma shared described an encounter at a conference where she heard the story of an Israeli woman in her twenties whose role in the military was to:

> Pick up the pieces of bodies after a bus explosion...I find it hard to even talk about. At the end, when we give feedback to the people we listened to, I remember looking at her and saying that I am so sorry this has been her experience. That I had kids her age that are spending their time exploring the world, going out with friends...and I just couldn't imagine

her at such a tender age doing the kind of work she was doing. And she immediately teared up, and you could see that there was a connection made between her and me on a human level. I was somebody who got her suffering. For me, this was an eye-opener. When looking at somebody who was a soldier, it would be easy to say "big deal" or "serves you right" [for serving] or whatever. "You want to steal somebody's country..." I could have gone that route. "You will pay the price." Or, you can really see the suffering. Asma's unique, hard-earned ability to "see the suffering" reflects a receptive heart and mind that has grown to see through the definitions of ethno-nationalism and the myriad of stories it tells. The Other that had so characterized her experience simply became "another." Furthermore, these contacts have inspired Asma to dedicate her life to the breaking of barriers, all the while advocating for justice in a society that is characterized by deep structural inequalities.

"...How Really Beautiful Life Is"

Khalil, the director of a local non-profit organization, told a story about his father that illustrates an active, ethically motivated intergroup contact:

> One of the first stories that my parents had to deal with was a Jewish homeless man. He basically would curse my father every time he passed by, because of him [Khalil's father] being an Arab. Then my father succeeded in making contact with him, and his anger toward Arabs was not because he knew Arabs but because it is what he grew up with, that Arabs are our enemy... [and] he had lost so much from personal problems. Once my father started talking with him, getting in touch, the person opened himself

and started talking about his struggles and how he needed treatment.

After that, Khalil remarked, "He [the man] no longer cursed, was happy to get support and was eventually placed in an elderly house. Yet, he continued to visit us here, so this was only the beginning." A similar type of engagement was echoed by Father Avedis, who remarked:

> My aim is, when I wake up every morning, to go to school to teach the students how to be a person, a person who is just, a person who in any case [even if he has enemies], loves, to be a person learning about the culture, about the identity, and using the culture and identity of his own, mixing to the culture of the community of the land where he lives.

Therefore, interpersonal interactions, whether sought out or stumbled upon, can have a profound, powerful impact on the participants, sometimes going so far as to dramatically reshape one's conception of reality, even if all four conditions of contact theory are not perfectly met (such as equal status, shared goals, and, some may argue, support of law and culture) in the case of Khalil's father. And, again, these altered conceptions may facilitate a change in lifestyle (whether substantial or small) that reflects a continual commitment to resisting interpersonal prejudice and politically reinforced conflict. However, this is by no means placing the onus on less advantaged groups to somehow shoulder this responsibility. It is simply an example of contact's potential effects on the lives of both privileged and historically disadvantaged groups.

I will share one last experience. Nawal told me a story of protest, violence, tear gas, sound grenades, and horses that left

scars on, and in, her. She shared this memory with suspense, pride, and sadness. I could tell that the reality of near-constant conflict was beginning to weigh on her just as it is on so many others (both Jews and Arabs), a weight that is reflected in Khalil's words; "it [the conflict] makes a daily struggle. Instead of investing more time in developing your situation, your children, your surroundings, you invest most of your powers in dealing with this conflict." In short, these political realities (of police brutality and consistent marginalization) consistently exacerbate the divisions of these societies. Furthermore, these particular types of negative, antagonistic contact may serve to reinforce prejudice. As such, there are very real cases of violence, injustice, and disregard, that, when coupled with face-to-face interaction, actually deepen wounds and "inhibit the potentially positive effects of contact" (Pettigrew and Tropp 2015, 767).

Yet, Nawal's demeanor changed when I asked about her relationships with Jews. She told me, "I have two really good Jewish friends. We are very close. I met them when they were fourteen and fifteen. One is from Haifa, so could have many interactions with Arabs when growing up, and the other is from a town that doesn't have many [Arabs]." When they met, they were surprised to learn that Nawal wasn't Jewish, which she revealed to them by stating, "stop occupying me," in her self-described "super straightforward, hurtfully straightforward [manner where] I often use the conflict as a subject of humor."

In spite (or perhaps because) of her bluntness, they are friends to this day. This then led me to ask her what difference she sees in these two individuals, as opposed to the majority of Jews she interacts with. She answered:

> That is a difficult question. I think

it's them; their personalities. It wasn't the context in which we met [at a conference], because I met other nice people there but I have kept in touch with these two. Both won't serve in the army, which is a big deal...one is male and the other female. They're doing something less than the army, not IDF but still serving the country.

I continued to press, asking Nawal if it could be their parents:

No, no, their parents are very very... no it isn't their parents. The girl, when she told her mom [that she wouldn't serve], she said "if you don't go, I will kick you out of the house." The guy once invited me over but decided against it because his father is a policeman, and therefore wouldn't like me that much. I don't know...it's a very interesting question. They're both very, very unique. They both have gone through hard things in their lives. To answer your question fully I would have to know everything in their life. Yet I have seen them growing and have grown with them for two, three, four years now. They're just, they're very nice. They're very kind. They have gone through really hard things but love life. It sounds really cliché but they really love life and see all the goodness...they love the world and love life. I think when someone really understands the point of life and understands how much beauty is around us, I don't think he would get stuck on...I don't like calling the conflict a little thing...but compared to the huge things around us it's really a little thing. Come on. Love each other. Settle down. Khalas [Arabic for stop/enough], it's been sixty years, let's just stop and take a moment to appreciate how really beautiful life is. I think my two friends really understand that.

I will not (and, frankly, probably cannot) add

much to these words. However, Nawal and her friends are further examples of how, despite the deep-rooted nature of nationalism, individuals can transcend such definitions and boundaries to, in her words, "stop and take a moment and appreciate how really beautiful life is" through embodied, transformational intergroup contact.

"I Think I'll Just End With That"

Nigerian novelist, nonfiction, and short story writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie once stated in a talk, "The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story" (Adichie 2009). This concept of the "single story" sheds much light on the experiences of the participants. Through these interviews and a myriad of other interactions, I began so see just how powerful and deep the simple, stereotypic stories of the Other run. Armenians become "traitors" and Palestinians become "terrorists," and are thereby perceived to lack deep, basic human yearnings such as safety, meaning, and belonging. However, it appears that positive intergroup contact can facilitate fundamental changes in the minds and actions of individuals; in this case, those who live outside a position of power. And, furthermore, I argue that these changes motivate ways of life that seek to communicate an alternative to the "single story" through political action and simple friendship.

This idea can be applied to human experience in every culture and nation, as human institutions and thought are remarkably adept at defining and dividing. They utilize religious belief, socioeconomic sequestering, racial prejudice and disdain, and, as pointed to in this paper, secular and religious nationalism to foster these imagined boundaries. For example, the concept of race and ethnicity is unintelligible to science; they are modern conceptions that possess no grounding in empirical reality. These constructions are motivated by a desire for safety and simplicity, both of which require a "single story" of the Other that can be easily grasped, understood, generalized, and applied.

These stories resist competing narratives, eliciting surprise, disbelief, anger, and even deep physiological reactions, as was the case for Asma. However, this resistance, if overcome (or transcended, if I may), can open the individual to a world beyond his or her own: a world that is characterized by a compassionate self-awareness, thoughtful engagement, and appreciation for beauty found in the story – and the face – of another. Again, it may not solve every aspect of political disparity and systemic injustice, as it is important, "both in theory and in practice, to recognize that intergroup harmony per se does not necessarily lead to intergroup equality" (Saguy et al. 2009, 120). But, I would argue it is an important step in that direction. Future studies might continue to expand upon the potential negative aspects of positive contact, types of contact that exacerbate prejudice, and the ways in which intergroup harmony can be deepened to include justice-motivated political advocacy.

In light of the findings of this study, I also believe that ethnographic forays into the complexities of human contact might benefit from the inclusion of other humanistic disciplines such as philosophy and theology, which may lend lenses and language to stories like the one Asma told about the moment she shared with a young Jewish veteran:

> ...she immediately teared up, and you could see that there was a connection made between her and me on a human level. I was somebody who got her suffering... [Now I seek to be one who] can really see the suffering.

Then, as we closed, she shared:

> In fact, I will tell you – as I know you are interested in religion and spirituality – compassionate listening...is, to me, a spiritual path. That is spiritual work. Even though I am not a practicing Muslim, Christian, or Jew, there is still a very strong spiritual way to how I see the world. I think I'll just end with that.

So, I will seek to end in a similar way, with some words from the 20th century Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas. His treatise, *Totality and Infinity*, explores the divisive nature of totality; that is, systems of thought, belief, and power that render the Other essentially invisible, and the transcendence of the human face, which, for him, possesses an infinite power to resist and undermine totalistic construction. He writes that we, "receive from the Other beyond the capacity of the I, which means exactly: to have the idea of infinity... [which] brings me to more than I can contain" (Levinas 1979, 51). Perhaps, then, the answer to the power of the "single story" lies in expansion. That is, the introduction of a new narrative – a human one – that opens one's world to the tapestry of stories that shape and characterize the various complexities of lived experience.

Appendix A

I used semi-structured ethnographic interviews that pertained to the individual's ethnic/religious identity and personal relations with the majority culture.

Questions:

1. What is your religious/ethnic background?

2. Where are you from?

3. Where do you practice your religion?

4. Is it easy to be you where you live/where you are from?

5. What, if any, difficulties have you as a religious/ethnic minority?

6. Do you have many friends outside of your community? If so, where have these relationships formed?

7. Have you found that these friendships have changed how people of the majority view your religious/ethnic community? Vice versa?

Acknowledgements

First of all, thank you to President Nayef Samhat, whose decision regarding the Presidential Scholarship provided the funding for this project. Thank you to countless professors, including but not limited to Courtney Dorroll, Phil Dorroll, A.K. Anderson, Jedediah Anderson, Byron McCane, Carol Wilson, and Ellen Goldey. All of you served to challenge and guide me during my studies at Wofford College, when conducting research overseas, and in the writing of this article. Finally, thank you to each participant in this study. Your stories and friendship not only made this study possible - they have added tremendous meaning to my life.

Endnotes

1. In this paper, I use the terms "Palestinian" and "Arab" interchangeably. In both cases, I am referring to "Palestinian Citizens of the State of Israel;" Palestinians who have Israeli Citizenship and comprise twenty percent of the state's total population.

References

Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. 2009. "The Danger of a Single Story," *TED*. https://www.ted.com/talks chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story

Akçam, Taner. 2014. *Young Turks' Crimes Against Humanity: The Armenian Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing in the Ottoman Empire*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Allport, Gordon. 1958. *The Nature of Prejudice (Abridged)*. New York: Doubleday Anchor Books.

Anderson, Benedict. 1991. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism.* London: Verso.

Becker, Julia C., Stephen C. Wright, Micah E. Lubensky, and Shelley Zhou. 2013."Friend or Ally: Whether Cross-Group Contact Undermines Collective Action Depends of What Advantaged Groups Say (or Don't Say*)." Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*. 39 (4): 442-455.

Brophy, I. N. 1946. "The luxury of anti-Negro prejudice." *Public Opinion Quarterly*. 9 (4): 456-466.

Cooperman, Alan, Sahgal, Neha, and Schiller, Anna. 2016. "Israel's Religiously Divided Society," Pew Research Center.

Denis, Jeffrey S. 2015. "Contact Theory in a Small-Town Settler-Colonial Context: The Reproduction of Laissez-Faire Racism in Indigenous-White Canadian Relations." *American Sociological Review.* 80(1): 218-242.

Harkov, Lahav. 2015. "Netanyahu warns: the Left is busing Arabs to vote, the Right is in Danger." *The Jerusalem Post*, March 2015. Accessed April 2016. http://www.jpost.com/Israel-Elections/Netanyahu-warns-The-Left-is-busing-Arabs-to-vote-the-Right-is-in-danger-394176

İnce, Başak. 2012. "Citizen education in Turkey: inclusive or exclusive," *Oxford Review of Education* 38 (2): 115-131.

Lamont, Michèle, Graziella Moraes Silva., Jessica S. Welburn, Joshua Guetzkow, Nissim Mizrachi, Hanna Herzog, and Elisa Reis. 2015. *Getting Respect: Responding to Stigma and Discrimination in the United States, Brazil, and Israel.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Levinas, Emmanuel. 1979. *Totality and Infinity.* Hingham: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers.

Kashi, Or. 2015. "Israel Bans Novel on Arab-Jewish Romance From Schools for 'Threatening Jewish Identity." *Haaretz*, December 2015. Accessed April 2016. http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-1.694620

Kephart, W. M. 1957. *Racial factors and Urban Law Enforcement*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Pettigrew, Thomas F., and Linda R. Tropp. 2006. "A Meta-Analytic Test of Intergroup Contact Theory." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 90(5): 751-83.

Saguy, Tamar, Nicole Tausch, John F. Doviodo, and Felicia Pratto. "The Irony of Harmony: Intergroup Contact Can Produce False Expectations for Equality." *Psychological Science* 20 (1): 114-121.

Said, Edward. 1978. *Orientalism*. New York: Random House, Inc.

Tessler, Mark. 2009. *A History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

White, Jenny. 2013. *Muslim Nationalism and the New Turks*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Visible, Invisible: A Portrait of the Intersection Between Whiteness and Moroccanness in the Netherlands

Oliver Dougherty

Maastricht University, oliver.a.dougherty@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This article explores the influence of appearance on experiences of race and racism in the Netherlands. It is based on one semi-structured, in-depth interview with a 20 year-old performing arts student who, despite his outward appearance of being white, has Moroccan heritage. The intersection between whiteness and Moroccan identity in the case of the interviewee is considered in terms of the Dutch national image, racial passing and Dutch visual culture. The results of the in-depth interview provide insight into the exclusivity of the categories of white and Moroccan in the image of Dutch identity, as well as the claims to a post-race Netherlands.

"I am just a guy from the Hague" -– Najib, the interviewee of my research.

From this quotation, what is the physical image that would be expected of Najib? If I were to ask a Dutch person to respond, I can imagine a number of qualities that may be mentioned in the dominant image: tall, blonde hair and blue eyes, for example. However, while probably not explicitly named, one quality that is akin to these characteristics would emerge as implicit: whiteness. Indeed, from the discourse of belonging examined by Essed & Trienekens (2008) that illustrated a stunted welcome of people of color into the Netherlands, they have concluded that whiteness is implicitly pictured as essential to the image of Dutch identity. Whiteness, therefore, becomes a category that excludes cultures and nationalities that are imagined as non-white in the Netherlands, particularly in ethnic minorities. In this sense, the Dutch and ethnic minorities become placed in a binary as two irreconcilable categories that are racialized as white and non-white, which problematizes and provides a lack of space for the acknowledgment of identities that occupy both positions (Essed & Trienekens 2008). In turn, two elements may be surprising for the average (white) Dutch person to learn in regard to this quotation: firstly, that it is from someone with Moroccan heritage and, secondly, that he fits within the aforementioned dominant white image.

While culturalist arguments may claim to reject biological determinism, the probable confusion at learning of the impossible intersection between whiteness and Moroccanness in the case of the interviewee hints at an internalized understanding of race in the Netherlands that is unconsciously dependent upon the visible (Siebers & Denissen 2015). In fact, according to Dienke

Hondius' (2014) *Black Dutch Voices: Reports from a Country that leaves Racism Unchallenged*, discourse of race in terms of skin color is specifically avoided: the Dutch "don't do" race, implying that the country is in fact "post-race". Despite the perceived irrelevance of skin color, however, her corroboration of 72 interviews with people living in the Netherlands of Afro-Caribbean descent reveals that their appearance most often formed the basis of and therefore largely determined their experiences of racism. As such, skin color and appearance are crucial to the experiences of racism in the Netherlands. In light of the visible foundation of race in the Netherlands explored by Hondius (2014), my research has investigated the following question: *How does appearance influence experiences of race and racism in the Netherlands?*

The problematic nature of appearance in racialized discourse of culture and ethnicity surfaces in specific identities in the Netherlands. To explore the intricacies of one such identity, I conducted an in-depth, semi-structured interview with Najib (not his real name). Najib is a 20-year-old performing arts student who was born and raised in The Hague. Despite an Arabic name and Moroccan heritage from his mother, Najib visually appears to be, and considers himself, a white Dutch man and indeed "just a guy from The Hague". The comprehension, negotiation and re-negotiation of Najib's racial identity both by himself as well as by wider Dutch society, can be positioned within discourse (or lack thereof) of race in the Netherlands. The understanding and explanation of Najib's impossible racial identity in a supposedly "post-race" Netherlands will therefore be the aim of my research, and will be discussed within this paper in terms of the Dutch national image, racial passing and Dutch visual culture. Firstly, however, it is important to establish a definition of race in the contemporary context of the Netherlands.

Defining Race

It should be noted that this research is informed by a definition of race from a critical whiteness studies perspective. In particular, Robin DiAngelo (2012) considers race to be a system of unequal power between white people and people of color in terms of history, culture and institutions. Such a definition moves beyond the consideration of only isolated acts of racism, understanding it instead as a broader system into which all of society is interwoven and which is fundamentally defined by the multi-layered dominance of white people. It is among this broader system of race that Najib's navigation of his whiteness shall be interpreted.

The process of racialization should be considered when focusing on race in the context of the Netherlands. While the concept of race is largely borne out of efforts by nineteenth century Western biologists and anthropologists to establish an order of racial categories which saw Caucasians labelled as superior and which functioned to justify colonialism, ongoing processes of "Othering" have transformed the concept to suit a contemporary context (Essed, 1996). In fact, race has in recent years been implicit in discussions of culture and ethnicity, particularly in the rise of migrant-hostile discourse and dynamics in Western Europe, including in the Netherlands (Essed & Trienekens, 2006). Importantly, migrant-hostile discourse depends on a target not defined by a racial category, but rather by one that is, for example, religious, national or cultural. Nevertheless, such discourse maintains qualities which are reminiscent of racism connected to colonial history.

Essed (2006) suggests the term 'racial-ethnic' to account for the convergence of racialization and ethnicization in the Netherlands. She notes two particular national groups – Turks and Moroccans – who migrated to the Netherlands in the 1980's in the context of post-war migration policies and economic crisis and parallels their subordinate image and treatment in the Netherlands to those of the Surinamese, who are from a former Dutch colony. In essence, she recognizes that groups that are tied together by concepts such as nationality, migrant status or religion may be racialized such that they experience a form of racism that both departs from and is intricately related to that which was fabricated by nineteenth century Western sciences. Although it is a useful heuristic in understanding a contemporary form of racism, the term 'racial-ethnic' shall not be employed throughout this ethnographic portrait, as the confounding of concepts such as culture with race shall be discussed more specifically. Nevertheless, in terms of Najib's navigation of his racial identity, what is important to underline is that while Moroccans are a national group, they have become racialized because of their specific history in the Netherlands which thereby distinguishes them from the broader and perhaps more traditional racial category of North Africans.

Limitations

With a sample size of one, it is important to reflect upon the limitations of my research. In fact, it is not possible to draw broad conclusions about the mechanisms of race in the Netherlands from one sole interview. However, this does not imply that this research is irrelevant for Dutch critical race studies. Instead, rather than to generalize, the aim of this research is to provide insight into the operation of appearance in the experiences of race and racism in the Netherlands in corroboration with previous research, particularly that of Hondius (2014). In fact, one point which the ethnographic portrait format of this study illuminates is that external validity emerges in qualitative research not through generalizability, but rather transferability. Indeed, an ethnographic portrait may exhibit significant transferability when the findings are rich and detailed enough to be transferable to other settings. One notable example is Paloma Gay y Blasco's *The Fragility of Cosmopolitanism: A Biographical Approach* (2010) which ethnographically analyses the position of Agata, a Gitano woman from Spain who fled her abusive husband and now lives in a

multicultural setting with her Moroccan lover. In this ethnographic portrait, the presence of a singular research subject is not a drawback but rather a strength; it is the subjective, uncommon and unique qualities of Agata's lived experiences and identity which position her in an insightful standpoint that allows for rich findings and thus transferability. With the valuable standpoint of Najib in mind, it is clear that an ethnographic portrait focusing on his lived experiences and opinions may likewise render the findings significantly transferable to other settings.

As such, while the research of Hondius (2014) provides an extensive and comprehensive overview of racism in the Netherlands in terms of its visible foundation, there is also value in a single portrait of racial experience, particularly when the subject occupies a uniquely insightful standpoint. Indeed, the portrait of Najib provides one in-depth exploration of the subjective and lived experience of race and racism in the Netherlands from the valuable perspective of a minority-privileged identity; that is, Najib is a minority because of his Moroccan heritage, but privileged because of his whiteness. Furthermore, Hondius (2014) argues that while racism is framed by mainstream Dutch ideas purely as blatant and discrete acts, it more commonly appears in passive forms which are nonetheless significantly more difficult to research because of their seemingly undetectable nature. In particularly, in the Dutch context, Hondius (in Essed & Hoving 2014) distinguishes between passive tolerance and passive intolerance; the allowance of space for cultural Others to engage in traditions and customs as opposed to the rejection of these practices without discussion around their particularities respectively. Nevertheless, she argues that passive tolerance and passive intolerance are rather similar because both function to reject discussion around cultural differences that thereby reinforces them as essential, irreconcilable and definitive. In fact, it is the suppression of action around issues of cultural difference for mainstream Dutch society that defines these forms of (in)tolerance as passive. In this sense, forms of passive (in)

tolerance produce a somewhat concealed racism, which allows the Netherlands to make claims to their supposedly "post-race" state. Therefore, a portrait of Najib's particular subjective experience is significant considering his embodiment of the "impossible" intersection between whiteness and Moroccanness. This information may thus act as a gateway into research of these more passive mechanisms of racism in the Netherlands that are connected to the fabrication of a "post-race" country. In fact, Najib's hybrid racial identity materializes the precisely inessential, reconcilable and indefinitive nature of the cultural differences between Dutch and Moroccans people, and thus undoes notions of passive tolerance and intolerance merely through his existence. Ultimately, while generalizations cannot be drawn solely from the ethnographic portrait of Najib, the analysis of his subjective experiences may extend upon insight into certain mechanisms of race in the Netherlands in terms of visible appearance that extend from the research of Hondius (2014) and contribute to its transferability to other settings.

When attempting to understand the location of Najib's racial identity, my own subjective position should be considered. Notably, I am a white Australian male whose Dutch is quite poor which limits my intrinsic knowledge of Najib's identity. This limited position in my research gives rise to a number of prejudices which I cannot avoid. However, there is value in having an outsider's perspective. Indeed, having been raised in a society in which the discourse of race is more salient than in the Netherlands, I have perhaps been enabled to make more nuanced claims about racism than the average Dutch person. In any case, I have aimed to maintain as much credibility (Guba &Lincoln 1981) as possible when connecting my claims with Najib's opinions.

"The Moroccans on the Corner of the Street": The Dutch (National) Image as White and not Moroccan

The Dutch national image has two key qualities: liberalism and tolerance (Weiner 2014). The

essential position of these qualities in the Dutch national image has given rise to the post-racial model that posits that race hierarchies and conflict have disappeared at the meta-level – that is, in terms of overarching societal morals and values – and therefore that society should move towards colorblind discourse that focuses on individualism (Sundquist 2012). As such, this image allows the Netherlands to picture itself as a nation that is fundamentally not racist. More specifically, in line with this national image, race is framed in the Netherlands as a false sense of hierarchy based on biological determinism, which therefore places racism as limited to the far-right or far in the past (Lentin 2008). Such a framing of race has contributed to Hondius' (2014) claim to the lack of racial discourse in the Netherlands, since the consistent perpetration of racism outside of the dominant Dutch image means that the topic supposedly does not deserve significant attention. Moreover, the encouragement of a colorblind attitude towards race relations inherently overlooks the integrally white characteristic of Dutch identity. Indeed, because the language of race is suppressed in the post-race era, the identification and discussion of the essential whiteness in the Dutch national image becomes problematic. As I will demonstrate, these issues clearly come to surface in the case of Najib.

The incongruence between Najib's Moroccan heritage and appearance produces an experience of whiteness that is uniquely different from the image of Dutch identity. Discourse of a post-race Netherlands has interacted with his treatment by other white Dutch people to influence his own self-concept. Najib made it clear from the beginning of the interview that he conceived himself as a white Dutch person, describing himself as "just the guy with blonde hair and blue eyes from the Netherlands". As such, his Moroccan heritage is concealed in his own self-concept. This self-concept emerges within a context in which many linguistic limitations of mixed ethnic identity in the Netherlands exist. Indeed, although Najib embodies a racially hybrid identity, Dutch terminology of ethnic identity problematizes and makes it difficult to define

oneself as a hybrid; the label of Dutch-Moroccan, for example, is not easily accepted by Dutch language and society (Weiner 2014). These linguistic facets may inform part of Najib's self-description as totally Dutch with the effect of conforming him to the dominant national image.

In essence, the Dutch image can be seen to be structured and interacting with Najib in such a way that he is led to minimize his Moroccan identity. However, this minimization of his Moroccan heritage is also prompted by the visual markers of race that present him as Dutch; that is, primarily, his whiteness. Indeed, when asked how Dutch society may encourage him to distance himself from his Moroccan background, Najib explained that "it is not pulled out of me. The Moroccan side is not stimulated, but I think that is also a consequence of me not visually being my Moroccan side". Here, Najib explains that one reason why Dutch society and its citizens do not bring out his Moroccan side stems from the fact that his appearance cooperates with the white Dutch image and not the image of a Moroccan man. With whiteness acting as a visual marker which communicates to others about Najib's race and identity, it may be considered a performance in a Goffmanian sense. In fact, Goffman (1959) conceives of a performance as all aspects of an individual that are presented to and influence others. By performing whiteness, therefore, Najib communicates his position in the white Dutch image.

In fact, this image is well illustrated by the Dutch linguistic dichotomy of autochthone and allochthone. Typically, the former refers to indigenous, real and authentic Dutch while the latter is the opposite form; the foreigner, the problematic, the not-quite-Dutch and, therefore, the second-class citizen (Essed & Trienekens 2008). Although the demarcation between these two categories is promoted as one that is cultural and ethnic, implicit within is also the similar dichotomy of white and non-white respectively (Essed & Trienekens 2008). Indeed, skin color is a marker of belonging, and positions individuals within the autochthone/ allochthone binary. For Najib, therefore,

because he appears to be and performs himself as white, he is consistently referred to as Dutch which strengthens his autochthonous location. As a result, while distinctions between autochthone and allochthone are explicitly labelled as based on culture and ethnicity, they embody that which Mica Pollock (2004) would describe as color muteness. That is, they in fact legitimate the articulation of clear racial hierarchies in a supposedly "post-race" Netherlands by providing a language that is not race or color explicit, yet fulfills the same agenda. Finally, it is important to note that by engaging in a program of color muteness that reinforces the supposedly irreconcilable nature of cultural differences, the autochthone/allochthone binary in which Najib is embedded promotes passive forms of (in)tolerance.

Because of his white appearance, Najib responds quite uniquely to negative stereotypes of and racism towards Moroccans in the Netherlands. According to Gregory Stone (1974), appearance is intricately interwoven into the construction and mobilization of the self. Using the metaphor of clothing, he explains that the self is both dressed by an individual and addressed towards others through their appearance. In fact, the self is constituted by the alignment between the identifications of an individual by herself and others; that is, when the individual and the other attach the same meanings to the former's appearance, the self is produced. Stone's (1974) conception of the relationship between appearance and the self is reflected in Najib's feeling of distance to the negative stereotypes of Moroccans. Najib emphasized one stereotype in particularly, which he referred to as: "The Moroccans on the corner of the street." Indeed, Najib claims that the negative stereotypes of Moroccans, such as this one, do not implicate him because of his outward appearance as a white Dutch person. In essence, the self that is produced by his appearance defines Najib as a white Dutch person and thus establishes a discrepancy between the visual image of Moroccans and his own self, with the effect that the negative stereotypes become personally irrelevant. However, these negative stereotypes prove to produce internal feelings of discomfort when

reflecting on his mother's family:

> During my holidays in Casablanca I met my nephew and grew a strong relationship with him... The guys that are called in these situations "the Moroccans on the corner of the street" really do look like my nephew. So sometimes I stop and notice that they are talking about guys who look exactly like my nephew who I had a great time with and have a great bond with.

As such, Najib becomes affected by racist stereotypes of Moroccans by the connection to his family. Here, the stereotype of "the Moroccans on the corner of the street" relies on an expression of cultural differences akin to the category of allochthone. "The corner of the street" acts as a passively intolerated space which is literally outcast from Dutch society and the Dutch image, as if Moroccan culture cannot fit therein. Underneath the guise of culture, Najib's response to the stereotypes of Moroccans reveals them to be dependent on biological forms of racism as he is shown to have an internalized sense of racial categories that is based on skin color. While the self that is produced by Najib's appearance defines him as white and Dutch, that of his nephew emerges as Moroccan and therefore it is his family and not his whiteness that becomes the link to his negative response to racism towards Moroccans.

Siebers & Dennissen (2015) dismiss the "racism-disguised-as-culture" argument on the grounds that it is problematic for researchers and scholars to uncover racism if it is entirely hidden by notions of culture. They question whether biology-based racism may be inferred if only discourse of cultural incompatibility is detectable. However, Najib's lived experience conflicts with the visually deterministic nature of racial categories that is prevalent in Dutch society. That is, his whiteness does not allow him to feel his self-concept to be affected by the racist stereotypes towards Moroccans, yet his family heritage – which is implicit in his racial identity – achieves this exact end. If the image of "the Moroccans on the corner of the

street" was borne out of culture, then how can the visual congruence between this stereotype and Najib's nephew be the foundation for his feelings of discomfort? The only answer can be that biologically-based racism is implicit in discourse of cultural incompatibility; Najib's lived experience therefore supports the "racism-disguised-as-culture" argument.

In any case, what is clear from Najib's relation to the "Moroccans on the corner of the street" stereotype is a simultaneous sense of distance and proximity to both his whiteness/Dutchness as well as his Moroccanness. It appears that the fluid and unconventional relationship to his racial identity positions Najib within that which Homi Bhabha (in Bolatagici 2004) would label the "third space". The third space represents a site of translation and negotiation of cultural ties into one's hybrid identity, while undermining discourse of cultural and racial polarity. The process of negotiation became clear in the case of Najib when he articulated the intangible benefits of his mixed racial background: "I think it would be a waste to be one thing – to be just Dutch, or be just a Dutch guy. I think it would be a waste to choose one if you can eat from both sides." Here, by articulating the perceived notion of waste associated with being merely "one thing", Najib engages in the process of negotiation that illuminates his position within the hybrid third space. Furthermore, the benefits of "eating from both sides" illustrate the third space as a site that is transgressive in a positive sense in a similar manner to its conceptualization by Bolatagici (2004). In her opinion, the transgressive qualities of the third space become distinctly positive through their deconstruction of the rigidity of racial categories as well as the concept of race itself. This is achieved precisely because the third space locates the wholeness of hybrid identities not in the bricolage of its origins, but in the transformations borne out of elements within this space; the acts of unification and organization involved in "eating from both sides".

Indeed, while forms of passive (in)tolerance in the Netherlands juxtapose white Dutch and non-white Others based on their cultural differences, the unification of these supposedly irreconcilable categories within the third space inherently undermines these divisive conceptions of race and racism. As such, when returning to Najib's relation to the aforementioned negative stereotype of Moroccans, the personal process of negotiation involved in his position within the third space allows him to undermine its racist foundation. Indeed, one of his critiques of the Moroccan stereotype was that "there are also white guys standing on the corner of the street." Departing from this critique, despite the process of socialization in Dutch society that functions to define Najib as white based on his appearance, his position within the third space grants him an acute understanding of the negative stereotypes of Moroccans. In effect, the exact power of Najib's hybrid identity is his unique position within the third space which allows him to undermine the authority of dominant ideas of race and destabilize the notion of a "post-race" Netherlands itself. Indeed, notions of passive (in)tolerance which reinforce cultural difference between Dutch and Moroccan become unified and therefore undone simply by the existence of Najib's minority-privileged hybrid identity.

Although his whiteness has socialized Najib to believe racism towards Moroccans has no influence on his self-concept, his discomforting experiences of racism emerge via the visual markers that connect his family to images of "the Moroccans on the corner of the street" and therefore position him within the third space. While these negative stereotypes are presented under the guise of cultural terms, since it is his personal connection to whiteness that socializes Najib into distancing himself from them, they may be demonstrated to serve to conceal the biologically deterministic foundation on which they stand; Dutch as white and Moroccans as non-white. The intersection between Moroccan and white is rejected by the Dutch national image and forms of passive (in)tolerance which therefore renders Najib's hybrid identity as impossible. In any case, Najib's fluid process of negotiation and self-unification in the third space allows the subversion of these dominant ideas of race and racism in the Netherlands.

(Almost) Passing (Post-)Racial Boundaries

Negative stereotypes may be understood as products of the stigma of group identity that surround Moroccan people in the Netherlands. In fact, Erving Goffman (1974) claims that the means by which one's possession of a certain stigma is communicated to others is through visibility. Whether or not the possession of a stigma is visible to others defines how one may experience the negative consequences of such a stigma. In terms of the visibility of Najib's race, the intersection between white and Moroccan allows for a case in which his Moroccan heritage is often concealed by his visible appearance. In this sense, because the visible appearance of Najib as white conceals his possession of his stigma, he gains the advantage of being considered "normal" and thus not Moroccan and not stigmatized.

Nevertheless, although Najib passes as a white Dutch person in most situations, there are cases in which his Moroccan heritage becomes distinctly visible. The most salient of these examples noted by Najib were "with my Moroccan family, when I talk about Morocco or when I don't judge so fast "those Moroccans on the corner of the street." Here, Najib positions the visibility of his Moroccan heritage precisely in his own actions. Such an understanding of the appearance of Moroccan identity points towards the distinction made by Goffman (1974) that visibility is not necessarily defined by visual markers, but rather by what is noticeable or evident. In the case of Najib, Goffman (1974) may claim that it is through his actions that his Moroccan identity continues to "cast a shadow" (p.94) even though it is visually imperceptible. As such, race becomes a performance that allows Najib to reveal his Moroccan heritage in some instances and not in others (Sundquist 2010; Goffman 1959).

Najib's capacity to choose to reveal his Moroccan background uncovers his possession of that which Waters (1996) would describe as a symbolic or optional ethnicity. According to Waters (1974), in the context of the USA, whiteness grants to individuals the possession

of a family heritage that is without significant social cost to their lives and thus has merely a symbolic impact. This contrasts to the lived realities of people of color who cannot avoid experiencing racial oppression on both everyday and systemic levels because of their skin color. For Najib, his hybrid identity is concealed by the fact that he visibly appears white and therefore he is granted the privilege of choice; that is, the choice to decide for himself the instances in which his Moroccan heritage is revealed.

In essence, Najib's possession of an optional ethnicity is encompassed by his ability to pass as white. In terms of the passive forms of (in)tolerance in the Netherlands, the supposedly essential racial categories that are marked by cultural difference propose that one cannot sit in both the categories of white and Moroccan. As such, Najib finds himself in a position produced by Dutch society in which he must move towards, and indeed pass as, one category or the other. Passing is significant as it reveals the socially constructed nature of racial categories and demands recognition of the notion that identities are "processual, intersubjective and contested/contestable" since they depend upon the repetition of embodied actions (Jackson and Jones in Elam 2007, p.750). Moreover, Goffman (1974) argues that passing allows one to avoid their stigma and to effectively obtain the advantages of being considered "normal". Therefore, significant to the undermining of the "post-race" claims of the Netherlands are the benefits of transgressing racial boundaries via passing into categories which are labelled as "normal".

In contrast to the advantages gained when one is considered "normal", the act of passing also shines light on the disadvantages associated with stigmatized categories. Indeed, the disadvantages of being Moroccan can be escaped by Najib because his appearance produces an optional ethnicity and thus the capacity to pass as white:

> I'm in a too easy situation of having Moroccan heritage because you don't see it and I could deny it... There are people in my class who

can't go around it because you see it and you can't cancel the disadvantages. Maybe they have a lot of disadvantages and I rarely ever have disadvantages, so that's maybe my luxury position.

Despite Najib's privilege to pass, in the case of the other students in his class "who can't go around it" their skin color acts as a visual marker that inextricably connects them to their non-white racial identity. In contrast to Najib's aforementioned actions which "cast a shadow" of his Moroccan identity, the skin color and appearance of people of color in his class means that their stigma is blatant and unavoidable and thus they are unable to pass: in effect, they become unavoidably subject to forms of passive (in)tolerance. Goffman (1974) employs the term visibility to refer to the perceptibility of one's stigma to others, which is therefore not only restricted to sight. However, he does indeed underline sight as the mechanism that renders stigma most visible to others, which is therefore reinforced by the imbalances between Najib and people of color in his class that stem from the outward (in)obviousness of their stigma. Using the example of ugliness, he explains that such a visually visible stigma produces its prime effect in social situations. In this sense, like ugliness, Goffman (1974) may consider that visible features stereotyped as being Moroccan transform Moroccan identity into a stigma that is focused on social situations in the Netherlands, rather than Najib's aforementioned actions which refrain from having any initial social impact.

In contrast to the optional ethnicity granted to white people, it is likewise useful here to reflect upon Franz Fanon's *The Fact of Blackness* (1967) in terms of the implications of non-white visual appearance. Fanon (1967) argues that Black identity operates like an inevitable social uniform. Indeed, Blackness is relationally dependent upon white people and cannot be avoided because it is based on physical appearance; this, Fanon claims, is the very fact of Blackness. The fact of Blackness is the case for Najib's classmates who "can't go around it because you see it". However, it is not

the reality for Najib who can pass as white because of the Goffmanian performative nature of his racial identity that is associated with his appearance. In any case, the mere possibility of passing as white disrupts claims to a post-race Netherlands. In effect, if the Netherlands were truly "post-race", Najib would gain no advantages by passing as white. Therefore, it is the precise possibility of Najib´s racial passing that uncovers both inequalities between the experiences of white people and Moroccans in the Netherlands as well as the persistence of race and racism.

However, Najib's capacity to pass as white becomes problematic when considering the Arabic root of his name. According to Onwuachi-Willig and Barnes (2005), a name can represent a racial signpost that is connected to the negative connotations of skin color and race and thereby may elicit prejudice. Therefore, impressions of Najib based purely on his name exposes his minority ethnic identity, destabilizes the privilege he experiences from passing as white and thereby leaves him vulnerable to racial prejudice. In fact, Najib explained one particularly salient act of racism towards him that was caused by his name in an experience with his housing agency:

> I had a complaint and I sent my name and they went to my house, but I wasn't there. They found my roommate and the man from the housing agency said "Where is Najib?" and he replied that I wasn't there...then I came in and wanted to go into my room and he said "Whoah, this is not your house" and I said "No, I'm Najib" and he said "Oh (nervous laugh), I thought you were going to be some big Black Moroccan guy!

In this instance, not only does the employee of the housing agency express his internalized racial profile of a Moroccan man based on Najib's name, he also makes a discomforting, ignorant and racist comment when reacting to his whiteness. When asked to consider why the man laughed, Najib explained:

Maybe he was ashamed of not expecting that [I am white] and maybe he actually felt relief because of that, but I also expect that he was trying to cope with the situation that he just made himself a bit of a fool.

Indeed, the racist comment may simultaneously express shock, shame and relief in discovering that whiteness and Moroccan identity can overlap. Furthermore, to extend upon Najib's interpretation of the man's laughter as a coping mechanism, this action also seems to function to establish an expectation that Najib would join in the laughter and therefore direct the attention away from the racially engrained notion of cultural difference embodied by the man. In fact, Najib experiences discomfort in an expectation that would effectively require him to ignore his internalized racial profile because he visibly appears to be in line with the white Dutch image. This expectation illustrates that which Robin DiAngelo (2012) labels white solidarity; the inherent agreement between white people to not challenge or compromise the comfort of one another when racism emerges, thereby maintaining white privilege and white supremacy.

Moreover, in a Goffmanian sense, the expectation of white solidarity on behalf of the housing agent may motivate Najib to cover the stigma of Moroccan identity (Goffman 1974). Acts of covering reduce the negative consequences of stigma, in contrast to passing wherein it is concealed (Goffman 1974). In addition, covering functions to draw attention away from the stigma itself while simultaneously focusing the social interaction more directly on its official content (Goffman 1974). Therefore, such a situation, which may motivate Najib to cover his Moroccan stigma, operates as an attempt by the housing agent to refocus the social interaction to the housing complaint itself. Importantly, since the laughter ultimately attempts to avoid the sense of cultural difference engrained in the housing agent's racial profile of a Moroccan man, it

embodies the form of passive tolerance that is distinctive of Dutch racism. Najib, in fact, experiences this expectation of white solidarity as racism itself since he is caused discomfort in negotiating his ties to two significant identity categories; white and Moroccan. This is an experience of racism that a blatantly visible Moroccan person would not encounter. Therefore, in spite of the fact that Najib's optional ethnicity grants him significant privilege, when his Moroccan heritage becomes salient he does indeed experience racism, albeit in a distinctly different form from that of a visibly Moroccan individual.

Najib's experiences of racism in terms of the tension produced by negotiating his whiteness and Moroccanness may be in fact be further compounded by the process of passing itself. Indeed, such conflicts that are experienced as racism because of the act of passing may be illuminated when returning to the example of Najib's tendency to not immediately judge the "Moroccans on the corner of the street". One significant conflict experienced by passers, according to Goffman (1974), arises from the fact that they are "torn between two attachments" (p.109) and therefore experience a sense of disloyalty towards the category from which they have passed. To safeguard the position as a passer, in fact, one is encouraged to refrain from challenging negative sentiments towards their concealed stigmatized category (Goffman, 1974). In light of this layer to the act of passing, Najib's tendency to avoid judgment of the negative stereotypes of Moroccans may be understood to signify his internalization that it is "normal" or acceptable for white Dutch people to perpetuate such stereotypes. Despite his whiteness, Najib feels uncomfortable to engage in these same negative judgments as they represent acts of disloyalty towards his Moroccan heritage and family. The tension that stems from the internalized acceptability of judging the "Moroccans on the corner of the street" is experienced by Najib as racism and, as is the case with the expectation to cover, is distinctly different from that of a visibly Moroccan person.

"Just a Family": Whiteness as the Human Norm in Dutch Visual Culture

A significant portion of the interview with Najib focused on his connection to Dutch visual culture in light of his concentration on performance at a Dutch theatre academy. This aspect of his life was deemed to be of particular importance to the research at hand because of the large impact that his appearance has in both his on-stage performance and racial identity. Moreover, further relevance and significance of Najib's relation to performance emerges from Hondius' (2014) claim that people of color remain "institutionally invisible and inarticulate" (p.274) in Dutch organizations such as the performing arts industry. According to her, these organizations reflect more broadly the dynamics of underrepresentation and overrepresentation of people of color in multiple branches of social interaction and organization in the Netherlands, which is interwoven into the dynamics of passive (in) tolerance of Moroccan culture. Therefore, because of Najib's white appearance, the reflections on his experiences with Dutch visual culture in terms of his race may be connected to these passive forms of racism in the Netherlands that indeed extend beyond the stage or screen and into other realms of social life. To understand Najib's position in relation to Dutch visual culture, I examined this aspect of his identity in terms of both his role as a consumer of Dutch film, theatre and TV and as an actor who performs and will make a career therein.

Najib's depiction of Dutch visual culture indicated the persistence of white supremacy based on the unquestionable assumption that whiteness is the norm for all of humanity, which Sue (2006) terms "the invisible whiteness of being". The position of whiteness as standard, Najib explained, is a particularly salient reality within visual culture in the Netherlands:

> In a realistic image, in a movie, if you want to shed light on the image of a family in The Hague, you're probably going to get a white family... So people who go to the movies and see a white family just think "Oh, okay that's just a family". But if people see a Moroccan family, they think "Oh, it's going to be about a crime, or they will go down the wrong path".

The image of the white family as "just a family" provides a categorization of white in Dutch visual culture – and indeed, in the Netherlands – that is supposedly external to and uninfluenced by race. It hints further towards the dominant definition of whiteness as default or standard, as the point of reference for all other races and as the essential quality of the image of Dutch identity (Sue 2006; Essed & Trienekens 2008). As such, with the Moroccan family defined as Other, it is represented in contrast to the image of a white Dutch family. In essence, the connotations of crime and wrongdoing associated with the Moroccan family are formed through and for the eyes of the dominant white Dutch society. By representing Dutch and Moroccan as a binary of good and bad respectively, the side of Dutch visual culture of which Najib speaks does not deconstruct or discuss, and thereby reinforces, cultural differences; it is this outcome which signifies that this industry is interwoven into the passive forms of (in)tolerance proposed by Hondius (2014). In any case, while visual culture frames whiteness as invisible, default and standard in Dutch society, Moroccan identity is cast to its fringes and becomes abnormal in contrast.

Within this categorization of whiteness as the human norm, Najib occupies a minority privileged position as his appearance allows him to pass as white. He explained that he has been cast in series as the default Dutch young man with blonde hair and blue eyes which therefore provides to him with a number of career opportunities. However, for visibly Moroccan actors, Najib described their casting possibilities quite differently:

> It's always something bad: the thief, the bad guy, the dealer... People [of color] in my class who graduate and

don't have a job, for instance, get called for the role of the criminal and do it because they have to pay their rent and then they end up only playing criminals for the rest of their lives.

The differences in experience in being cast between Najib and visibly Moroccan actors uncover the privileges awarded to him by passing as white in Dutch visual culture. While a visibly Moroccan actor will be forced to play degrading roles in order to earn an income, there are a spectrum of possibilities for Najib precisely because of "the invisible whiteness of being" (Sue, 2006), the idea of the white family as "just a family". Despite dominant claims, the Netherlands is not and cannot be "post-race" as long as such deep inequalities exist between the number and types of roles available for Najib and people of color in his class because of their appearance.

Furthermore, the representation of Moroccan families and individuals as criminals or abnormal is problematic for Najib's connection to the characters he sees on screen or on stage. When considering how Najib consumes Dutch visual culture, the theatrical metaphors used to describe self-presentation by Goffman (1959) mean that his classical work becomes particularly pertinent in this instance. The expressive equipment described by Goffman are employed by individuals to perform their self in a certain way; this constitutes their front. The front may be divided into the scenic – which encompasses the setting – and the personal – which encompasses appearance and manner and which refers to the expected social status and interaction role of the performer herself respectively. With the front providing the tools to present oneself to others, their repetitive assemblage into presentations of Moroccan actors within degrading roles on screen may serve to perform racial scripts that are internalized by the dominant white Dutch audience, according to Robin DiAngelo's (2012) line of reasoning. The influence of white supremacy, therefore, transforms the previously powerless conception of Goffman's

(1959) front into a presentation that has significant racial implications. Interestingly, the perpetuation of white supremacy in the presentations of Moroccan characters in Dutch visual culture has influenced Najib's response to films and television in terms of his racial identity:

> I think I feel connected to the Dutch white characters. But that's also because of what we just talked about, that the Moroccan actors are always the thieves or the criminals. So, this is something that I don't connect to because they play these roles. But if they would play the random or normal guy, I think then it would make a difference for me.

Here, Najib explains that his association to Moroccan characters within Dutch visual culture is diminished because they fulfill a negative stereotype which does not reflect his lived experience. Since observers anticipate a consistency between the appearance, manner and setting of an individual, the front of a Moroccan character on screen – as presented as a criminal, for example – may fulfill the expectations of the dominant white Dutch society (Goffman 1959). However, Najib sees a disparity between the front of Moroccan characters presented on stage and his own; he is not a criminal and therefore he cannot relate to the Moroccan character he sees on screen. In this way, Dutch visual culture – and Dutch society, more generally – can be seen to encourage Najib to distance himself from his Moroccan heritage. While associating with the white Dutch characters provides Najib with a sense of belonging in the Netherlands, connection to the Moroccan characters would engender him as outcast, hopeless and problematic. Within the good/bad binary of Dutch and Moroccan stemming from their respective representation, the reinforcement of a definitive and irreconcilable difference between these two categories that is akin to passive (in)tolerance does not provide a space for Najib to position the hybridity of his racial identity. Indeed, even when a hybrid identity has been represented on stage or screen, it is

most often framed as relentlessly striving towards assuming the image of one of its racial categories, rather than their precise unification (Bolatagici 2004). Therefore, when consuming Dutch visual culture and associating with the represented characters, Najib must make a decision between his ties to both Moroccan and Dutch. In effect, Dutch visual culture encourages quite a predictable decision since Najib can feel normal when and only when he pictures himself purely as a white Dutch person. Racism, in essence, can be seen to persist in Najib's consumption of Dutch visual culture whose assemblage of the expressive tools of Moroccan characters on screen define them as marginalized and undesirable and whitewashes Najib's sense of racial identity.

Conclusion

Najib's experiences of race and racism are subjective, lived and performed in terms of his minority-privileged position as both white and with a Moroccan heritage. Najib and his hybrid identity are positioned in the Dutch context of discourse, or lack thereof, that renders cultural differences as essential, irreconcilable and thereby allows the supposedly liberal and tolerant Netherlands to picture itself as "post-race". Therefore, Najib effectively negotiates his hybrid racial identity amongst a social, cultural and national environment that denies the unification of the Moroccan and Dutch backgrounds that he embodies. As such, Najib occupies a powerful minority-privileged identity that inherently destabilizes notions of a "post-race" Netherlands, as illustrated by his privileges that stem from his white appearance as well as his experiences of racism that are distinct from those of someone who is visibly Moroccan.

The interview conducted with Najib predominantly uncovered the effects of race in terms of the Dutch national image, racial passing and Dutch visual culture. Essed & Trienekens (2008) argue that the Dutch image is essentially white, which therefore places Najib on the privileged side of the autochthone/allochthone binary when being treated by Dutch people. However, Najib experiences racism in response to negative stereotypes of Moroccans by their visual connection to his family which thereby illuminates the biologically deterministic – and not cultural – foundation on which whiteness in the Dutch national image fundamentally stands. Furthermore, the Goffmanian performative nature of Najib's racial identity allows him to pass as white and gain privilege from concealing his stigma; an ability which he himself labels his "luxury position". Nevertheless, the Arabic root of Najib's name decreases his ability to pass as white as it operates as a racial marker which has caused experiences of racism since he is pictured to not conform to the image of his name. Finally, access to more diverse and respectable roles in Dutch visual culture has been granted to Najib because of his whiteness, in contrast to the people of color in his class who may only play criminals and "bad guys" for the entirety of their careers. It is for this reason that Najib does not associate with the Moroccan characters in Dutch visual culture; they are simply viewed as incongruent to his lived experience. On these three levels, the apparently "post-race" Netherlands can be framed to encourage the suppression of Najib's Moroccan identity with the supplementation of the white Dutch image.

What is clear in the case of Najib is that his experiences with race and racism are distinctly different from both the average white Dutch person and a visibly Moroccan person in the Netherlands. As such, the portrait of Najib's hybrid racial identity extends upon the research of Hondius (2014) which indicates that skin color and appearance are crucial to the shape and persistence of racism in the Netherlands. In fact, by embodying the unification of Dutch and Moroccan which are considered supposedly irreconcilable by forms of passive (in)tolerance in the Netherlands, the essential nature of cultural incompatibility is subverted. As a result, with appearance so central to Najib's racial experience and with the passive (in)tolerance akin to Dutch racism illuminated by his minority-privileged identity, claims to a "post-race" Netherlands are rendered simply illusory and rather generative of racism itself. Indeed, if the "post-race" position of the Netherlands were a reality then Najib would not gain privilege from

passing as white, nor would he experience racism when his Moroccanness becomes visible. Therefore, providing a portrait of Najib's minority-privileged racial identity has subverted the progressive and "post-race" claims of the Netherlands and has rather emphasized their under-articulated discussion on racism.

In the Netherlands, the categories of white and ethnic minority become mutually exclusive when considering the image of Dutch identity that excludes "non-white" cultures. However, the impossibility of Najib's existence empowers him to deconstruct and challenge discourse of (post-)race and (post-)racism in the Netherlands. Nevertheless, in order to increase the transferability of this ethnographic portrait of Najib's racial identity, more research should be conducted into the nuances of passing as white in the Netherlands as well as the dynamics of whiteness in Dutch visual culture. This may be achieved by conducting interviews with white passers similar to Najib, or people of color who are involved in the performing arts. From this accumulation of research, the more underlying and passive mechanisms of race may be identified and deconstructed on a larger scale. In any case, the portrait of Najib's racial experience uncovers his subversive position within the impossible intersection between whiteness and Moroccan identity which allows him to experience both oppression and privilege; for his racial identity to be both visible, and invisible.

Acknowledgments

References

Bolatagici, Torika. 2004. Claiming the (N)either/(N)or of 'Third Space': (Re)presenting Hybrid Identity and the Embodiment of Mixed Race. *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 25(1): 25-85.

DiAngelo, Robin. 2012. *What Does it Mean to be White? Developing White Racial Literacy.* New York: Peter Lang Publishing.

Elam, Michele. 2007. "Passing in the Post-Race Era: Danzy Senna, Philip Roth, and Colson Whitehead". *African American Review*, 41 (4):749-768.

Essed, Philomena. 1996. *Diversity: Gender, Color and Culture*. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts

Essed, Philomena & Isabel Hoving. 2014. *Dutch Racism*. Amsterdam: Rodopi

Essed, Philomena & Sandra Trienekens. 2008. 'Who Wants to Feel White?' Race, Dutch Culture and Contested Identities. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 31(1):52-72.

Fanon, Franz. 1967. *Black Skin, White Masks*. New York: Grove Press

Gay y Blasco, Paloma. 2010. "The Fragility of Cosmopolitanism: A Biographical Approach." *Social Anthropology*, 18(4):403-409.

Goffman, Erving. 1974. *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books

Goffman, Erving, 1959. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. New York, NY: Anchor Books

Hondius, Dienke. 2014. Black Dutch Voices: Reports from a Country that Leaves Racism Unchallenged. *Dutch Racism*, 27:273-293. Leiden: Brill

Guba, Egon & Lincoln, Yvonna. 1981. *Effective Evaluation*. Jossey-Bass Publishers: San Francisco, CA

Lentin, Alana. 2008. Europe and the Silence about Race. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 11 (4), 487-503. doi:10.1177/1368431008097008

Onwuachi-Willig, Angela & Mario L.Barnes. 2005. By Any Other Name?: On Being "Regarded As" Black, and Why Title VII Should Apply Even If Lakisha and Jamal Are White. *UC Davis Legal Research Paper Series*. Retrieved 26/6/2016 from: https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=870048

Pollock, Mica. 2004. *Colormute: Race Talk Dilemmas in an American School*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press Siebers, Hans & Dennissen, Marjolein HJ. 2015. Is It Cultural Racism? Discursive Exclusion and Oppression of Migrants in the Netherlands. *Current Sociology*, 63(3):470-489.

Sue, Derald Wing. 2006. The invisible Whiteness of being: Whiteness, White Supremacy, White Privilege, and Racism. In *Addressing Racism: Facilitating Cultural Competence in Mental Health and Educational Setting,* edited by Madonna G. Constantine and Derald Wing Sue, 15-30. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons

Stone, Gregory P. 1974. "Appearance and the Self: A Slightly Revised Version*". In *Life as Theater: a Dramaturgical Sourcebook*, Dennis Brissett and Charles Edgley, eds. Chicago: Aldine

Sundquist, Christian, B. 2012. Signifying on passing: (post) post-racialism, (post) post-Marxism and (Post) post-modernism. Columbia Journal of Race and Law, 1(3):482-489.

Waters, Mary, C. 1996. 'Optional Ethnicities: For Whites Only' in Origins and Destinies: *Immigration, Race and Ethnicity in America*, Sylvia Pedraza and Ruben Rumbaut, eds. 444-454. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Press, 444-454

Weiner, Melissa F. 2014. The Ideologically Colonized Metropole: Dutch Racism and Racist Denial. *Sociology Compass* 8(6):731-744.

Beyond Invisibility: A REDress Collaboration to Raise Awareness of the Crisis of Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women

Natalie Marie Lesco

St. Francis Xavier University, lesconatalie@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This article describes the impact of a case study of the REDress project on a university campus in Nova Scotia, Canada. The REDress project is a grassroots initiative that operates at the local level to empower Aboriginal women through an evocative art exhibit: the hanging of empty red dresses symbolizing missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls and the emptiness of the societal response to the violence committed against them. Using a participatory-action research model (PAR), which guides the exploration of the kinds of ideas instilled within this community-based initiative, my research demonstrates the potential this project has to mobilize local Indigenous women's perspectives and voices, in order to break the silence to which they are often subjected through structures of oppression. This process relies on the establishment of meaningful connections with members of the StFX Aboriginal Student's Society and creating a transparent research process, while also encouraging action in the form of awareness building. The project makes a political statement that resists the ascribed invisibility of Aboriginal women by honouring the lives of missing and murdered Aboriginal women. As a community-based initiative, the REDress project demonstrates the beginnings of reconciliation by cultivating meaningful relationships that provide hope for the future.

Keywords: reconciliation, indigenous, women, REDress

Missing and murdered. These are two words that describe the multidimensional condition of violence that Aboriginal women experience as a consequence of ongoing processes of colonialism. Approximately 1,181 Aboriginal women have been reported as either missing or murdered between 1980 and 2012, and are "three times more likely than non-Aboriginal women to be killed by a stranger" (NWAC 2015; RCMP 2014). Aboriginal women represent 16% of all female homicides that have occurred in Canada while making up only 4% of the national population (RCMP 2014). This disproportionate relationship is a consequence of the dehumanizing colonial processes of the Canadian state that have been occurring for decades.

To be human, and yet socially constructed as less than human, is a contradiction that has shaped much of what Aboriginal women recognize as their identity within the confines of the Canadian state. This dehumanization, in which women are framed as object rather than subject, is a reality that plagues many Aboriginal women throughout the country (Archuleta 2006). There is a long history of colonization in Canada, and its detrimental effects are still visible within our society today. The explicit attempt to strip Indigenous women of their identity and destroy Aboriginal cultures in order for assimilation to take place has subordinated these women to the boundaries of society. The ways in which Aboriginal women are represented in our society today contribute to the ongoing exposure to violence in their lives.

The present position, in which Aboriginal women live in marginal, racialized, gendered and vulnerable spaces, must be understood within its historical context. The displacement of Aboriginal communities and their expulsion onto reserves, coupled with the denial of Aboriginal rights and equity within the Canadian justice system, has created socio-economic disadvantages for Aboriginal peoples. Poor infrastructure, the effects of intergenerational trauma such as violence in the family, and the breakdown of community structures on some reserves has pressured many Aboriginal people to leave their families and reserves in search of a better way to live (NWAC 2010). For women, this usually involves moving to urban areas where there are significant challenges in fighting stereotypes and finding work, making women more susceptible to forces of exploitation, such as drug use and prostitution (Oppal 2012). It is through these types of activities that Aboriginal women are framed as being at fault for their own living conditions (poverty, addictions, abuse). As a result, until recently there has been little public or policing response to the crisis of missing and murdered Aboriginal women.

Current government efforts to mitigate the effects of colonialism are ineffective, as they are drawn from preexisting policies which are extensions of colonial ideologies. This paradoxical approach will not affect existing paternalistic attitudes or actions of indifference towards Aboriginal women unless there is systemic change and reconciliation. It is from within this marginal position that Aboriginal women have been constructed as vulnerable and weak, strongly contrasting the traditional roles they previously occupied within many Aboriginal societies (RCAP 1996).

In order to reclaim their voices, Aboriginal women have come together to combat the gendered and racialized policies and systems that have rendered them invisible within the Canadian state. An example of this is the REDress project, a grassroots initiative that operates at the local level to empower Aboriginal women through an evocative art exhibit: the hanging of empty red dresses. The placement of red dresses in public spaces serves as a political statement against the invisibility of Aboriginal women and simultaneously honours the lives of those women who have gone missing or who have been murdered. As a community-based initiative, the REDress project, organized by

both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students, created the space for the beginnings of reconciliation, cultivating dialogue and producing meaningful action oriented toward collective awareness campaigns.

The REDress Project

The REDress project was created by Jamie Black, a Métis artist based in Winnipeg, in attempt to bring the crisis of missing and murdered Aboriginal women to the public's attention. The initial aim of the project was to collect 600 red dresses that would not only reflect the staggeringly high rates of missing and murdered Aboriginal women, but that could also be used to create a display in the Winnipeg museum. Solo exhibitions have also been held at various universities and communities throughout Canada.

The importance of visual representation is described by Black as "an aesthetic response to the more than 1000 Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women in Canada" in which the aim is to "draw attention to the gendered and racialized nature of violence crimes against Aboriginal women and to evoke a presence through the marking of absence" (Black 2014). It is the continual negative representations of Aboriginal women through media portrayals that Black describes as a major catalyst for the negligence towards the missing and murdered Aboriginal women crisis in Canada. For example, missing Indigenous women are often presented to the public through posters using mug shots to identify potential victims. This approach criminalizes the women, thereby restricting their public profile within boundaries that ultimately disadvantage them (Pratt 2005). By countering these destructive narratives with the use of powerful symbolism—the colour red encompasses ideas about "blood, sexual energy, and violence"—the REDress project seeks to return a sense of humanity back to the victims (Marrouat 2011).

This independent project examines the ways in which Aboriginal women are both empowered and limited through localized grassroots social movements. By participating in the organization and production of a StFX university-based REDress project (See Figure 1), I documented and analyzed how Indigenous

and non-Indigenous students worked together to raise public awareness of the systemic discrimination that Indigenous women face. In doing so, I determine the narrative the REDress project offers in response to the issue.

Figure 1: Dresses hanging in Nicholson Hall, 2016 (Source: Natalie Lesco)

Methodology

The principal methodology used in this study was participatory-action research (PAR), involving participant observation, ethnographic fieldwork, interviews and a focus group. Information was collected according to Geertz' (1973) concept of thick description. By compiling detailed observations, I described information as it happened as objectively as possible, uncovering underlying patterns that structure the event and the ways in which culture is symbolically expressed.

As a component of my undergraduate honours thesis research, the study and the project commenced in September 2015 and ended in May of 2016. The REDress project was presented in four different locations on the St. Francis Xavier University (StFX) campus in order to attract the attention of students from various academic backgrounds. StFX is a small university of around 4000 students, located on Mi'kmaq territory in the small rural town of Antigonish, Nova Scotia.

While the dresses were on display, I spent much time monitoring the project with the other members of the organizing committee, using our meetings and general interactions as a component of PAR. Importantly, this particular methodology involves the researcher

creating and sustaining a critical awareness with research participants in order to attain a more decolonized way of understanding both literature and data (Smith 2012). PAR allows Indigenous ways of understanding to be implemented into the process of research. The utilization of an inclusive research design, involving the ideas of both researcher and participants, creates an informative and transparent process (Smith 2012). This process involved providing my field notes to participants for their review at each subsequent meeting and allowing participants to give feedback to guide the next steps. In addition, interviews and a focus group with the four young Indigenous women served to ascertain, more directly, the opinions of the REDress organization committee members on their experience in producing the exhibit and their thoughts of the public responses.

Figure 2: Morningstar (left) and myself (Source: Morningstar)

PAR begins with building relationships. Building on my existing relationships with members of the Aboriginal Student Society, I reached out to them, stating my interest in collaborating with the REDress organization committee to help bring the REDress project to StFX. This interaction led to the formalization of a committee made up of myself, a non-Indigenous woman, and four Indigenous women: Shanna, Morningstar, Miss Cremo and Jasmine (see Figure 2). The criterion for involvement in the committee was simply an interest in assisting with the production of the REDress project at StFX.

Six organizational meetings were held between January and March. These were informal meetings used to structure the project and included different combinations of members of the organizational committee, based on availability. I took detailed field notes during meetings and interviews and while the project was on display. Questions emerged regarding both the success and shortcomings of the project, as well as general issues that Indigenous women are faced with. These discussions were recorded and made up a large portion of my field notes, both of which helped me contextualize violence against Aboriginal women, while also informing the positions of the REDress organizing committee.

A focus group was held on March 5, 2016, a week after the project was first put on display. It consisted of Jasmine, Miss Cremo, and Morningstar, who had all agreed to take part in the structured and semi-structured interview process together. The questions revolved around the REDress project and participants' opinions of the impact and potential success of the exhibit. This process involved telling personal stories and experiences that reflected those which the REDress project intended to expose, and also providing critical feedback about the process as a whole. The focus group lasted about two hours in total.

Additional interview data were collected from structured interviews guided by a journalist from the Antigonish Casket newspaper who was not involved in the process of PAR. Since the interviewer asked many questions about the REDress project, I gained permission to record the process myself and use it as an additional source. This interview also involved myself, Miss Cremo, Jasmine, and Morningstar.

Indigenous Feminism

The project was analyzed through the theoretical framework of Indigenous Feminism. What many Aboriginal women find unsatisfying about feminism is the homogenization that they are subjected to when represented as a "unified front" (Monture-Angus 1995: 182). As Lee Maracle explains, "feminism is racist because it does not account for any other woman other than White females" (1995: 137). The diverse identities and experiences of

Aboriginal women are taken into account by the Indigenous feminist perspective, combating the "double discrimination" that is a result of patrilineal narratives enforced in colonial society (Couture-Grondin and Suzak 2013: 27). The resultant social, economic, and political barriers are paramount in the perpetuation of this vicious cycle of systemic discrimination. It is through the deconstruction of current Canadian, and therefore inherently colonial, justice systems that we can come to expose the gendered forces that act to dehumanize, disempower and limit the social and economic mobilization of Aboriginal women.

Suzak (2010) envisions violence against Aboriginal women as a result of the sexualization of women through processes of colonization, upheld in the present day by legislation, such as the *Indian Act* of 1876, that continues to subjugate Aboriginal women into spaces of heightened vulnerability to violence. That violence is not just physical, but manifests in many different ways, continually affecting Aboriginal women. By taking into account the extent of the uniquely structural and colonial oppression that Aboriginal women face, we can better understand the complexity of such violence (Monture-Angus 1995). Indigenous feminism is therefore a combination of both post-colonial and feminist theories with a specialized focus on the experiences that differentiate Aboriginal women from white middle-class women and as such, Western feminist theory (Suzak 2010: 3).

Instead of occupying the periphery and accepting imposed definitions of womanhood, as in Western notions of feminism, Indigenous feminism offers a space in which Aboriginal women's understanding and definitions are at the forefront (Cunningham 2006). The knowledge keepers, in this case Indigenous women, have the power to create and share the factors that have influenced their lives (Cannon and Sunseri 2011: 46). Instead of conforming to established ideas of gendered forces, the intersectionality of race, class, and gender are emphasized. This gives Indigenous women the power to define themselves, an important aspect of self-determination.

A common criticism of Indigenous feminism by Aboriginal women themselves is that it does not address enough issues that are considered highly important in Indigenous communities, such as autonomy (Suzak 2010). In addition, offering a single definitive characteristic of Indigenous feminism is often difficult because of the diversity that it, as a theoretical framework, encompasses (Suzak 2010).

However, the use of Indigenous feminist perspectives largely informed the decision to use participatory-action research, as it serves as an avenue for the decolonization of understanding. Presenting the voices of Indigenous women was a fundamental element in increasing self-determination. Similar to existing Indigenous feminist literature, the aim is to expose and deconstruct the gendered and racialized forces of violence that often go unnoticed in society (Archuleta 2006: 89). Feminist theory alone cannot account for all of the experiences of women, and therefore, Indigenous feminism offers an intersectional pathway towards specialized knowledge.

The Process

Breaking Barriers: REDress and the Event Review Committee (ERC)

In order to display the REDress project on the StFX University campus, permission was needed from the Event Review Committee (ERC). The application process requires a written submission to the StFX Student's Union committee that critically evaluates the perceived risk an activity may present to the individuals involved. Initially, our first two proposals were rejected. It was suggested that we include support resources, such as fact sheets and helpline numbers in the event that the project generated an emotional response. The ERC committee also wanted us to take down the dresses at night, as a previous installation at Acadia University had been vandalized (Squires 2015). However, we felt that to take the dresses down at night would compromise the integrity of the REDress project and the ideas it represents. Our response was as follows:

> To remove the dresses in fear of vandalism contradicts the reasons that it is installed in the first place. It is the nature of ignorance in Canadian society surrounding the

unacknowledged crisis of missing and murdered Aboriginal women that the REDress exhibit is attempting to combat. Vandalism of the dresses would serve as a testament to the ongoing crisis and also indicative of the problem that still exists. It is for this reason that we do not fear potential vandalism... The outcome of this project is also important, as we must consider larger problems that such an installation is trying to raise awareness about (E-mail response to the ERC, Feb. 26, 2016).

Although the university was well intentioned in their attempts to keep campus safe, it is difficult for us to understand why the hanging of empty red dresses around campus was so hard to negotiate. Of course, it is a symbol of something deeply problematic and embedded within Canadian society, but the dresses themselves should not pose a threat. That the ERC was hesitant to expose the crisis of missing and murdered Aboriginal women in all its intricacies, and to bear the potential effects, is emblematic of the silence that has characterized Indigenous issues for decades.

The required ERC application is indicative of the larger processes affecting Aboriginal peoples within institutional settings. In their quest for self-determination and self-expression, Aboriginal men and women alike want to have control over their lives, as do non-Aboriginal peoples. However, when working within a colonial system that systemically disadvantages them, it is hard to yield productive results. As such, the actions of the ERC exemplify the regulation of information wherein there needed to be approval of the event prior to the implementation of it. The risk-assessment model used to gain approval to hang the REDress project on the grounds of the university proved to be problematic not only in the process but also in the message that it translated to the members of the REDress organization committee. The process was frustrating, as Jasmine LaBillois conveys: "I have to put in a little bit of criticism, especially towards the university and how difficult they made it for us to sort of put this up, we were

rejected two times through the ERC which was just frustrating".

In response to the request of the ERC, we provided additional information on posters, such as helplines, that offered background information on the topic. It is clear that the institutional barriers demonstrate, firstly, a lack of awareness about the crisis of missing and murdered Aboriginal women in the university community. But secondly, the reply from the university, fearing the emotional responses the exhibit may evoke, delegitimized the reality that many Aboriginal communities are faced with. Jasmine stated that "I feel like a lot of our truths are not being told within these walls of StFX". Although the topic of missing and murdered Aboriginal women is sensitive in nature, it is a complex facet of social relations that needs healing, and healing begins with addressing the issue. The evocative presence of the exhibit is powerful, and the same response could not have been received if any element of the exhibit ceased to exist.

The risk-assessment process at the university should take into consideration the

Figure 3: Dresses hanging outside Schwartz, 2016 (Source: Natalie Lesco)

barriers it imposes on groups of people when it is attached to strong political and social issues. The arduous process of trying to prove the legitimacy of the REDress project was emotionally taxing on the organization committee. The underlying message the ERC communicated in their decision to reject the event proposal was that the issues Indigenous peoples face need to be appropriated, so as not to offend those who are unaware of the situation. The underlying assumption that the project posed a threat to the university was perceived as indirect racism and structural discrimination.

As our frustrations escalated, we consulted the members and executives of the Aboriginal Student's Society in order to create a strategy to expedite the process. There was unanimous disapproval of the way the ERC was handing the application, which we attributed to a cultural disconnect between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. As an act of explicit resistance, we decided to go ahead and hang the dresses before gaining approval. A few hours after installing the exhibit, an administrator personally e-mailed me with permission, signing off her e-mail with "Kudos!" (See Figure 3). It is evident that for mobilization of awareness to occur there is usually a degree of resistance that may be encountered. This is an example of how allies must continue to support Indigenous people's expression and rights, if any significant action is to occur.

Schwartz

In the weeks leading up to the installation, the committee had created posters and a Facebook page asking for donations of red dresses and advertising the exhibit. Over the course of about three weeks we received over 20 donations from friends, family, professors, community members and strangers. The call for donations stimulated initial interest, as evidenced in the growing views of our Facebook page. Having collected enough dresses, Morningstar and I proceeded to install the REDress project on the morning of February 29th in front of the Gerald Schwartz School of Business (See Figure 4). Importantly, we did so without confirmed approval from the ERC.

The process involved weaving fishing line through the branches of the trees to secure the

Figure 4: Dresses hanging in front of Schwartz, 2016 (Source: Natalie Lesco)

wooden hangers that the dresses rested upon. When we had evenly dispersed the dresses, there were two striking rows of red that lined the road. A very highly visible area on campus, Schwartz is located on a one-way street where there is little traffic but many pedestrian students. This is one of the most popular routes to get to campus from Main Street in Antigonish, and, as such, was chosen because the dresses would be seen by both students and community members passing by. The tall trees that line the street were also an essential piece of the project, as there needed to be space to hang the dresses evenly so they would be aesthetically appealing.

Even during the early hours of the morning, the dresses were turning heads. The few people passing by were interested in what the dresses represented and did not hesitate to ask questions. As I was reinforcing the dresses in the trees, a woman walking into Schwartz complimented the dresses. She stated that "it was about time someone around here did something" to raise awareness about the crisis of missing and murdered Aboriginal women. She took a moment to really soak in the impact of the exhibit, turned to me, and said "you know, this is powerful and this means a lot to me... my niece is one of them...she is Aboriginal,

and she is missing". Having been unexpectedly struck by a wave of emotion, I responded with, "this is for her", as the woman turned away and continued to walk into the building. The two days that the dresses were showcased in front of Schwartz were very windy, although bright and sunny. The dresses had to be reinforced multiple times throughout the day with fishing line so that they would not blow away. However, in between the time I had left for class and then returned afterwards, the dresses were placed in different trees and in different spots than they had originally been hung. Upon inspection, it was clear that the fishing line had broken and the dresses had fallen, but people walking by took the initiative to hang them back up. Even as I was walking to hang up a dress in the afternoon after it had fallen, one student walked by and hung it up before I could get to it. This initiative suggests there was an evident importance to the exhibit which garnered respect. Though people may not have been aware of the purpose of the dresses, the arrangement, the colour, posters and overall appearance of the exhibit clearly demonstrated that they were there for a reason. This was a

Figure 5: Poster advertising the REDress Project, 2016 (Source: Natalie Lesco)

very positive form of feedback on campus and it demonstrates the engagement that the university community has with the exhibit against all the ERC's expectations. The following two weeks, the dresses were showcased in two different areas of campus, receiving the same general curiosity and interest.

International Women's Week

Given the positive reaction to the project, it was suggested to the organization committee by a faculty member that the dresses be included in the International Women's Week: Feminist Future's segment. Keynote speaker and post-colonial feminist scholar, Sherene Razack, brought the attention of the audience to the dresses hanging along the auditorium walls. She described how the empty dresses are symbolic of the way Indigenous women are reduced to body parts, ascribing and reinforcing the invisibility of Aboriginal women in the legal system. Dr. Razack discussed the case of Cindy Gladue, an Aboriginal woman who was brutally murdered in 2011. The way in which Cindy Gladue's case was handled by the court system is indicative of the way Aboriginal women have been constructed as disposable entities by the government, undeserving of legitimate protection by the state (Razack 2015: 24). This case is exemplary of the flaws inherent in a legal system that does not account for the realities of Indigenous and other marginalized peoples.

Analysis

The following section examines the evidence complied from the applied methodology, theory and process of the exhibit. The purpose of this section is to demonstrate how the REDress project functions as a reflexive, fluid and influential exhibit that is meant to engage with the environment in which it is situated.

Raising Awareness and Recognizing the Problem

The power of the exhibit is drawn from the symbolism that it uses to portray Aboriginal women. The colour red itself has multiple implications which the artist, Jamie Black, intended to convey. As Morningstar, a member of the organizational committee states, "the colour red... red represents power, and the violence and the blood and the things that

Figure 6: Dresses hanging at the Youth Activism Conference, 2016 (Source: Natalie Lesco)

these women have gone through, which is why these dresses hang where they are today". The visual aspect of the project is striking and it is meant to draw attention to the urgency and depth of the problem that Aboriginal women face. In addition to those visual elements that Morningstar describes, Black meant to imbue the dresses with a component of sexual energy.

The marked identity of Indigenous women in Canada is both recognized and experienced by the women on the REDress organizing committee. As Morningstar says:

> We've all been there. We've all walked the streets and had somebody chirp us and make us feel uncomfortable, unworthy or vulnerable, and you just kind of shake your head and think, "what the fuck". But there are women out there where that gets told to them and that's the only attention that they will ever see, so they're vulnerable to that. And sometimes they'll allow it, or think that it's okay... because they have been in situations where it hasn't been taught to be not okay.

The women in the REDress organizing committee have experienced racism throughout their lives. They have been subjected to the devised colonial narratives created about Aboriginal women. These narratives were constructed in order to delegitimize the positions of Aboriginal women in their communities by defining them as incapable. This involved taking away traditional roles that were deeply instilled with meaning, such as those held "in government and in spiritual ceremonies" (AJIC 1999). Instead, Indigenous women were subjected to notions of female inferiority, thereby ceasing to exist in their independent right, and becoming dependant on their husbands. Being "reduced to a state or powerlessness and vulnerability" undermined the fabric of traditional Indigenous communities (AJIC 1999).

The REDress project can be viewed as a tool through which dehumanizing narratives about Aboriginal women can be resisted by first recognizing their presence and their absence (Morningstar). The aspect of invisibility, evidenced in failed police protection and government inaction, can be challenged when Indigenous women are no longer silent (RCMP 2014). The REDress project is a method of resisting this imposed silence.

Miss Cremo talks about the way in which history must be decolonized; the system has to start teaching more than a one-sided story. The opinions and knowledge of Indigenous peoples

have been deliberately excluded from what is considered Canadian history, thereby perpetuating and legitimizing the power of those who distribute information. Holding the REDress project in an academic institution opens up the dialogue about missing and murdered Aboriginal women, and allows people to think critically about the reasons why Aboriginal peoples are in their current situations. When speaking about the outcome of this project, Miss Cremo says that she hopes the REDress project contributes to the larger issues at hand:

> We're not going to be oppressed anymore and the institution is going to allow education, Aboriginal education, to be heard, because it's not...just first nation's history or 'it's just our truth', no, it's everyone's truth, it's everyone's history and we have to make sure that we bring that out in our classrooms.

Having the red dresses on display in an academic institution both indirectly and directly challenges the one-sided story of history that is commonly taught at universities (TRC 2012). The direct effect of the dresses is that they make a bold statement, grabbing the attention of the viewers (See Figure 5). Indirectly, the red dresses represent larger systemic issues that must be acknowledged in order to move forward.

To bring attention to the current issues that are a result of history is a call for people to pay more attention to what has happened, and to question why Aboriginal peoples are in the position they are today. Jasmine adds that "this is what StFX needs, this diversity". To raise awareness about the crisis of missing and murdered Aboriginal women is to engage with the reality that many peoples face, and to acknowledge the hurt that history has caused. Moreover, the promotion of awareness about missing and murdered Aboriginal women can foster an environment where people begin to talk about issues, as Jasmine says, "it doesn't take a special person to realize that something is wrong, to see that there is an issue". In promoting awareness, the REDress project provides a fundamental perspective in understanding the neglected facets of our shared history.

Although the REDress project raises awareness about the present circumstances of Aboriginal communities in regard to the crisis of missing and murdered Aboriginal women, the project itself does not directly address the underlying systemic issues that are inherently racist. The project calls attention to the present circumstances of missing and murdered Aboriginal women, but does not offer any context into why this situation is occurring. The problems presented by the ERC's practices of event-application and risk-mitigation demonstrate how challenging it can be to create politically engaged statements on campus. Jasmine elaborates:

> I definitely like the campaign because I feel like it brings a lot of awareness, but I feel like it brings awareness to the women that are missing, but not to an extent the sort of systemic problems that lie behind those reasons... [The red dresses] make it look flashy and it makes people think about things in sort of a critical way, but it doesn't give a full image.

While the project can encourage people to think in a more critical manner about the issue of missing and murdered Aboriginal women, the inclusion of increased contextual evidence could provide a more holistic understanding of the systemic racism Aboriginal peoples must endure. This may include a more interactive exhibit, wherein more information is given about the issue. The crisis of missing and murdered Aboriginal women is only one issue that Aboriginal people are faced within a society that does not equate their personhood with humanity. By calling attention to the crisis itself, people in the community can gain a better understanding of the current situation that Aboriginal peoples are forced to face. However, the REDress organizing committee felt as though there needed to be more of an impact in order to actually become a catalyst for change. As Jasmine illustrates, "it's bringing awareness, I think it's nice, but what's next? This awareness has been brought but how do we eliminate this issue, how do we move forward together?"

Beyond Invisibility: Honouring our Sisters

It is the dresses that mark the absence of the women who have gone missing or been murdered. Their absence is felt, and their presence is missed. The way in which the dresses move in the wind, it is almost as if there are spirits that inhabit them. They move, and they feel alive. One participant described the dresses as looking like "ghosts", which in a way, they are meant to. However, even if their bodies are gone, their restless spirits remain, and I think that is something that the dresses portray, "their spirits are broken, but it's not that it can't be fixed" (Morningstar). To Morningstar, the dresses go beyond respecting Aboriginal women. Instead, they honour the lives of missing and murdered Aboriginal women; "when you honour someone, that's everything. Their mind, their body, their spirit, like them. That individual… it takes courage and self-love to be able to honour people".

When addressing the functionality of the exhibit, Miss Cremo talks about the way in which the project works to create a more definitive pathway for the next stages of action to occur. Importantly, she addresses the need for Aboriginal women to be self-determining in the process:

> I think that what the REDress project is, [is] that it's a stepping stone. And I think that if we didn't have that, where else would we go? We wouldn't have these discussions; we wouldn't have these questions to do more. So I think that it is up to individuals, as independent women, coming together as sisters, being united, and we have to make sure that we keep pushing forward because we see those [dresses] and we understand those, but it's our duty to make sure that its not silent.

The awareness generated through the project creates avenues for empowerment. The resiliency, strength and determination of Indigenous women are factors that are evident and at the forefront of the platform. As such, women are enabled to hold each other accountable, to set the record straight and to change the perceptions of people around them with regard to history and culture. When the lives of Aboriginal women are honoured, it reinforces the fact that they matter.

Connecting to Culture

It is important to consider the way in which the REDress project establishes a platform to generate positive understandings of identity for Indigenous women. Morningstar mentions that "everything comes back to identity. And I feel like your identity is twisted to how society should make you want to feel". The red dresses serve as a symbol to contrast the invisibility of Aboriginal women and reassert an identity of value, as opposed to previous notions of indifference. The project's main goal is to break this silence and call attention to the issue. This did occur within the StFX and Antigonish community, when local newspapers and radio stations were investigating the issue and asking more as a result of the REDress project.

The perception of the organization committee is that the project does not incorporate Aboriginal culture into the representation of Aboriginal woman. Though the humanity of the woman may be recognized as being in the dresses themselves, the individual realities and situations of Aboriginal women who have gone missing and been murdered is not revealed. The collective identity of Aboriginal women allows them a personal connection with the REDress exhibit, however, the organizing committee was unsure that it would be able to evoke the same emotion for people who had not experienced the same degree of loss and violence in their lives. People may note that a life was lost, but they may not see the impact that such losses have on communities and societies on a larger scale. Jasmine describes her opinion:

> I feel like the campaign is really nice, but does it reflect our culture? No. I don't feel like it does. Does it reflect who we are as individuals? No. Or who these women are? No. It's nice because it represents their missing presence and their spirit… I feel like I can understand that, because this is me. My people, my sisters, my mother, my aunties and my cousins, and I see those important women in those dresses, but for people who don't have that connection they

don't understand that. They don't understand the culture, they don't understand the history, they don't understand what sort of situation that brought these women to no longer be with us. And I feel like that is what is missing.

Jasmine also talks about how important it is that she is able to connect with her culture and allow it to build her back up.

I'm glad that I can take a step back and sort of take myself out of the picture and look at it, but a lot of our people don't know how to do that, or they ask themselves why are they in this predicament and not realizing that there is a systemic reason as to why you are in your predicament. And instead of blaming individuals, you got to blame the system. That's what's failing.

The ability to separate herself from the imposed identity of the state, one which is invisible or unimportant, is a critical element to her everyday success. Moreover, the cycle of blame referred to denotes the idea that Indigenous peoples have perpetuated their own self-inflicted misfortunes. It is a method used to evade responsibility of the state's obligation to maintain the welfare of its citizens. Recognizing that the government has caused, and continues to cause, many of the issues Indigenous peoples face today (such as alcohol abuse, drug addiction and high rates of suicide) allows Jasmine to disassociate herself with the cycles of blame imposed onto her. Instead, to look at the system and understand the ways in which it is failing gives her the power to work towards changing the current systemic barriers and racist attitudes that Aboriginal peoples face in society.

The Power of Knowing

The act of coming forward and sharing our stories is important. To shed light on the current issues is to also begin processes of healing. When Aboriginal women feel the effects of healing, there is an opportunity for empowerment. Jasmine reflects on her own story:

Being able to shine light on people's story is important because it empowers other people to step forward and to recognize what's happening isn't right, and that you shouldn't be silent and if that justice system doesn't work, I have my sisters; my supports who allow me to stand tall and to be proud, knowing I can step forward and be truthful.

Calling attention to the harms that have occurred against, and that continue to harm Aboriginal women, is important because acknowledging the past is the first step towards creating a better future. Being able to relate through stories and experiences is something that the REDress project encourages through the statement that sexual violence is prevalent in the lives of Aboriginal women. It may serve as a reminder that one is not alone in their "walk" and that there is hope for the future.

Considering the Other Side of History

The REDress project does not reinstate the humanity of these women, but Miss Cremo states that in the dresses, "I see hope, and I see that our women are going to be okay and regain our power and make sure that we're heard". The loss of power and strength of Aboriginal women through decades of colonization and intergenerational trauma is one of the first things that needs to be regained before any course of action is taken. Jasmine explains why understanding history is so important:

I feel like when people think that they don't feel the history behind it and they don't understand that there has been so much violence and oppression and just, I always struggle to use the word genocide, but that's what I believe has happened to our people. And it's not just women, but men and children and elders. Since the day of colonization, since the day they discovered the New World, it's just like, that messes people up. Can you imagine being a man, and in our society you're a warrior, you're a protector of your people, and have

these intruders come in and rape and kill and slaughter your family, our elders, your whole systems, and you can't do anything about it? Imagine what kind of psychological effects that has on somebody. And then you put that into reproduction. Those traits automatically get passed down to your children. You know what I mean? I just feel like people don't really understand that there are reasons why people do the things they do.

Without taking history into account, the present situation facing Aboriginal peoples, notably the high rates of missing and murdered Aboriginal women, cannot be completely understood. The intergenerational trauma that reverberates through some Aboriginal communities, a result of colonization, is often overlooked. This cultural genocide has been sanitized throughout history with the passage of time, but needs to be exposed for what it really is. The REDress project demonstrates the current crisis of missing and murdered Aboriginal women, a potent illustration of the effect of bureaucratic and legislative disregard, that is occurring throughout this country.

The REDress Project: Encouraging Reconciliation

There are two dimensions of reconciliation that the REDress project encouraged on the StFX University campus. Firstly, at the public level, evidence by the increase in awareness of the crisis of missing and murdered Aboriginal women within the campus and community. Secondly, at the interpersonal level, wherein myself and other members of the committee created "lifelong friendships" (Morningstar).

Large Scale Reconciliation

The REDress project has potential to open doors to further education about Indigenous culture and incorporate their ways of being into the educational system. One of the biggest factors of reconciliation is that it requires an honest relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations. Miss Cremo says that what is necessary to begin the process of reconciliation is "for us to work together and build a stronger community, we have to work together. We don't have to assimilate, but have

people who are able to push us in the right directions". She indicates that there needs to be more support for Aboriginal students within the university system, which starts with the recognition that they have been systemically disadvantaged for years. In this case, it is not necessarily about giving everyone the same resources so they can access education, it is about creating bonds of solidarity within the system so that Aboriginal students can feel their culture is represented in the institution (TRC 2012).

The REDress project exemplifies the alternative avenues of learning that can be used by the institution, and furthermore, should be encouraged. This type of learning, when taken into the hands of Aboriginal women themselves, demonstrates not only their resilience and strength, but their capacity to carry out education processes that encourage reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in government funded institutions. It is also evident that the exhibit garnered enough respect from the students and faculty at the university to support its continued exhibition. I think that this example shows the willingness of the community to help and to engage in activities that are representative of reconciliation.

Figure 7: (Left to right) Morningstar, Natalie, Jasmine and Miss Cremo. This picture was featured in the Antigonish Casket, the local newspaper, 2016
(Source: Antigonish Casket)

Interpersonal Reconciliation

The women in the REDress organizing committee felt that the project reflected one of the most fundamental elements necessary for reconciliation to take place, which is recognition: recognition of the past, and the way in which it has influenced the present. In this way, the REDress project and the steps involved in the organization of the exhibit create a microcosm of the larger social situation. With respect towards more large-scale efforts of reconciliation, Morningstar reflects on the way in which the REDress project embodies the most important aspects of the treaties:

> Look at this [points to dresses], we have a lifelong friendship here that we developed just from having Natalie reach out. And when we talk about making those things personal, that's what it is, its creating those friendships. Those treaties were created for peace and friendship and this is us living it out. And that's the take home from this, for the community and the institution and the faculty and the students to realize that it's a partnership (See Figure 6).

Efforts of reconciliation through this process begin from the ground up. The relationships formed throughout the REDress project can be viewed as an act of reconciliation in part because of the PAR process. Largescale reconciliation, such as that between Indigenous and other Canadian systems of governance, must first rectify relationships on the individual level.

Importantly, PAR allowed for there to be transparency in the research process, which instilled meaningfulness in the relationships that were developed throughout the project. These are qualities that should continue to inform community and grassroots level projects that involve Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations, so as to embody those elements that Morningstar speaks to truth and reconciliation.

With regard to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and the efforts that have taken place in Canada to gain momentum with regard to reconciliation, Jasmine states that:

> When we talk about truth and reconciliation, that first word is truth, and I feel like this... it just shows so much truthfulness. That's the first step in recognizing and understanding that this is an issue, that this is a problem, now it's like how do we work together to push forward and to do better. That's definitely what I hope that people get from that.

This comment demonstrates Jasmine's view that there needs to be better recognition of the situation that Aboriginal people in Canada face. The REDress project should be viewed as a way to raise awareness about the issue, especially among populations who perhaps do not have direct exposure to it. This is important because without recognition of the wrongs done there will not be space for movement forward.

Encouraging Empowerment

By moving Aboriginal peoples away from the periphery and toward the center of knowing, their voices are accorded importance and value. Solidarity comes from the shared experiences that a common identity is based upon, and is something that Indigenous females today may not necessarily have access to as a consequence of colonialism. In line with the Indigenous feminist perspective, women have the ability to empower each other when they come together. The women involved in the REDress organizing committee demonstrated the sense of unity that arose between us as a result of our work together and support for each other along the way.

Our friendship is based on principles of honesty and respect, which are two elements that have been absent in the relationships that characterize many Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal relationships. PAR allowed for a decolonized approach to research, wherein a transparent process guided our activity. It encouraged a space where hierarchy between researcher and participants was mitigated by

the larger process of action that required cooperation, trust, and collaboration. The organization of the REDress committee was largely a product of equal involvement by all participants, including myself.

Moving Forward

As the late Patricia Monture-Angus, Mohawk lawyer, activist and educator has demonstrated (1995), violence is equally as effective when manifested in silence. The REDress project is important because it is a way through which silence can be broken. When a population is silenced by the force of domination, they also may be silenced within themselves. It may not be what we cannot say to each other, but rather what we cannot say to ourselves that causes the most pain (Sider 2014: 19). By bringing attention to the problem, potential pathways towards healing can be recognized.

That the red dresses are emblematic of blood, the life-force that runs through our veins, and more specifically bloodshed and blood that has been lost, points to the fact that the crisis of missing and murdered Aboriginal women is an ongoing struggle. As Sider (2014) states, "struggle itself not only dignifies but heals" (20). Raising awareness about the situation requires breaking the silence that Aboriginal women have been subjected to. The REDress project becomes a symbol of empowerment, then, because it breaks the silence that has characterized much of the engagement and relationship between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

Community-Based Collaboration and Reconciliation

Instead of continuing the cycles of blame that frame Aboriginal peoples as the source of problems that are actually caused by societal oppression, collaborative projects recognize that social and political structures constrain Aboriginal populations. As such, the combination of ideas can strengthen and create new systems that are "directed at changing institutions that deal with indigenous peoples, and not at changing indigenous peoples to fit the structures" (Smith 2012: 148). Institutions are key in the dissemination of knowledge within society and have largely contributed to

the continuation of colonization in present day (Smith 2012). The power embedded within the "prestige" of academia naturalizes the discourses and narratives that are provided by education and government institutions and the information being produced is therefore taken as "fact" and "provide *ad hoc* justification for the maintenance of inequalities and the continued oppression" of Aboriginal peoples (Smith 2012: 188). To disrupt these traditional practices and offer an Indigenous alternative by using PAR is thereby a strategy that aims to include Indigenous understandings within the dominant systems of society. Such inclusion within the system has the potential to allow Indigenous knowledge to be accepted on a wider societal scale.

In understanding the way that the crisis affects not only Aboriginal peoples but the wider community and the country as a whole, by means of addressing safety concerns and recognizing racism, non-Aboriginal peoples can begin to understand the importance of raising awareness and creating allies on large scale. As a non-Aboriginal student, my involvement in the organizational efforts of the REDress project exemplifies the kind of connections used to raise awareness about a critical Indigenous issue.

The REDress project, as a grassroots initiative, is described by Miss Cremo as a "stepping stone". The exhibit serves as a way to raise awareness about the crisis of missing and murdered Aboriginal women in the community but does not necessarily depict the larger systemic issues that the crisis is rooted in. However, the nature of grassroots activism allows for relationships that are not structured by the larger system to be established. Such efforts will serve to structure a fairer and more equitable system in the future because they are based on more sustainable and promising principles. Grassroots initiatives are important because they encourage more equal representation of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples without the constraints of systemic racism limiting interaction. The REDress project is a materialized effort that compliments this academic research in creating change.

Conclusion

The REDress project opposes the ascribed invisibility of Indigenous women in Canadian society. The hanging of red dresses in public spaces serves as a political statement of collective resistance to the inactivity, ignorance and avoidance by systems of government that have long perpetuated the problem. Honouring the lives of women who have gone missing or been murdered is also an integral part of recognition, which then enables efforts of healing. The resulting awareness that is created through the project is dependent on the way in which it is presented, which makes using a PAR approach highly effective. The combined efforts of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students were carried out on principles of equality and transparency, wherein both parts had the same opportunity to contribute and lead. As a community-based initiative, the REDress project created a space for the beginning of reconciliation, cultivating dialogue and producing meaningful action oriented toward a successful and effective awareness campaign.

References

Aboriginal Justice Implementation Commission. 1999. *Report of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry of Manitoba*. Manitoba: Aboriginal Justice Implementation Commission.

Archuleta, Elizabeth. 2006. "I Give You Back: Indigenous Women Writing to Survive." *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 18 (4): 88-114. doi: 10.1353/ail.2007.0000.

Black, Jamie. 2014. "The REDress Project." Accessed November 22, 2015. http://www.theredressproject.org.

Cannon, Martin and Lina Sunseri. 2011. *Racism, Colonialism, and Indigeneity in Canada.* Toronto: Oxford University Press.

Couture-Grondin, Élise and Cheryl Suzak. 2013. "The Becoming of Justice. Indigenous Women's Writing in Pre-Truth and Reconciliation Period." *Transitional Justice Review*. 1 (2): 97-152.

Cunningham, Myrna. 2006. "Indigenous Women's Visions of an Inclusive Feminism." *Development* 49 (1): 55-59. doi:10.1057/palgrave.development.1100227. https://search.proquest.com/docview/216912832.

Geertz, Clifford. 1973. *The Interpretation of Cultures; Selected Essays*. New York: Basic Books.

Georges Erasmus, and René Dussault. 1996. RCAP (Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples). Ottawa: The Commission.

Maracle, Lee. 1996. *I Am Woman: A Native Perspective on Sociology and Feminism*. 2. ed. Vancouver: Press Gang.

Marrouat. "Exhibition Review: 'REDress Project'." Accessed November 20, 2015. http://www.examiner.com/review/exhibition-review-redress-project.

Monture-Angus, Patricia. 1995. *Thunder in My Soul: A Mohawk Woman Speaks.* Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.

NWAC (Native Women's Association of Canada). 2010. "What Their Stories Tell Us: Research Findings from the Sisters In Spirit Initiative." Ottawa: Native Women's Association of Canada.

NWAC (Native Women's Association of Canada). 2015. "Fact Sheet: Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women and Girls." Ottawa: Native Women's Association of Canada.

Oppal, Wally. 2012. "Forsaken: The Report of the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry – Volume IV: The Commission's Process." Report, Government of British Columbia.

Razack, Sherene. 2015. *Dying From Improvement*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police. 2014. "Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women: A National Operational Overview." Report, RCMP.

Sider, Gerald M. 2014. *Skin for Skin: Death and Life for Inuit and Innu. Durham*: Duke University Press.

Smith, Linda Tuhiwai. 2012. *Decolonizing Methodologies.* 2nd ed. Dunedin: Otago University Press.

Squires, Dave. 2015. "Vandalism of REDress Art Project seen as Further Violation of Missing   and Murdered Aboriginal Women." Global News, October 30, 2015. https://globalnews.ca/news/2309641/vandalism-of-redress-art-project-seen-as-further-violation-of-missing-and-murdered-aboriginal-women/.

Suzak, Cheryl, Huhndorf Shari, M., Perreault, Jeanne, and Jean Barman. 2010. *Indigenous Woman and Feminism: Politics, Activism, Culture*. Vancouver: UBC Press.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. 2012. *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada interim report.* Winnipeg: Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

Acute Awareness of the Self and Interaction: Responsive Embodiment among Dancers and Sociologists

Andrea Farley Shimota

SUNY Purchase, a.farleyshimota@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

My experience and observation of the physical manifestations of insecurities as a dancer and sociologist led me to develop questions surrounding kinesthetic intelligence, critical cerebral processing, the concept of a "self," and feelings of embodiment. I became interested in how these reconcile under structures that promote external validation, alienation, and logical thought. This article describes a research-creation project that I began by choreographing a dance with six conservatory students researching themes of alienation, socialization, and scripted behavior. These dancers were individually interviewed about the creation process as well as their experience of dancing. I also conducted a contact improvisation event and group interview with the six dancers and three sociology students. An analysis of the results revealed that they felt a pervasive sense of monotony and disenchantment occurring with routine behavior and interaction in everyday life. They were able to disrupt this disenchantment by working to generate a sense of their own embodiment. Specifically, this entailed attending to concrete details, personal responsiveness, and acknowledging their own impulses toward and away from others. This allowed them to connect to a "self" and to others. In addition, novel physical interactions helped facilitate an understanding of where attention lies, amplified social connection, and combated alienation and disenchantment.

Keywords: alienation, arts-based research, attention, contact improvisation, (dis)embodiment, self, sentience.

The Beginnings

The sparkly costumes were the lure. Like many young dancers, I validated my decision to dance by saying that I wanted these exciting costumes. A similar justification occurred later, when I told myself that I was dancing to stay in shape. These ideas were initially cute, but upon reflection, they became disconcerting. Where was the concept of "self" in these explanations? Like many of my friends, I had been identifying as a "female," a "dancer," and a "student" for years. My perception of myself was defined in relation to the expectations, social validation, and positive attention I received in relation to these terms. But how was I understanding my choices? What agency was I giving myself to understanding my own experience? This way of identifying myself in relation to proscribed identities began an alienating process dependent upon external validation. I felt both myself and my peers seeking this validation.

The experience of identifying myself based on other people's observations – external validation – makes me feel disconnected from my own thoughts and ability to understand. I sense that I can comprehend things from an intellectual, cognitive, cerebral, top-down standpoint or from an intuitive, physical, embodied, bottom-up approach. Intuitive ideas come to me more rapidly than words but by questioning their validity, I cannot effectively articulate myself. Instead I try to deconstruct my intuition. In my experience, an imbalanced focus between the sentient body and cognitive mind leads to immobility, inflexibility, and reduced productiveness. Is this a universal experience?

My experience with a western academic school system in the United States leads me to believe that intellectualizing and cerebral analysis is more valid than corporeal knowledge, that hypothesizing is better than experiencing. However, what is one without the other? Both modes of thought need to exist in order to understand one's self and interactions with others. Can they even be separated? But what is the experience of understanding "self" and attention? Is it different for people who spend more time on discursive or kinesthetic modes of communication?

I am interested in looking at subjective experiences of cognition, movement, embodiment, insecurity, and how these concepts affect the sense of self. This led me to construct a research-creation project using dancers and dance as the reference for physical observation and sociologists as the reference for discursive thought. I use these two cohorts because they both seek to understand interaction, one from a more theoretical cerebral place and the other from a more physically focused place. Sociology is the study of the forces and structures that maintain and change social order and affect human behavior and interaction. Dance is a place where movement and images are made through the interaction of bodies in space, where interactions serve as metaphors to understand personal and social phenomena through highlighting the physicality of different human patterns. Looking at the two fields of practice in relation to each other led me to several areas of scholarship.

Understanding the Literature

The Self Amongst Others

All humans exist in relation to an intangible shaping force, culture. Culture is a perspective that allows individuals to understand and categorize behavior. It is a socializing force that, through its ideology, shapes the nature of a community and its inhabitants. People's habits and interactions are by-products of the values and ideologies of the dominant culture; people's habits are developed through exposure and repetition of behavior in response to their surroundings. Philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty claims that as socialized beings, we are comprised of the combinations of our various experiences (Merleau-Ponty 1962). Within the context of cultural influences,

our unique history shapes our presentation of self as well as our perception of any situation. Our perception is inevitably influenced by relative social inequalities, due to the different conditions of our upbringings (Wong 2013). As each of us develops our concept of the self, we begin expressing it through our actions, making culture by interacting with one another. These actions are physical, emotional, and intellectual in nature. Our own and others' perception of our actions and thus our presentation of self is of utmost importance to how each of us relates to the world socially (Merleau-Ponty 1962).

Erving Goffman describes presentation of self in his concept of the imaginary social script. Goffman theorizes that cultural ideologies form an assumed normative script where actions can be judged by adherence or deviation from these norms. Deviations result in feelings of alienation and disenchantment (Goffman 1959). The subtle differences in each human experience determine the nature of the self that Goffman theorizes. In this way, we situate ourselves as cultural objects through our "relative otherness" (Goffman 1959).

The Body Sponge

The self goes beyond the conceptual realm. Bodies are an essential, ever present aspect of the self. Michel Foucault argues that the body is marked by social norms (Ehrenberg 2015). The physical nature of culture means that our bodies are essential to how we understand, comprehend, and form meaning (Assaf 2013). Our bodies act with embodied knowledge: pre-thematic and pre-reflexive understandings of social scripts. Teoma Jackson Naccarato, a dancer/choreographer studying embodied cognition and memory, expands upon Foucault's theories, arguing that felt experiences mean that the body is not purely social (Naccarato 2004). Bodies "acquire understanding and skills through sensory experience and practice before we are able to theorize about what we have learned" (Naccarato 2004, 4). Therefore, because the body and the senses are constantly present throughout a person's daily life, all knowledge is embodied.

This sensation of embodied knowledge is the precursor to all critical, abstract, and theoretical thinking (Merleau-Ponty 1962). The implication

of existing in this embodied state, in one's "responsive intelligent body" (Novack 2016, 6) is that we know more and retain more knowledge than we are aware of or can verbally articulate. It further implies that critical analysis and cognitive thinking associated with intellectualism are not the only forms of processing or knowledge (Merleau-Ponty 1962). This non-cerebral type of knowledge has been studied by different disciplines under different names: embodied knowledge, implicit knowledge, muscle memory, tacit knowledge, kinesthetic intelligence, affect, affective information.

The inclusion of the physical body in the concept of the self is an essential but often missing portion of intellectualism. Merleau-Ponty postulates that critical analysis and cognitive thinking would benefit from including affective information. The error in dissociating the body and mind is exposed:

> All human 'functions' from sexuality to motility and intelligence, are rigorously unified in one synthesis; it is impossible to distinguish in the total being of a man a bodily organization to be treated as a contingent fact, and other attributes necessarily entering in to his makeup. (Merleau-Ponty 1962, 197).

This call to reintegrate various aspects of the self, including 'subjective history and embodiment, has been approached in feminist, post-humanist, and critical animal studies. Feminist researchers often acknowledge their past and their perspective in their writings. Post-humanist and critical animal studies utilize Merleau-Ponty's theories of phenomenology, prioritizing the sensory experience as a tool to effectively bridge the species divide and comprehend the sensorium of another organism (Chaudhuri 2017). In critical animal studies, the exchange of implicit information is highlighted because verbal language cannot facilitate the transference of information. For example, researchers studying bees found that information such as temperament and agitation could be transmitted interspecies, between bees and humans, by humans increasing their awareness of the intuitive, physical, sensing self

and cultivating the exchange of affective information (Moore 2013). In fact, psychologist Albert Mehrabian finds that, even between humans, only 7% of communications involving emotion and attitude occur through semantic language. Most communication occurs through body language (55%) and the voice's tonal quality and inflection (38%) (Mehrabian 2016).

Because the entire history of the self is included, exchange of affective information is described by Merleau-Ponty as, "the upsurge of a *true* and *exact* world" (Merleau-Ponty 1962, 62, emphasis in original). Affect is continuously present in the body and experience; it is inseparable from perception. Leading dance philosopher and phenomenologist Shantel Erhenberg postulates that to access this non-cerebral, kinesthetic intelligence and intuit others' emotional states of being, one must expose the proprioceptive, sensuous sense of an embodied self (Ehrenberg 2015). An example of this can be found in Assaf's research (2013). She references an audience member who was used to keeping a critical and analytical mind active when watching live performance. While watching Assaf's dance, this individual found themselves compelled to stop their analysis to leave space to experience the full magnitude of the performance (Assaf 2013). The experience of leaving space to just sense what is happening can feel as if one is "present in the body and mind" (Moore and Kosut 2013, 91).

Dancers' Understanding

While many researchers agree on the existence of embodied knowledge, studies of how it is accessed are scarce. Researchers such as Cynthia Novack and Randy Martin address theories of embodiment and kinesthetic intelligence from the perspective of bodies and movement. Their research is based on the premise that, like embodied knowledge, in all situations, "movement is possible and unavoidable" (Martin 1998,1).

In fact, movement is essential to revealing the tacit knowledge from both our bodies and from the culture in which we are situated. On a macro level, Novack claims that "through movement we reinforce, participate, and create culture" (Novack 1990, 7). This claim is supported by recalling Goffman's social scripts

and remembering the physicality of socialization. Martin asserts that through movement, people form more comprehensive understandings of themselves as well as learning new skills and influencing the world (Martin 1998). Through moving, we are able to understand and navigate more fully within ourselves and within the ambiguous situations in which we exist.

Dance is a form of movement that may yield interesting insight into kinesthetic intelligence. Dancing explicitly trains bodies for moving and in the process trains a hyper-sensitive awareness of the self, of the potential for movement in space, and of one's relationship to others. Moreover, dance is experiential, subjective, and qualitative, relying on a phenomenological, non-objective, lived, historical body. It draws on a deep well of in-articulable experiences (Naccarato 2010). Dancing explicitly trains one to access empathetic and kinesthetic intelligence. Studies of mirror neurons, neurons that activate both while doing and while observing actions, suggest that dance is able to tap into other bodies' memories of lived experience (Naccarato 2010). Accordingly, dance has been explored as a means of "constructing subjectivity, inter-subjectivity, and reality in a manner that strongly relies on the embodied and experiential as well as pre-reflexive" (Ehrenberg 2015, 47).

Many dancers study contact improvisation, a technique that explicitly trains kinesthetic listening. Created by Steve Paxton in the 1970's, contact improvisation focuses on communication between moving bodies in relation to gravity and momentum and encourages responses to literal and abstract points of contact. It encompasses different kinds of somatic energies, appearing both "wild and athletic, sometimes quiet and meditative" (Contact Quarterly 2014, n.p.). The movement language of this technique results in dancers being vulnerable, exploring physical, non-sexual, intimacy with others as well as placing themselves in risky situations (Novack 1990). Dancers roll, fall, hang upside-down, fly in the air, suspend themselves precariously, support heavier individuals, and enter many unpredictable situations. The physical precariousness of these situations requires that

dancers be "constantly in the crisis they appear to be in" (Martin 1998, 1). Dancers must quickly and tacitly listen to the needs of the space and others, adapting themselves to keep safety a priority.

Contact improvisation is about the constant flow of energy and negotiation, the physical dialogue between two or more individuals, and their reading of each other's responses and impulses through the senses. However, because of the speed and risk involved, filtered, top-down analysis is not fast enough. Dancers processing situations must primarily depend on kinesthetic intelligence, fully immersing themselves in the moment. Dancers exist where "reflection and embodiment meet" (Martin 1998,1).

Synopsis

The literature suggests that everyone exists in social settings, in relationship to others and to scripts created by cultural norms. These norms are historically situated and, along with personal experiences, integrated into the self. This integration is physical as well as cerebral. Research has also shown that movement, particularly dance, can help one access and understand this embodiment through training attention to sentient awareness. The practice of dance can allow individuals to be in touch with the constantly shifting sense of self, create awareness of others, and enable the kinesthetic transference of ideas (Martin 1998).

Martin suggests that by studying dance one can more easily "mobilize" or be responsive in any given situation (Martin 1998). In my research, I examine contact improvisation as a place to be present cognitively and affectively, to be attentive and responsive. I delve into individuals' experiences with Goffman's concepts of social norms and the resulting feelings of disembodiment and alienation. I investigate how the language people use in recalling their experience of movement relates to these concepts. Finally, I explore the feelings that dancing generates in relationship to understanding the self and others. Ultimately, the purpose of my research creation study is to go beyond theories in the literature and utilize the movement of dance to heuristically explore attention and how people understand their experiences.

Methods

My research is situated in the context of arts-based research and sensory ethnographies. My ethnography uses classic qualitative interview methods from Earl Babbie's *The Practice of Social Research*, auto-ethnographic reflection, and research creation. As arts-based research-creation, my work focuses on uncovering complex, nuanced, and subtle interactions instead of reaching precise conclusions. Throughout the interviews and improvisation event, I utilized Weber's concept of verstehen, empathetic understanding, to record, gather, and analyze the material. Accordingly, I noted filler words, pauses in the conversation, and memorable gestures. I focused on the verbal articulation of feelings of mood, physical tension, and texture to explore sociologists and dancers' perception of their affective experiences and their rationalization of the ability to perceive their emotions.

I first investigated how dancers relate physical gestural movements and emotion. Beginning by reading Goffman and Merleau-Ponty's theories of the self, social norms, alienation, and embodiment, I then choreographed a dance with dance conservatory students from Purchase College, SUNY based on these themes. In my choreography, I used arts-based research's values of "attending to the dimensions of the physical and social world" (Eisner and Barone 2011, 4) and "creating a more refined experience" (Eisner and Barone, 4) to reframe how the dancers and audience experienced particular gestures in movement. In March 2016, I interviewed these dancers individually about their experiences of the process.

In addition, I explored contact improvisation as a heuristic method for discovering how discursive minds interpret and practice attention to embodiment. I structured a contact improvisation event with my dance cast and with sociologists. Interviewing the group before and after the guided movement, I again paid attention to changes in the physical tension, texture, and mood in both myself and the other participants in conjunction with the concepts that were discussed.

Interviews with The Dancers

My open-ended interview questions created space for the conversation to develop and specify to the individual being interviewed. After introductory demographic information, recurrent questions of interest were:

1. Have you ever taken a prolonged break from dance? If so, how did you feel limiting your movement?

2. Do you find there to be social benefits to dancing?

3. Has being in a dance piece ever changed your opinion of a social issue or norm?

4. Are you providing or accomplishing something larger than simply performance through dance?

5. Can you describe the experience of creating and performing my piece?

The personal interviews with the dancers were detailed, lasting between 20-60 minutes. I recorded the interviews and took minimal notes, transcribing the interviews afterwards. In two situations, the recordings were erased and the content was reconstructed from memory and interview notes. Analyzing this interview material, I determined patterns in how dancers related to and communicated about subjects they were speaking about.

Heuristically Exploring Attention

To explore how dancers and non-dancers respond to, verbalize, and interpret their subjective understanding of their embodiment — embodiment defined as feeling receptive and able to respond to affective information — I needed to find a way for everyone to connect with their ability to perceive and feel their sentience. Connecting to an analytic responsiveness required creating a space where people could play with their thoughts,

Figure 1: Photo of Contact Event by author

feelings, and actions: a stimulating contact improvisation event (see Figure 1, a moment from the event where sociologists and dancers are moving together).

I arranged for four dancers from my cast (Alana , Ronnie, John, Ellie), three sociology majors (Terry, Becca, Victor), and a moderator (Karen) to meet in a spacious mirrorless dance studio for ninety minutes. (All names are pseudonyms.) The sociology students were not taking dance technique classes; they were interested volunteers recommended by the sociology department. While their interest may have introduced a bias, I thought that enlisting inquisitive individuals in the project would create a non-judgmental space and increase the likelihood that the participants would be open to attending to their own sentience and exploring their impulses.

We began in a semi-lit studio in a tight circle, I briefly introduced the participants to each other and to the concept of my project. Spreading out horizontally on the floor, Karen began verbally guiding the unspeaking participants through a physical exploration of releasing places of excess tension, finding places of contact, discovering supportive surfaces. Participants slowly generated self-awareness of physical movement by being prompted to attend to their sensations and weight by pushing and pulling and measuring tension, both utilizing the floor as a "partner" and engaging with a human partner. The thoughts softly articulated by Karen became abstracted, talking about acceptance and connection. What started individually on the floor developed into standing and engaging each other.

After the guided movement, Ellie left and another dancer, Billy, joined, and I conducted an open-ended group interview. The interview flowed without many prompts from me, revolving around similar themes as in the individual interviews: movement, alienation, identity. I asked general questions: "How do you feel right now?", "What were your experiences?", "How was it moving by yourself in comparison to moving with others?", "Why are you studying sociology?", "How do you relate to cerebral analysis/movement?" Again, I recorded and transcribed the group interview, noting when

and which participants seemed to feel uncomfortable speaking or moving.

As a participant in both the fields of dance and sociology, I could relate to the unique language, references, and physical expressions of both groups of participants. The small sample size in the contact improvisation event and choreographic process allowed detailed intimate conversations. With the dancers, this trust had also been established over three years of working together daily as conservatory students in technique classes and rehearsal processes for others.

Throughout the interview process, I became more confident phrasing and delivering the questions. As I relaxed as an interviewer and learned how to manage the flow of the conversation, the interviewees seemed to deepen their linguistic exploration of their experience. Also, pulling from my own experiences seemed to make conversation more comfortable, allowing the interviews to lead to a more personal, almost casual place. However, to my disadvantage later, being so personally involved with the subject matter allowed me to take what participants said for granted, rather than pushing them to articulate themselves with more detail. Any lack of clarity coming from my questions was more evident in the responses from the dancers than the sociologists, as the sociologists' language is inherently more linguistic and hypothetical. Therefore, the sociologists would continue theorizing without prompts from me more readily than the dancers. My findings are not generalizable, due to the small sample size and homogenous participant population. However, as an exploratory, creative research study, my aim was not to achieve generalization but rather to gain insight into a little-studied phenomenon.

The Findings

In working with my participants, I uncovered themes in the potential for monotony in vocabulary, insecurity in relation to acting according to scripts, disembodiment resulting from a constant analysis concerning adherence to a perceived script, and feelings of alienation from the self and others resulting from this analysis. In connection to the contact

improvisation event, I found there was reenchanting excitement and energy generated by attending to others actions in the group and paying attention to ones' own sentience and impulses.

Experiencing Vocabulary

Every field has its jargon, a repetitive vocabulary enabling a consistent, efficient, form of comprehension, fluency, and communication. In the sociology department, students utilize specific terminology to assist them in analyzing interactions and deconstructing social power dynamics; this language provides the "ability and access to talk about [disheartening] things," Terry explained. Dance also has its own movement-oriented vocabulary. In both fields, while the use of appropriate vocabulary is essential, the language can also become repetitive, routine. People begin communicating on autopilot, without really understanding or listening to the other person; there is no longer a push for total comprehension, action, or response. The conversation develops into a "monologue" and the language loses its subtlety as we get accustomed to the shortcuts in vocabulary. While appreciating the necessity of their field's vocabulary, both sociologists and dancers at times describe their respective languages as rigid and repetitive, monotonous, and disenchanting.

The sensation of feeling unproductive and disconnected from a field's vocabulary was spoken about similarly by sociologists and dancers as having a "fog in your head." Sociologist Terry (whose preferred pronoun is "they") clarified their experience of producing language but not actively attending to the impact of the words: "Using the same language every single day, every time I write a paper and it doesn't feel real anymore. It feels disembodied and it feels like I've reached my capacity." Karen, a dancer as well as moderator, described this sensation in the context of dance similarly: "I feel like I'm often doing these same moves over and over and I can't stop... same words, same movement words, every day."

These feelings of disembodiment, inactivity, and inattentiveness to the language of a field manifest themselves in several ways. The sociologists described the results of being in a "disembodied" state by saying they weren't as productive or effective in comprehending new material, participating in the classroom, or writing papers. For dancers, the sense of monotony and disenchantment from their kinesthetic vocabulary felt like succumbing to patterns the body had learned. Billy fought to articulate this, "These are set um pathways of communicating an idea. But that can get stale or feel like they can lose their meaning." Beyond feeling stuck or immobile, Billy described this as feeling similar to losing consciousness, similar to losing the "realness" referenced by Terry. These sensibilities are consistent with Ehrenburg's (2015) description of embodiment, being present in the body and mind; they simply describe the opposite sentiment. This disembodiment makes responding to physical tension or texture difficult.

Acting on Scripts

As language and practices recur, a script begins to emerge. People active in a field begin to articulate and incorporate its norms, both consciously and subconsciously. The expectations that members of the sociology and dance communities have of themselves to be articulate and effectively communicate an idea (conceptual or movement-based) within their language calls to mind Goffman's concept of acting in relation to scripts. Accordingly, having this structured vocabulary also involves having a level of self-doubt about the correct use of this language and the implications of not utilizing the language appropriately. What is it to "fail" at using a language?

Whether consciously or subconsciously acting in relation to scripts, a person often has the desire to achieve the "expectation" set by the script. The result of not successfully producing the desired idea is evident throughout my interviews. Ronnie pushed herself to explain the disappointment that occurs when she acts in relation to a script:

> Sometimes I feel really stuck in movement in my body. Like there is a right and wrong, very clear ... even within this, in contact improvisation. Because I have knowledge of my experiences with it, I see something that I think is an opportunity, and already I'm like out of the moment.

I'm ahead of it. And if I don't achieve what I think I should achieve, I, I missed something that could have been equally as amazing or better. Do you know what I mean?

The disenchantment resulting from the disappointment in not fulfilling her expectation is highlighted by the way she subtly hesitates before talking about the missed opportunity.

Past socializing experiences have taught people the patterns of language that have previously been successful in communicating an idea. In the quotation above, Ronnie talked about feeling "ahead of it," that is, about how acting from her expectations of what outcome should occur, what idea should be communicated, prevented the actual fulfillment of her idea. Her inattention to the present took her out of production and, upon reflection, generated anxiety about failure, even in a context where there was no right or wrong. We can feel, not that the script failed, but that we failed in fulfilling the script. This "failure" is anxiety-provoking because, as Goffman (1959) explains, measuring oneself against the script is a way to identify with one's "self."

This anxiety created by relating an identity to a script can also be seen in how dancers spoke about taking a prolonged break from dancing. In their personal interviews, dancers discussed feeling "bad." Prompted by my question about how it felt to "not be moving," dancers often cited and exuded anxiety and insecurity relating to their "identity as a dancer." After admitting that it can feel good to take a break from technique classes, Ronnie backtracked, reemphasizing that not taking dance technique classes, "just makes me anxious. Is that the answer? Is that an answer?" Even after acknowledging a positive result from not complying with the "script," Ronnie still tried to align herself with her conception of what a "dancer" does while seeking my validation about the correctness of her response. Ellie also explained how she felt when she was not dancing due to an injury. In the months of recovery, comparing herself to her peers and other "dancers" made her depressed:

I start getting like, super self-conscious just with like everything I do with myself when I stop dancing... [I was] jealous of what everyone else was doing. I had to shut down all social media. I like though if I like. I don't know, if I cut myself out this past summer cause I was like I can't know what everyone else is doing 'cause I'll be super behind and fat so I unfollowed everyone.

Ellie's level of discomfort was palpable; she was laughing uncomfortably, as she remembered how it was to not follow the script of a "dancer." Her perception of herself was integrated with those expectations.

Alana had a similar anxiety-inducing experience with a prolonged break due to injury. She saw a sports psychologist and referenced this period as a time of "crisis." However, later, Alana explicitly chose to not take technique classes for a summer, "taking a step away from dance" and disentangling herself from the "identity" of a dancer. She cited being much happier when actively choosing not to follow the conceptual script, saying it was "the most amazing decision I think I've made."

Scripts, Disembodiment, and Alienation

The prevalent ideology and pedagogy of western society encourages bifurcation between thought and emotion, devaluing sentience by discouraging the acknowledgment of feelings in cognitive thought and, as Merleau-Ponty (1962) postulates, dismissing the physical body entirely. Western pedagogy does not address the embodiment of one's subjective history and knowledge. Participants in my study, therefore, turned to external parties for justification, validation, and feedback as insecurities arose as a result of perceived deviations from the expected script. This quest for validation generates feelings of alienation from having a concept of one's self, which in turn furthers the quest for validation. While this cyclical phenomenon frequently arose conversationally during the interviews when we discussed acting in relation to scripts, it was explicitly apparent in the contact improvisation event, where nervous glances (showing the need for validation) were quelled by the prompt that "there is no right or wrong."

The sense of disembodiment resulting from this separation or even alienation from one's own sensory observations was quite clear in the context of the Dance Conservatory. Beyond the disembodiment created by not fulfilling the technical expectations of their script, the dancers were not even sure whether they were developing in a way that would lead to success. For myself and my peers, as dancers, even kinesthetic understanding of our own bodies feels like it needs to be validated by an external authority, a teacher. Alana described her experience in class: "I am just striving for acceptance all of the time from teachers and peers. All I want is to be told I'm good." However, what is it to be good? To be told "you are good"? What is external validation helping a person to understand or feel? Alana's speech softened as she recalled a time when two people asked her if she was a dancer while she was waitressing at a café. Something about being identified as a dancer, as a person outwardly fitting the concept of a dancer, felt grounding to her. She felt her identity was validated by having external observations align with her concept of herself as a "dancer." Alana believed that she was successfully fulfilling the script of a dancer by being outwardly observed as such.

Alana also spoke about her ability to "emit insecurity" when feeling tired, unsure, or disembodied. She described this nonverbal communication with those observing her, "a teacher will address you and say, 'oh you're too in your head.'" She went on to say that actively attending and responding to different sights and textures is "a completely different physicality for us, when we're too in our brain space and not just trusting our natural facility… it's all energetically what you emit to other people and what you are seeing." She felt a difference and claimed teachers can see a difference when she can connect to a responsive embodied practice. Ironically, Alana is giving the power of determining what is embodied away to a teacher who validates her "embodied" movement, potentially further alienating Alana from her own understanding of herself.

In addition, the sociologist Terry addressed their feelings of alienation from others as they focused on the results instead of the process of communicating an idea: "I feel like a lot of the time we're so like in our own heads we don't know how to like communicate with other people a lot of the time." Trying to clarify the concept, their attention is not on the receptivity of the other person. As Alana said, "being in your brain space" constrains the listening and thus communication ideas (verbally and physically). Conversation becomes about conveying a point, not about how much the other understands, thus leading to feelings of disconnection and alienation. In both instances, being "disembodied" and "too in your head" can alienate a person from their sense of self and from other people.

How Do You Feel?
Interestingly, in the contact improvisation event, simply talking about connecting to a sense of legitimacy in one's body seemed to allow participants to attend to the physical details in the space instead of whether what they were doing was "right" or "wrong." The participants began the process of alleviating their insecurities. Becca described feeling the shift from her analyzing mindset to a mindset of observing the space as a sense of "surrendering." Focusing one's attention on concrete physical experiences such as weight and touch enabled feelings of fun, looseness, catharsis, exploration, and curiosity to emerge. The participants' physicality visibly shifted during the event, becoming less hesitant to interact or generate movement the more they attended to these physical prompts. After improvising, positive energy was emanating from people in the room; I could see it in the casualness and lightness in peoples' bodies and conversation. "As soon as it was over I said I wanna throw a party," Ronnie recalled.

Focusing attention on one's sentience can be a personalized, welcome relief from the impersonal practice of analyzing abstract cerebral concepts and scripts, which, as we have seen, can result in feelings of monotony, disenchantment, and alienation. The overwhelming response by participants after

the contact improvisation event was that people "felt better about themselves," enchanted and less alienated. Dancers were energized by dancing with new people, which demanded that they be more physically observant and responsive. Sociologists appeared to be affected by the novelty of the movement itself.

When I asked Becca to articulate what it was to "feel much better," she responded, "I think it's umm. I don't know like it's just like to me moving is like a really connective experience and like so much of our culture like we're living in our heads all the time and we're always taught like to like almost bow to our brains." Becca was unsure of how to specify the feeling, and so this sociologist fell into her pattern of removing her "self" and her personal experience with these phenomena by switching to a theoretical instead of corporeal analysis. The shift in her physicality was visible as she focused on cerebral analysis as opposed to kinesthetic memory; she became more upright and looked around at others less. Becca was not insecure discussing theories and felt comfortable looking and explaining her concept directly to me. However, before, when I prompted her to talk about her feelings, something more personal or sensory, she was less comfortable and unsure of what to say.

Academia prioritizes a kind of logic, objectivity, and cognition that does not reference the "self" or its "embodied knowledge" in the analysis. Sociology students in particular, who spend most of their time in this setting, seemed surprised and very much affected by their residual feelings after attending more to their sentience during the contact improvisation event. Several people described the ability to "open up" and feel vulnerable and safe within the space as cathartic. Becca felt secure and liberated by having permission, knowing that in the context of the improvisation event, "'you can do whatever feels good for you." Expanding on her experience with academia, she said that sociology work does not "value intimacy or connection or vulnerability at any level, so to be in a space where you are allowed to be intimate and are allowed to trust and let go and surrender is really radical."

The sociologists were very taken by letting themselves be emotional during and immediately after the movement portion of the contact improvisation event. Interestingly, as soon as we reintroduced verbal language and they began deconstructing the experience and sociologically analyzing the structures that prohibit them from attending to their physicality, a bifurcation happened. Becca described her experience of attending to her responsiveness in her interactions with others as a "potentially transformative" way to look at relationships. However, a bifurcation existed between the "revolutionary" experience recalled and the unaffected and dispassionate nature of her speech. This happened for both dancers and sociologists as they abstracted their experience, but was more noticeable in the sociologists. Their immediate descriptions were energetic and emotional and personally invested as they described their feelings and encounters. Then their "sociological language" crept in. The sociologists' emotionality lessened. They became audibly less passionate and physically less emotive as their vocabulary became more abstract and the content of their observations became more hypothetical. While Terry cried multiple times dancing with people, they were able to speak quite unemotionally about the cathartic experience of moving in a group. Terry said afterward, "There is something really powerful about being able to be vulnerable in spaces and being able to feel everything you're feeling and just release it and let it go and maybe have another person carry it for a second and then releasing that." Yet I noted an extreme physical difference between watching Terry move and hearing them speak. Dancing, Terry was incredibly playful, lively, and initiated games with other participants; while speaking, Terry was still energetic, although they were slightly slouching and were not gesticulating as much as I would have expected.

Towards the Group
The contact improvisation event was a place where everyone involved attended to sentience, a place where their own bodies, the space, and the other people in it were prioritized. This awareness of details of touch and feeling arose, in part, from novelty of the event. For dancers, this situation was new because of the different bodies in space. As John articulated, "we're with

the same students for four years… so it's just so nice to share new energy." For the sociologists, novelty came from moving and being aware of others in an unfamiliar, physical way.

Opening up to a new kind of physical listening and responsiveness resonated with all of the participants in the improvisation. The attention paid to physical impulses and desires was an important practice to generate feelings not only of self-worth but also of group care and support. Excitedly, dancer Alana struggled to describe the feeling: "I don't know I felt like I was, like I was so giddy. Like I had a smile on my face the whole time and my eyes were closed. I was just like [pause] but it was quiet. It was like it was kind of heartwarming. I don't know just to feel like she could hear me." She was smiling with the recollection. This kind of attention was similarly difficult for sociologist Becca to explain:

> It felt very nurturing. I don't know why it's just like um like someone was listening to you and like almost hearing you and seeing you in a way that you're not seen and heard every single day um and putting attention on you in like a very specific way. And um uh and we don't receive.

Becca became more confident, clearer, using fewer filler words, as she began to theorize:

> Or I feel like we have trouble more receiving attention a lot of the time. Like we always put attention on other people so there was something really nice about this understanding and like giving and receiving and putting attention on the other person and them putting attention on you. It just felt very caring.

Dancer Alana described her physiological response, a smile, while sociologist Becca uses an abstraction, "nurturing." Alana was more gestural but seemed happy with the point she conveyed. Becca seemed less confident in what she said about her experience.

The contact improvisation environment highlights a specific responsive kind of listening and attention between people that made participants feel responded to and cared for.

Becca described her experience connecting with another person in the contact improvisation event:

> It's more of like a listening exercise than like. Cause I felt like when I was alone I could just do whatever felt good but like when you're with someone else like listening to them and what their body needs while also paying attention and being aware of what your body needs. So like it kind if. I don't know it was kind of it was like a conversation that you were listening and receiving and giving and it was almost cyclical.

Trying to move with another body forced Becca to be more perceptive not only of the space and the physical sensations occurring within herself but also what was potentially within the people around her. Her awareness of her body connected her with the attention of others in the space.

The participating sociologists observed that attending to movement and highlighting responsiveness to others helped them dissociate from overwhelming, disheartening subject matter studied in classrooms. Sociological theories link feelings of "alienation" and "disembodiment" to feeling oppressed by power structures under which we live. Unable to take action to change things, this abstract theoretical concept of oppressive structures "overwhelmed" the sociologists as they felt "powerless." Talking about an assigned sociological reading, Terry said, only somewhat sarcastically, "I want to like set it on fire and drop out of school." What is the benefit of being so theoretical? Moving so far away from specific concrete problems can leave students feeling powerless and stagnant.

Redirecting sociologists' habits of observation and focus from intangible abstract concepts to more concrete elements such as physical tension, touch, and change in themselves and others highlights their own responsiveness and individual choices. Feeling the ability to physically initiate and respond to people reduces their alienation at a tangible micro-level of interaction between individuals.

The connections generated in the contact improvisation event were initially obvious in the more casual, gestural, and group-focused body language and banter in the discussion following the event. Participants used terms like "emotional", "energized", "heartwarming", "reckless", and "cathartic" to describe their experience of dancing together and attending to each other, not to a script of right or wrong. Ronnie spoke of the enjoyment of "working towards something together." Ultimately, this connectivity addressed feelings of isolation and alienation. As Becca stated, "we're so disconnected from each other and to actually feel connection and feel genuine connection is so impactful. Really all people want is connection." This connection seemed to come from the ability to be aware and responsive to physical stimuli coming from the self and from others. Ronnie understood the experience in relation to ideas and feelings of hers, to a direction, to working with other people towards something. Becca expressed her understanding in a way much less personal and specific manner, an alienating manner that removed herself or her experience. Her method of speaking itself seems to encourage alienation and dissociation from the self.

Billy theorized that by actively participating, "it shows that you are a part of something bigger than yourself and that you are an important part of this larger thing. Just by being yourself." Billy's thought speaks to the value of listening and responding with the physical components of the self, to the connectivity between one's body, ideas, and others fostered by focusing on concrete not abstract attention.

Accessing Sentience and Emotion

The intensity of emotions experienced while feeling embodied and attending to one's impulses while moving can be quite unexpected. The sociologists experienced this catharsis in the contact improvisation event. Catharsis also occurred for the dancers while engaging in the piece that I choreographed. Alana described how, unknowingly, the physicality of my dance emotionally affected her when transitioning between my piece and another; "I was like [gasp] I can't think about anything... I don't want to talk to anyone else. I just wanna think about what just happened. It

hits and I don't want to do anything else. Just need to process." Alana described this experience as "traumatic." She was very taken aback with her experience that "someone could actually physically respond and like be upset" simply from the movement. Even while talking about it, Alana seemed to be recalling how it felt, eyes widening and using vocals to help communicate what she recalled feeling. I felt drawn to what she was trying to communicate and also a bit guilty for the intensity she felt after my piece. The experience of feeling an emotional response to the movements in my piece was not unique to Alana; other dancers expressed their emotional reactions both in their interviews and physically in the rehearsals (see Figure 2 for a resonant moment for one of my dancers).

This intensity of feeling is not confined only to the dancers performing the movement. The sociologist, Terry, admitted to crying often in watching live theater and dance. Simply recalling their experience watching my piece being performed brought tears to their eyes. They wanted to take a moment before attempting to articulate themselves: "I would talk but I will cry. Like swear to God... I'm so unprepared. I'll gather my thoughts first." I didn't press here because Terry felt so uneasy and nervous. Instead of continuing to say what they felt and speaking through the emotions they were feeling, Terry took a second to compose themself and resorted to more general theorization, saying:

> There is something about watching other people move and having it be an emotional piece and watching an ending to a piece that's very emotional. There's something. I can feel it. But I don't know how to articulate it. It's pre-linguistic. And I think that's why it affects me so much.

Terry's initial physical response to recalling my piece was clear and visceral, but subjective experience and emotion are not experiences that academia views as "valid" thought requiring articulation. But that is where the nuance, detail, and texture lie. The theoretical is helpful, safe, and impersonal. Unconnected to "the self," Terry is not the focus in their abstract

thought. Their thought can exist without any personal effect on Terry, generating feelings of alienation and impotence that their sociological vocabulary can promote.

What It Means

Like other arts-based research studies, my ambition is not to enhance the certainty of the subject matter researched. In my research, I set out to explore how people relate to a concept of themselves, how they understand and attend to the world. While the literature covered theories of cognition and physicality as well as disembodiment and alienation, I found that focusing on concrete ideas generated more pertinent results. Inspired by theorists Goffman and Merleau-Ponty's ideas of the self, social norms, alienation, and disembodiment, I examined how attention contributes to these discussions.

Dancers and sociology students became my research subjects because they both explore the "self," but with different ambitions. Sociologists seek to understand the self, while dancers seek to utilize the self. Sociologists focus on comprehension and communication of abstract theories through attending to discursive cerebral vocabulary while dancers focus on comprehension and communication through empathetic understanding of physical images through attending to kinesthetic practice. In the contact improvisation event, I attempted to provide a heuristic space to explore how sociologists and dancers perceive, understand, and interpret textures and qualities elicited from attending to physicality (concrete detail, textures, and tensions in space) and cognition (abstract concepts, generalizations, and theories.) It was an intersubjective space to play with thinking, feeling, and doing.

Figure 2: Photo of author's choreography by Umi Akiyoshi Photography

Many interesting thoughts and patterns emerged from my research. Vocabulary, both verbal and physical, can feel rigid, repetitive, and monotonous as it loses nuance while trying to communicate previously learned and experienced ideas if the "speaker" is not actively attending to the responsiveness of the subject to whom they are speaking. Sociologists expressed these sentiments in relation to writing papers and in classroom participation.

The vocabularies of both fields also generate scripts. Defining oneself in relation to a seemingly definitive identity created by these scripts, such as "dancer," generates anxiety as one tries to act in relation to these imaginary scripts. People seemed to identify feelings of "alienation" and "disembodiment" when they failed to adhere to the steps and achieve the anticipated outcomes of these scripts. This was most strongly articulated by dancers when they discussed prolonged periods when they were not taking technique classes.

To get participants, especially the sociologists, to attend to concrete physical emotions, impulses, feelings, and textures, I needed to validate their subjective experience, to shift their attention away from concepts of right and wrong. Attending to the subjective details in the contact improvisation event highlighted personal agency and responsiveness to their sentience; as the event progressed this made the sociologists feel "liberated" from disheartening impersonal and abstract sociological theories. Both sociologists and dancers felt "better" about themselves. The novel group movement appears to have created feelings of "embodiment" and responsivity. This increased responsiveness was clear in the participants' adaptive physical relationships with each other, acting on impulses towards and away from each other. All the participants understood this physical "listening" to potentially generate care, intimacy, and vulnerability.

Ironically, the discussion of intimacy and feelings occurred without eliciting much excitement, speed, or urgency from anyone. People were animated or emotional in discussion only when recalling specific memories or experiences with others in the space. Even then, as the discussion of their phenomenological experience became more abstract, the intensity of the conversation lessened; the bifurcation between the emotionality of the actual experience and the calmness of the concepts being discussed became apparent. Terry didn't cry while theorizing; they cried while moving and recalling details and textures.

Sociologists retreated to understanding their experience in the contact improvisation event through the language of their field. The language of sociology gives one the ability to gauge oneself in relationship to scripts, to understand "the self" within the context of larger structures and abstract concepts with little room to attend to nuance or detail. The sociologists understood tension in relation to power structures, in an impersonal way that was disconnected from physical responsiveness. In the interviews, it was easier for sociologists to omit discussing their physical experiences and place their experiences in relation to theories, rather than articulating concretely their impulses or feelings. The dancers were more likely to talk about the viscerality of their experiences and the language of their hypothesizes was generally less clear and more colloquial than the sociologists. This behavior is consistent with the demands of their "movement language."

If allotted more time and resources, I would expand my research. I would explore Marcel Mauss' work on giving, receiving, and reciprocating embodiment. I would also research how students from other majors attended to micro-interaction and detail. Additionally, I would spend more time individually with the sociologists to see if this could open up discussion in different ways.

As talented students in their fields, both the dancers and sociologists were enchanted and inspired by listening and attending to one another through novel movement and discourse. Other people can also benefit from this research on embodiment, consciousness, and attention. Integrating physical and cognitive interdisciplinary experiences into a

system of education and work could benefit many individuals, as this balance is enchanting and motivating. Encouraging people to attend to their own senses and impulses, as well as the sensitivity and physicality of others could lead to less insecurity, more responsive and productive relationships with others, and a less binding concept of "the self."

Acknowledgements

References

Assaf, Nadra M. 2013. "I Matter: An Interactive Exploration of Audience–Performer Connections." *Research In Dance Education* 14 (3): 233-259.

Babbie, Earl. ed. 2013. *The Practice of Social Research*. Belmont: Wadsworth Pub

Barone, Tom, and Elliot W. Eisner. 2012. *Arts Based Research.* Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Chaudhuri, Una. 2017. "Interspecies Diplomacy in Anthropocenic Waters: Performing an Ocean-Oriented Ontology." In *Routledge Companion to the Environmental Humanities*, edited by Ursula K. Heise, Jon Christensen, and Michelle Niemann, 144-152.

Ehrenberg, Shantel. 2015. "A Kinesthetic Mode of Attention in Contemporary Dance Practice." *Dance Research Journal* 47 (2): 43 -61.

Elliott, Denielle, and Dara Culhane, eds. 2017. *A Different Kind of Ethnography: Imaginative Practices and Creative Methodologies*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Goffman, Erving. 1959. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. New York: Anchor Books.

Contact Quarterly. 2014. "About Contact Improvisation." Accessed Dec 10, 2015. https://contactquarterly.com/contact-improvisation/about/index.php

Martin, Randy. 1998. *Critical Moves: Dance Studies in Theory and Politics*. Durham: Duke UP.

Merleau-Ponty. Maurice. 1962. "Phenomenology of Perception." In *Maurice Merleau-Ponty Basic Writing*, edited by Thomas Baldwin, 62-145. New York: Routledge

Moore, Lisa-Jean, and Mary Kosut. 2013. *Buzz: Urban Beekeeping and the Power of the Bee*. New York: New York University Press.

Naccarato, Teoma. 2004. "We know more than we can tell: Reflections on Dance Practice as Research." M.A. Thesis, Concordia University.

Novack, Cynthia. 1990. *Sharing the Dance: Contact Improvisation and American Culture.* Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Wong, Chee M. 2013. "Intangible Cultural Heritage of Dance as Medium for Intercultural Dialogue: Culture Assimilator Reinterpreted." PhD diss., Brandenburg University of Technology Cottbus-Senftenberg.