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Editor's Welcome

Martha Radice, Editor-in-Chief

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Welcome to another issue of *The Journal for Undergraduate Ethnography*, which wraps up our tenth volume. This issue opens with two articles examining dimensions of identity in the USA: Samantha Pentecost explores expressions of hegemonic masculinity at a co-ed scout camp, and Mary Heinz looks at the formation of furry LGBT+ identity and community online. Lorena Reinert then takes us to Asháninka territory in the Peruvian Amazon to show how Asháninka epistemologies sustain resistance to colonial oppression. The next two articles focus on France. Mariel Tabachnick investigates French college students' views on how Muslims fit into France's assertively secular society. Anqi Chen and Yongxin Lu analyze patterns of integration among Chinese immigrants in the Triangle de Choisy, the best-known *quartier chinois* of Paris. (Our cover photo, a creative commons image by Myrabella, depicts Chinese New Year 2015 in that neighbourhood.) Finally, continuing the migration theme, Yuxian Seow lyrically explores everyday transnationalism through the mutual care and loving communication she sustains with her grandmother.

With this issue, we welcome Karen McGarry, who joins the JUE team in the role of Co-Editor. Dr McGarry is an associate professor in the Department of Anthropology at McMaster University (Hamilton, Ontario, Canada). Her earlier research examined how Canadian nationalism was performed along with more particular identities of race, class, gender, and sexuality in the arena of Olympic-level figure skating. Her recent research focuses on currents of masculinity in high-performance swimming and scuba-diving tourism in the Virgin Islands. She is also coauthor of *Practicing Ethnography: A Student Guide to Method and Methodology* (written with Lynda Mannik, published by University of Toronto Press, 2017), an engaging and practical textbook that brings doing ethnography in contemporary North American cultures to life. I'm delighted to be sharing the editorial work with such an expert colleague.

It goes without saying that the months since the publication of vol. 10 no. 1 in February 2020 have been challenging. I want to express particular thanks to all the members of our Senior Editorial Board, named on the inside front cover. They have upheld their commitment to reviewing and rereviewing article submissions even as they shoulder the extra burdens placed on professors and researchers during the pandemic. I would also like to recognize the indispensable assistance of Briana Kelly and the support of Dalhousie University Libraries, whose infrastructure hosts this journal in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People.

Ten years is already an impressive lifespan for an undergraduate journal, and thanks to the continued commitment of everyone on the team of *The Journal for Undergraduate Ethnography*, we are well set for at least ten more.

Martha Radice

October 2020

Gendering the Boy Scouts: Examining Hegemonic Masculinity at a Co-Ed Backpacking Camp

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ABSTRACT

Masculinity has been studied in various outdoor settings, including the industries of ecotourism, outdoor education, and forestry. However, few studies have examined how physical space contributes to the construction of hegemonic masculinity in organizations associated with nature and the outdoors. This study relies on nine in-depth interviews conducted with outdoor educators and sixteen hours of ethnographic research completed at Mountain View Scout Camp, a backpacking program for youth operated by the Boy Scouts of America. Findings indicate that Mountain View is gendered both through its organizational aesthetics, which valorize a hegemonically masculine ideal, and via staff members' conception of nature as feminine and forestry work and tools as masculine. Results also suggest that men employed at Mountain View will occasionally embody a hybrid masculine gender performance by utilizing non-hegemonic traits of masculinity such as pro-feminist ideas. However, these episodic masculine performances also serve to subtly reproduce gender inequalities by accepting only a specific type of woman and rewarding men for superficial allyship.

Keywords: hegemonic masculinity; hybrid masculinity; organizational aesthetics; forestry; outdoor education

T he wilderness is gone, the buckskin man is gone, the painted Indian has hit the trail over the Great Divide, the hardships and privations of pioneer life which did so much to develop sterling manhood are now but a legend in history, and we must depend upon the Boy Scout movement to produce the MEN of the future (Daniel Carter Beard, 1910 in Segal 1996:639).

The outdoors, nature, or, as Daniel Carter Beard, one of the founders of the Boy Scouts of America writes, the wilderness, has long been viewed as a perfect place for boys and men alike to challenge themselves and, in doing so, construct their masculine identity. Few organizations have centered nature in their ethos as explicitly and dutifully as the Boy Scouts of America[1] (BSA), which, from its inception, has considered the outdoors to be the premier place for a boy to become a man (Hantover 1978; Jordan 2016). In part, because of the BSA's long history as a single-gender organization, many Americans were at least mildly surprised to learn that on February 1st of 2019, the Boy Scouts would begin to allow girls into their ranks, integrating one of the largest single-gender organizations in the country.

Although previous research has detailed the relationship between the BSA and masculinity in its nascent stages (Hantover 1978; MacLeod 1982; Jordan 2016), the organization's recent integration necessitates a re-examination of its relationship with gender.

The purpose of this research is two-fold. First, it seeks to provide an estimation of the potential barriers that young women may face in a newly gender integrated Boy Scouts of America. Second, it offers new understandings of how the gendering of space can affect outdoor education, ecotourism, and forestry focused organizations. To accomplish these goals, I examine Mountain View Scout Camp[2]— one of the BSA's biggest and most profitable high adventure camps which draws thousands of participants from across the country and around the world every summer. Mountain View's operations include both outdoor education and conservation programs, allowing for the study of gender in the industries of outdoor education, ecotourism, and forestry. Mountain View is also a site for examining potential problems elicited by gender integration as it has been co-ed since the 1970s. This history, combined with the fact that it is a major conduit of the BSA's policies, make it an ideal space to examine how the BSA deals with gender and its performance, and how this will potentially affect the young girls and women entering into its programs.

Relying on theories of gendered organizations and multiple theories of masculinity, I consider how hegemonic masculinity is reproduced in the material and spatial context of the organization as well as how individual staff members utilize a hybrid masculinity.

Literature Review: Gendered Spaces and Masculinity

I draw on two central bodies of literature: the gendering of space and the cultivation of hegemonic and hybrid masculinities. The first section examines the production and gendering of space, specifically organizations, and nature, while the second explores how hegemonic and hybrid masculinities are created and maintained through social interactions and gendered discourses.

Feminine Nature, Masculine Occupations, and the Gendering of Space

The sociological study of space suggests that it is both processual and relational rather than static, and that space develops over time and through various channels (Löw 2016). Scholars have also discussed how space is both itself gendered and part of the social production of gender (Spain 1992; Colomina 1996; Löw 2006; Wasserman and Frenkel 2015). For this paper, I examine organizations and nature as gendered spaces.

Joan Acker (1990) pioneered theory arguing that rather than being neutral units that house gendered bodies, organizations should be understood as fundamentally gendered themselves. More recent scholarship has expanded upon Acker's work and has generally followed one of three arguments: 1) bureaucracies are inherently gendered, 2) organizations are gendered if their workforce is dominated by one gender, or 3) organizations are gendered through discourses (Britton 2000). In her "gendering-through-discourse" perspective, Britton (2000) asserted that future studies should examine both the gendered social-historical context of organizations and the ways that actors within these spaces engage in gendered practices. Additionally, sociologists have argued that workplace gender inequalities can be the result of the interplay between the gendered structure of an organization and the gender performance of the workers (Pierce 1995; Williams 1995). For example, Christine Williams (1995) found that men in feminized occupations such as nursing actively seek to differentiate themselves from their female colleagues, and that by doing so, they help to reproduce hegemonic dominance. Also, Jennifer Pierce (1995) discovered that women in the male dominated occupation of trial attorney feel pressured to act more like men in order to be successful at their jobs.

Furthermore, organization members' relationship to their surrounding material space is potentially essential to understanding the less obvious ways that hierarchies and specific gendered identities are created within organizations (Wasserman and Frenkel 2015). Through the study of organizational aesthetics (OA), recent scholarship has addressed the more subtle ways that groups are gendered. OA has been described as "a *sensory map* through which organizations' members and visitors intuitively sense what the organization is all about, what its main values are, and who the organization sees as the ideal worker (Wasserman and Frenkel 2011, 503). OA can include things such as images that reflect organizational values (Hancock 2005) and art, which can provide information about the historical context of an institution (Strati 1992). All organizations have some type of organizational aesthetics. Relying on and

extending these previous studies, I examine the ways that the gendered organizational aesthetics of Mountain View reinforce hegemonic masculinity via the artwork that is commissioned for and prominently displayed at the site.

Although organizational sociology generally calls to mind the traditional office, jobs in more natural settings such as work within ecotourism and forestry industries have also been studied. Ecotourism can generally be understood as a form of tourism based in nature, with key goals such as citizen education, promoting conservation, sustainability, and ethical/ responsible engagement with the outdoors and its resources (Donohoe and Needham 2006). The ecotourism job of "guiding" has been identified as being male-dominated (Tran and Walter 2014), and backpacking and mountaineering, subsections of ecotourism, have traditionally been considered male-oriented recreational activities (Noy 2007; Humberstone 2000; Lugg 2003). In Mendoza's (2020) study of one popular destination in the Patagonian Andes, he found that "ecotourism distinguishes, elevates and valorises certain bodies over others within its logic of accumulation", elevating men whom he identifies as having "alpine masculinity" over women and other men without such a gender identity (211).

The forestry industry has also historically been associated with men and masculinity (Quam-Wickham 1999; Follo 2002; Brandth and Haugen 2005). In the industry itself, domination over nature (Brandth and Haugen 2005), the use of tools (Brandth and Haugen 2005; Desmond 2007), and technical skill (Quam-Wickham 1999; Desmond 2007) are all ways in which masculinity and manliness have historically been quantified. Matthew Desmond's (2007) ethnography of wildland firefighters in the US Forest Service has revealed how the forest can function not only as a worksite, but also as a place for men to create and enact a certain type of what he calls "country masculinity."

Although many ecotourism and forestry occupations have been closely associated with masculinity, the natural world itself has often been perceived as being more closely aligned

with femininity. Little and Panelli (2003) have argued that nature "is equated with femininity and with emotions, and set in binary opposition to masculinity, science and rationality" (286). Male dominance over nature has also been documented as being essential to the construction of masculinity in specific local contexts (Woodward 2000). These studies indicate that the natural world is conceived of as a feminine space over which men exert their dominance. However, specific outdoor spaces and areas in nature have also been gendered as masculine ones in an attempt to actively exclude women. Reidy (2015) has recounted how, in an effort to prevent women from having access to European peaks and mountains such as the Swiss Alps, 1800s physiologists crafted elevation zones that they gendered, wherein lower elevations were labeled as feminine and available to women and children, while higher elevations were labeled as masculine and exclusive to men. Morin, Longhurst, and Johnston (2001) have explored a similar phenomenon in more recent times, documenting how women's completion of a difficult mountaineering feat "feminizes" it and lowers its perceived difficulty to other male climbers. With these studies as a backdrop, I explore the ways that gender plays out at Mountain View as an organization, in the interactions among staff members and adult participants, and in the natural landscape in which it resides.

Hegemonic Masculinity and Hybrid Masculinity

In sociology and many other disciplines, it is widely regarded that gender is something that people "do" and "perform" (Butler 1987; West and Zimmerman 1987). One vein of this scholarship has specifically explored masculinity, how it is performed *vis a vis* other genders, and the consequences of such performances. Preeminent among this theorizing is Raewyn Connell's (1995) conception of hegemonic masculinity, a form of masculinity that situates the men embodying it into a dominant position over women and, because so few men fully meet its stringent requirements, the majority of other men. Hegemonic masculinity has been identified as having locally, regionally, and potentially even globally specific characteristics that identify a

man embodying it (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). As hegemonic masculinity is not static and represents "the currently most honored way of being a man" (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, 832), in the United States a hegemonically masculine man is generally understood as being white, economically privileged, cisgender, heterosexual, and able bodied. Scholars in outdoor education studies, ecotourism studies, and rural studies have identified variations of hegemonic masculinity in occupations such as outdoor education (Humberstone 2000), nature guiding (Mendoza 2020), and forestry (Brandth and Hauge 2005).

Although hegemonic masculinity has been sociology's dominant understanding of the hierarchies of gender power, seemingly new forms of masculinity have recently been identified. Bridges and Pascoe (2014) have found that these documented shifts in men's gender performance do not actually represent a change in gendered power structures, but rather are ways of concealing masculinity's privileges through what they call a hybrid masculinity. Men, generally young, white, heterosexual, and affluent, will take on certain traits associated with femininities (Bridges 2010; Arxer 2011; Schmitz and Haltom 2017) or gay (Heasley 2005) or black (Ward 2008; Hughey 2012) masculinities, giving the appearance of having a "better" or "gentler" form of masculinity. Yet, such performances often serve to subtly realign these men with dominant power systems. By doing so, Bridges and Pascoe (2014) have argued that "hybrid masculinities work to fortify symbolic and social boundaries between (racial, gender, sexual) groups – further entrenching, and often concealing, inequality in new ways" (250).

One way that hybrid masculinity can appear more progressive while actually reinforcing social inequalities is through what scholars have identified as discursive distancing (Wilkins 2009; Bridges 2010; Weber 2012; Pascoe and Hollander 2015; Pfaffendorf 2017). Here, men may assume more stereotypical feminine qualities, such as talking openly about their feelings, and in doing so, realign themselves with hegemonic masculine privileges that ultimately benefit them. Potential benefits of using a hybrid masculinity include: attracting women (Wilkins 2009), dominance over other,

"lesser" men through their demonization (Weber 2012; Pascoe and Hollander 2015; Pfaffendorf 2017), and subtly preserving gender and sexual boundaries (Bridges 2010). In contrast to the largely hollow allyship of hybrid masculinity, Delay and Dyment (2003) suggest that real strides towards equality in industries such as outdoor education can be accomplished by men using their masculine privileges to engage in discussions about and ultimately dismantle structural sexism and exclusion.

There are several gaps in masculinities literature that this study aims to address. First, as an organization associated with the masculine industries of ecotourism, forestry, and outdoor education, Mountain View is a unique space for exploring how hegemonic masculinity is embedded into physical space through organizational aesthetics and members' discourses. Second, research on outdoor educators has done little to examine the specific ways in which hegemonic masculinity is reproduced, and scholarship on outdoor professions and masculinity has primarily been focused on research sites outside of the United States. Furthermore, although prior scholarship has illuminated various ways that space can both inform gendered hierarchies and how these same hierarchies are reflected in space, outdoor-focused industries have remained mostly unexplored through this lens. Finally, there have been no recent sociological studies that have examined gender performance in members of the Boy Scouts of America.

Methodology

This study relies on nine in-depth, semi-structured interviews conducted from April to October of 2018 with outdoor educators at Mountain View Scout Camp as well as ethnographic data from fieldwork conducted during July and August of 2018. Interviewees were recruited through my contacts from Mountain View as well as from a Guide department employee database. Seven individuals were directly asked to participate, while the final two were randomly selected from a pool that expressed interest after I sent a recruitment statement to all the Guides who met specific requirements. I only contacted

individuals who were in their second, third, or fourth year as a Guide to ensure that they could answer in-depth questions about working with adult and youth BSA participants. Interviews ranged from 1 hour to 2 hours and 42 minutes, for an average of 1 hour and 25 minutes. Eight of the nine interviews were conducted over the phone, and the final one consisted of a face-to-face interview. All individuals were assigned a pseudonym of their choosing prior to beginning their interview.

All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed. Respondents were asked a series of questions about their experiences with the Boy Scouts of America as well as their work responsibilities and interactions at Mountain View Scout Camp. Phone interviews were necessary for this study because a natural disaster occurred in the summer of 2018 that prevented Mountain View from operating normally and caused many individuals to end their contracts early. Instead of conducting in-person interviews like I had planned, I was compelled to do phone interviews. Therefore, there is at least one limitation to note: phone interviews prevented me from being able to see facial expressions and body language, important cues that are detected with in-person interviews.

All respondents identified as white and were either twenty-one or twenty-two at the time of their interviews. Each had worked at the research site for a minimum of two years, and all were enrolled in some form of higher education most of the year, therefore considering Mountain View to be seasonal employment. Respondents had various levels of affiliation with the Boy Scouts of America; some had grown up in the program since they were very young and others had never been a part of the organization until they decided to work at Mountain View. I interviewed four women and five men. All had been exclusively employed in the Guide department, which hires young adults to teach youth participants and their adult advisors the necessary skills to be able to complete a ten-day, strenuous backcountry trek.

Ethnographic fieldwork was conducted over eight total workdays at the end of the summer of 2018 after a natural disaster disrupted

Mountain View's normal operations for the season. This event meant that it was difficult to find a stable working schedule until the end of the summer when I served as one of two supervisors for a BSA sponsored forestry team at Mountain View. During the day, my team and I would often work individually but would come together during meals, breaks, and after our shift was over. For this reason, the majority of my notes took place during breaks and after the workday was complete. Every evening, I would write up a summary of the day's events, paying particular attention to comments, actions, and occurrences that were gendered or involving topics concerning gender, sex, or sexuality. These notes were later typed up and coded for themes pertaining to the gendering of the environment and various expressions of masculinity.

As an individual who has been employed by the BSA at Mountain View for four summer seasons, I had easy access to the research site and possessed technical knowledge of the various requirements, culture, and traditions of the organization, allowing me to establish rapport with my respondents quickly. While my positionality as a woman helped me to engage with other women about the hardships of working in a male-dominated and highly masculine space, there is the possibility that male interviewees may have been less open about their opinions concerning gender. Nevertheless, my history of employment and knowledge of Mountain View's inner workings still allowed me to cultivate a sense of trust with male respondents.

As an ethnographer, I was able to easily engage with and observe participants as my own demographic characteristics, being a white individual in my early twenties, match those of the large majority of Mountain View's staff members. I was the only woman in the forestry crew I co-supervised, but this was unusual for the nineteen forestry and fire rehab crews that were in operation during the summer of 2018. Most had at least two women and many had more. My gender was rarely openly commented on by crew members with perhaps the exception of an occasional joke referring to me as a maternal figure. Crew members did not appear to censor themselves around me any more than they did my co-supervisor, meaning

that I was privy to all types of interactions including sexually explicit comments and jokes made throughout the day.

The Boy Scouts of America: A Brief History

The Boy Scouts of America has long been a prosocial organization designed for America's male youth. Sociologists and historians have pointed to various reasons for its rise in prominence in the twenties, including the perceived feminization of middle-class white boys (Hantover 1978), as well as adult Americans' and parents' bid for control over adolescents, whom they perceived as being overly rebellious towards authority (MacLeod 1982). Founded in 1910, the BSA today is one of the most well-known youth organizations in America, eclipsed only perhaps by the YMCA. In its heyday in the 1970s, the BSA's enrollment peaked at approximately 6.3 million active members (Arneil 2010). Today, it has approximately 2.2 million youth participants and 800,000 adult leaders (BSA 2020). Over the last century of its existence, the BSA has had over 110 million members registered within its ranks (Jordan 2016). The BSA's recent drop in participation has been attributed to the organization's inability to shift with changing times and its history of excluding gay and transgender youth and adult participants (Arneil 2010).

While the YMCA and other organizations sought to assimilate immigrant boys into the dominant Protestant culture of the United States, the Boy Scouts of America was founded with the purpose of educating and molding elite, white, male youths (Jordan 2016). Historically essential to the Boy Scouts' ethos is its focus on certain moral values as well as its emphasis on building young men into well-prepared citizens and leaders through training in the outdoors (Hantover 1978; Jordan 2016). Currently, the Boy Scouts describe their mission as being "to prepare young people to make ethical and moral choices over their lifetimes by instilling in them the values of the Scout Oath and Scout Law" (BSA 2020, n.p.). The Boy Scouts of America as an umbrella organization hosts a number of different programs, all of which incorporate community building, interest

development for youth, and outdoor adventure into their various curricula. These programs include Cub Scouts, Venturing, Sea Scouts, Exploring, and formerly, the Boy Scouts, which today is called Scouts BSA. Of these, Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts were exclusively for male youth up until February of 2019.

As part of their goal of developing young leaders through the outdoors, the BSA operates regional summer camps and larger high adventure bases where Scouts can practice the various leadership and technical skills they have learned, such as knot tying, wilderness survival, and cooking over a fire. At the research site, youth participants and their adult advisors who are generally their parents, guardians, or trusted BSA volunteers, are led by outdoor educators known as Guides. The first women Guides began to work in the 1970s and have since grown as a percentage of the outdoor educators on staff, generally staying a little below a fifth of the department's total members. As of the 2018 summer season, women Guides made up approximately 17% of the department as a whole and about 26% of the Guide department's leadership.

Findings

In the following sections, I explore how hegemonic masculinity is embedded in the physical space of the research site and is a central part of the interactions of camp participants and employees. I argue that the organizational aesthetics of Mountain View and the ways that the institution and employees conceive of nature are informed by and, in turn, reproduce hegemonic masculinity. In the second section, I examine the ways that employees and adult participants utilize various gendered discourses that contribute to the production of both hegemonic and hybrid masculine performances.

The Gendering of Organizational Spaces, Nature, and Tools at Mountain View

Located at the foot of a large mountain range, Mountain View Scout Camp backs against a long ridge, facing out towards flat plainlands. When Scouts first arrive, either by bus or personal vehicle, they the drive up a narrow two-lane highway, eventually passing under a large sign welcoming them to the camp. After

being checked in by staff, they will be introduced to their Guide, a young man or woman who will be with them for the next four days, helping them train and prepare for their ten-day trek in the woods. After introducing themselves, Guides will take crews to drop their gear and luggage off at the small, canvas platform tents they have been assigned for the night. They will then lead them to registration, a trip planning meeting, gear and food pick-ups, a health physical, all of their meals, a chapel service, and finally a nighttime program in which the history and lore of the surrounding landscape and Mountain View is acted out. After camping and hiking with them for their first two nights, instructing them in concepts including wilderness ethics and in skills such as how to set up camp, read maps, and protect their food from bears, Guides will leave crews to complete their trek on their own.

When Scouts and their adult leaders are led across basecamp, they will encounter two pieces of art—a sculpture and a large painting—that set the tone for their upcoming outdoor adventure. While Mountain View has a museum in which many symbols of the camp and the BSA are on exhibit, here I focus on two pieces which are visible to Scouts and their adult leaders within their first half-hour of arriving at camp.

Walking from the welcome center into the main entrance of Mountain View's headquarters, crews pass by a bronze statue entitled "Journey to Manhood."[3] Approximately seven feet tall with a two-foot-high base, the sculpture depicts a young, white Boy Scout dressed in a traditional scouting uniform with a wide-brimmed hat, handkerchief around his neck, high socks, and boots. He appears to be in the middle of a hike as he is carrying a knapsack on his back and a tall walking stick in his right hand. His left foot is placed upon a rock in front of him as he looks towards the southwest, into the plains in front of him.

After passing this statue, the adult leaders of crews will walk into Mountain View's registration office with their Guide. Inside, on the wall that crews face as they check-in, is a portrait of a staff member. The staff member is a young, physically fit white man who is sitting on a stool looking off towards his left. In his

hand is a map of Mountain View's property. He is wearing brown hiking boots with red laces, which are untied. A hiking backpack with a patch from the Guide department stitched onto it rests against the left side of the stool. In the background is a skyline featuring one of Mountain View's most prominent landmarks.

What is notable about both of these works is that they depict images of young, white, able-bodied men in the outdoors, and both are visible to participants when they first arrive at Mountain View. Also noteworthy is the fact that both images have been used on postcards sold in the camp gift shop and on promotional materials. The latter piece has also been featured on the cover of a book about the Guide department. Conspicuously, there are no visual representations of women in these spaces. While this lack of representation may at first seem self-evident—it is, after all, a Boy Scout camp—it is important to remember that women have been working at the research site for over forty years. These artworks are significant because they demarcate who is foregrounded at Mountain View and who is not.

These visuals are essential to consider because they embody the gendered nature of Mountain View. Similar to Strati's (1992) findings about art in workplaces, both pieces reflect Mountain View's historical and present context. Specifically, it is an organization that caters to young, white, able-bodied, male participants, and where the majority of the workforce has similar demographics. These images' effects on Mountain View's target audience are discussed by Eric, who has worked at the camp for two years. When talking about Scouts' expectations of their trip to Mountain View, Eric said: "If you think about the Guide painting…with his map and everything…like that's the perfect stereotype of like what you would expect [your Guide] to be. Tall, lean guy. White dude. So then if like, you do have a female Guide it just maybe skews [how you envisioned Mountain View] a little bit." Here, Eric noted the power of imagery and how it informs crews' perceptions of who will be leading their trek and who will not. In this case, crews valorize a certain type of masculinity in their leaders: a Scout who is young, strong, white, and a man. This image of masculinity is pervasive within Mountain View's physical setting and marketing images, and the

effects of the imagery and the masculinity it depicts are clear: every single woman respondent relayed to me a story in which their position as a Guide was questioned by their crews. For instance, Abigail, a Guide with four years of experience, reported being told, "I didn't know girls could be Guides," and asked, "Girls can work at Mountain View?" Similarly, Rosie recalled, "I had a couple of crews that were like 'Oh, a female Guide, I wasn't expecting that.' So, it definitely was made…known that they were…surprised to get a female Guide."

Many of the women reported jarring feelings of being forced to realize they were thought of as "female Guides" rather than just Guides. This othering commentary was draining for women employees, who expressed frustration that their existence as Guides was regarded with such consistent surprise. Statements and questions like these highlight a disconnect between the actual gender makeup of Mountain View's Guides and the expectations that Scouts have. This confusion can be partially explained by the organization's aesthetics and by which type of people are highlighted and which are left out. Women Guides' visual representation at Mountain View—both virtually on the website and in the physical space—is almost non-existent, a fact that is concerning since women have been working as Guides at Mountain View for decades. The fact that organizationally supported images and art have such a large effect on the perceptions and understandings of Mountain View's participants not only is supported by previous scholarship (Strati 1992; Hancock 2005; Wasserman and Frenkel 2011), but also reveals how Mountain View institutionalizes a locally specific hegemonic masculinity. As Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) note, "at the local level, hegemonic patterns of masculinity are embedded in specific social environments, such as formal organizations" (839). At Mountain View these patterns are embedded visually in the organization's choices in art.

The hegemonic ideal touted by Mountain View also affects male Guides. Bob, a man with two years of experience, described how he has had crews question his ability to do his job because of their perception of his physical fitness, saying, "I've definitely been like looked

at from some of the adults being like, 'Well this guy is like heavier than me. He's leading us?'" Bob's comment reveals how images that only represent one type of person are hurtful not only to women but also to other men as well.

An analysis of Mountain View's organizational aesthetics reveals that its participants and employees are subtly presented with a visual reminder of who is "supposed" to work there, especially as a Guide. By valorizing a hegemonic male ideal via artwork that Scouts will see when they first arrive at Mountain View, the organization underpins participants' inaccurate perceptions of what a staff member looks like, failing to acknowledge not only women's presence but also the various body types and backgrounds of male employees.

While Mountain View's art contributes to its gendered nature, so does the way that the surrounding landscape is conceived of by its staff. Following a wildfire in the summer of 2018, the majority of staff members, including Guides, were unable to perform the jobs they were originally hired for after Mountain View closed its backpacking programs for the summer. In lieu of their previous assignments, a small portion of the staff members chose to stay and work as part of forestry teams known as Timber Stand Improvement (TSI) crews.

My field research from time spent working as one of two supervisors of an otherwise all-male forestry crew at Mountain View in July and August of 2018 reveals numerous ways that this workplace was gendered. First, I noted that nature was perceived as feminine. Over eight days, I observed numerous instances where members of the conservation crew I was working with referred to mountains and trees as "she" and "her." Comments included excited rallying cries such as "let's go get her" at the start of a work period to more casually referring to the landscape as a whole as a "she." Specific aspects of the surrounding landscape were also sexualized, including a large rock formation named after a woman's breasts and a landmark near Mountain View's basecamp referred to jokingly as "pussy mesa." These comments and the names given to natural geographical features are illustrative of a common finding that historically in Western countries, nature is gendered as feminine (Quam-Wickham 1999; Woodward 2000; Little and Panelli 2003).

In opposition to the feminine landscape, I found that at Mountain View, similar to previous research, forestry work is coded as masculine. Specifically, I found that the use of tools such as handsaws, picmatics, and chainsaws was related to men's constructions of masculinity in the workplace. As Brandth and Haugen (2005) note, in forestry "being capable operators of the machines establishes men's connection to other men and confirm their distance from women" (152). This finding is apparent in my fieldnotes in what I identified as a masculine hierarchy of tools amongst my TSI team. Hand tools such as loppers (sharp clippers for smaller branches) and handsaws of various sizes were viewed as less useful than chainsaws, which were seen as more powerful and ultimately more manly. In my crew, myself and two of the men I supervised had been trained as sawyers and equipped with chainsaws. The tool's connection to masculinity was illuminated by my crew members' continuous commentary on who did and did not have access to a chainsaw and their apparent fascination with operating one. Men who had the training and ability to run a chainsaw were often deemed "cooler," more capable, and ultimately more masculine men. Desmond (2007) similarly notes the importance of the chainsaw to his subjects' masculine constructions, describing how chainsaws were so important to his crew members' gender performance that one competition over who was better at operating a saw almost led to a physical altercation.

Crew members would regularly make comments and jokes indicating that the individuals who used a chainsaw (be they men or women) had larger male genitalia and were more masculine than the men who did not operate one. Although jokes about chainsaws making their operators more "manly" were made in a light-hearted manner, two of the men whom I supervised took a chainsaw and safety gear during a break and posed, pretending to operate the tool, for pictures that they later posted to various social media sites. This posturing indicates that the appearance of having operated a chainsaw represented an opportunity for these men to accrue social clout

outside of the research site, suggesting that the conception of the tool as being related to masculinity is recognized even outside of a forestry context.

The idea of masculinity being based in having access to and control over nature-modifying tools reflects what Brandth and Haugen (2005) identify as the "macho" man in past eras of Norway's forestry industry. Because the chainsaw is symbolic of being able to perform work and cut down more trees, men who use one are perceived as more productive workers, more dominant over nature, and therefore dominant over others who do not have chainsaws.

Another way that men's interactions with chainsaws served to gender the surrounding environment was when they would compare their chainsaws to a phallus, referring to it as their "chainsaw dick." This reference would often be accompanied by placing the chainsaw between their legs and using it to make sexually suggestive motions while revving it loudly. One man informed me that when he was learning to use the chainsaw, his instructor told him to think of his chainsaw as an extension of his penis in order to help him operate it more effectively. By depicting the chainsaw as a penis, the instructor compared the cutting down of trees to a sex act that requires skill and explicitly implicates a male sex organ in controlling the surrounding physical landscape. The likening of the chainsaw to a phallus constructs it as something that is outside of women's reach. Acker (1990) finds that in gendered organizations "symbolic expressions of male dominance also act as significant controls over women in work organizations because they are per se excluded from the informal bonding men produce with the 'body talk' of sex and sports" (153). This understanding would suggest that the chainsaw-as-a-phallus discourse serves to symbolically otherize women, excluding them from certain jokes and camaraderie that men derive from working with the tool.

Just as Desmond (2007) found that the pine forests of Arizona were "a specific and salient outlet for the reproduction, reaffirmation, and reconstitution of the country-masculine habitus" (266), it is clear that Mountain View's backcountry is a space for young men to enact their own carefully crafted form of masculinity via the use of landscape shaping tools. Especially in the Boy Scouts, the ability to master nature in an unsentimental manner was crucial in the measure of a man (Jordan 2016). It is therefore unsurprising that in Mountain View's context, where the natural world is feminized and nature scaping tools are made phallic, that the primary outcome is a space in which hegemonic masculinity is championed.

Hybrid Masculine Performances in Staff Members and Adult Participants

As noted by previous scholars, the most likely individuals to employ hybrid masculinities are young, straight, middle-class, white men (Bridges and Pascoe 2014). As this fits the demographics of the majority of Mountain View's staff and participants, Mountain View is an ideal location to examine if men in outdoor industries embody hybrid masculinity.

Interviews with staff members indicated that men at Mountain View, both adult participants and staff, employ hybrid masculinity through a number of ways. Bridges and Pascoe (2014) find that hybrid masculinity is characterized by men engaging in the practices of discursive distancing and appropriating characteristics of femininities and subordinate masculinities. While these actions appear to be progressive, they actually lead to the fortification of gendered boundaries and the concealment of social inequalities. I found that men at Mountain View drew on pro-feminist ideas by openly discussing sexism and gender equality while simultaneously labeling other men as the sole possible perpetrators of sexism. In doing both, men constructed themselves as being apart from hegemonic masculinity while still actively benefiting from its privileges.

Hybrid masculine performances are visible in the ways that men discuss and frame having female coworkers in the Guide department. Four out of five male respondents reported that working with women at Mountain View led to them experiencing a turning point related to their beliefs about women's capability as backpackers and leaders. For instance, when discussing his first training trek when he was learning to be a Guide, Jaxon, a man who had worked in the department for four years, noted:

"I can't stress enough…[how] valuable that experience was because like I knew girls could backpack, I had just never seen it…I couldn't tell you if girls acted differently in the outdoors or not. But then, hiking with them, backpacking with them [I saw] it doesn't matter your gender." While this change in understanding is initially positive, it underscores the conception that women at Mountain View are different and special compared to other women. Jaxon continued his previous thought saying "the girls out here are the cream of the crop…but as far as boys go, you have a whole spectrum of them from those that cry the entire time to those who are a step away from Navy Seals." Jaxon clearly views these women and their abilities in a positive light, but his comments also reveal how gender boundaries are reified as women at Mountain View are painted as always being exceptional while men are allowed more variance in their abilities.

Abigail describes a similar phenomenon among adult male participants when she discussed an instance when an adult advisor that had been to Mountain View before was particularly excited to see her walk up as their Guide. She recalled how he told her that when his sons went to Mountain View, he hoped that they would meet women there because then he would know that "the girlfriends would be awesome and cool and like, strong women." It was for this same reason that he thought that Abigail's presence as a Guide would be constructive for the boys so that they could see what an "outdoorsy" girl looked like and eventually "find [themselves] a girl like [that]." While this adult leader's positive conception of women Guides is not immediately problematic, his framing of female Guides as women who are "cool and strong" implies that other women are not, and further serves to limit these women Guides by treating them as a homogenous group. In doing so, the women are also reduced to being potential marriage material rather than being recognized for their abilities as a leader and educator.

One of the principal ways in which men would engage in discursive distancing was by presenting themselves as individuals who were socially aware and therefore better than other men. Three out of five men I interviewed labeled certain groups of *other* men as

perpetrators of sexist and regressive behavior. The men who were typically identified as being the cause of women's experiences with sexism were older male advisors and crews from parts of the country that are often stereotyped as less progressive. For instance, Eric said, "I'm in the Northeast, and people are a lot different here than say, you know, a middle-aged Scoutmaster from Alabama." Alexander, a Guide with two years of experience also referred to "the crews like from the backwoods of Texas or Alabama" as the ones where "the advisors don't trust [female Guides] as well." Although Mountain View's participants come from all over the United States and even internationally, Eric and Alexander specifically identified adult Boy Scout leaders from the geographic South as the individuals who are sexist. In contrast, Eric described himself as needing to remain "professional" during interactions with such crews, demonstrating a sense of superiority to men with regressive, less socially aware masculinities (Wilkins 2009; Pfaffendorf 2017).

The idea that it is only adult male participants from certain parts of the country that are sexist is directly contradictory to my ethnographic findings and women Guides' stories. For instance, Jackie, a Guide with three years of experience, once had a supervisor make jokes about her staying in the kitchen while her male counterparts were out hiking. By constructing certain "other" men as engaging in sexist practices, these interviewees subtly distanced themselves from hegemonic masculinity's privileges. This distancing is, of course, only symbolic, as each of these men still reaps the benefits that their identity affords them. While recognition of privilege is an important step, it means little if nothing is done to actively help dismantle hegemonic structures. Delay and Dyment (2003) suggest that a counter-hegemonic alternative for men in the outdoor industry would be for them to actively encourage others to both recognize the issue and to use their privilege to prevent it in the future.

By framing themselves as socially aware and different than other men, male Guides are likely to gain significant social approval, especially from women who are used to being in a space that marginalizes them. Eric explained how men

can leverage public displays of support for women to their own advantage: "If I called out a guy on something, it would probably be seen as a good thing just because there is that macho environment at Mountain View, like the fact that I would directly challenge another guy would probably get me some prestige." This quote helps to illuminate why men might hybridize their masculinities, but also how in doing so they realign themselves with the competitive nature of hegemonic masculinity in attempting to gain "prestige" and social dominance over other men.

These findings are not to suggest that all men engaged in a hybrid performance of masculinity. Indeed, women reported experiences that ranged from open acts of sexism, such as when an adult advisor told Polly, a Guide with four years of experience, "that he didn't respect women's authority," to microaggressions, such as when adult leaders made demeaning comments on one woman's fingernail polish. All of the men I interviewed were also aware of or had personally witnessed a time when a female coworker had experienced sexism at Mountain View. These instances were generally readily and vividly recalled, and male respondents always described them disapprovingly. When asked if he was aware of sexism at Mountain View, Bob recounted how a close friend ran up to him crying. "[Her crew was] blatantly sexist, being like 'Where's our Guide?' and she was like 'Well I am your Guide,' and they're like 'Well can we get a guy one?'" However, despite being aware of instances like the one described above, all male interviewees still reported that overall they considered Mountain View to be a safe place for everyone who came to participate and work. Although several said that participants' and staff's physical safety was not completely guaranteed because of the outdoor setting, they overall agreed that Mountain View was generally a psychologically safe place.

Unlike the men in Pfaffendorf's (2017) study who used hybrid masculinities in the face of a "masculinity crisis," those at Mountain View do not face such a battle as the majority embody traits that would align them with hegemonic masculinity. However, as I have shown, it appears that at times, these men may embody hybrid masculinities as a way to demonstrate to both others and perhaps even to themselves that they are one of "the good guys". Furthermore, while I documented all of the male respondents as viewing women and their abilities in a positive light, it appears that their framing quietly, and perhaps even subconsciously, reaffirms gendered boundaries and inequalities, such as the idea that women at Mountain View are the exception to the rule when it comes to women as a whole.

Discussion and Conclusion

Relying on interviews with staff members and participant observation at a backpacking camp operated by the Boy Scouts of America, I found that Mountain View Scout Camp functions as a gendered organization in three main ways. First, the prominent pieces of artwork that are placed in Scouts' paths when they first arrive at Mountain View manifest an image of a particular kind of employee that Scouts should expect to encounter at Mountain View. Because of this imagery, participants may expect staff members to be young, white, physically strong, able-bodied men, effectively erasing the existence of women and men who deviate from these characteristics. Second, at the research site, nature is constructed as feminine and forestry work, which alters said landscape, is gendered as masculine. The use of landscape-altering tools such as a chainsaw is framed as only being available to men by associating it with male genitalia. Finally, men will episodically use hybrid masculinities to present themselves as advocates of female Guides, but in doing so, actually reify gender boundaries. By coding women at Mountain View as being different or unique as compared to "other" women, gender inequalities continue to be upheld, especially considering that there was little recognition of the more damaging effects of sexism in regards to women's experience and safety at Mountain View as a whole.

There is a dearth of recent sociological research that has examined the ways that the Boy Scouts of America is gendered. As Acker (1990) and Britton (2000) caution, rather than assuming organizations to be gender neutral, as a sociologist it is crucial to explore the processes that make them so. Because the Boy Scouts of America has recently integrated, the study of Mountain View—an integral program

in the organization and a space that has been co-ed for over forty years—is a helpful tool in predicting some of the barriers that young women will face as they begin to enter the ranks of one of the nation's oldest and largest single-gender youth programs. Mountain View and other outdoor education and ecotourism programs in the BSA and beyond need to consider the various ways in which their organizations and associated spaces are subtly exclusionary. In reviewing the characteristics that I have outlined in this study, organizations can work to examine whether they are actually welcoming to young women (and to various types of men) or whether they are only so for a singular hegemonic ideal.

My work adds to the literature on gender in outdoor education in two important ways. First, although previous work on masculinity in outdoor education programs has touched on the presence of hegemonic masculinity, my research explicitly reveals how certain spatial characteristics and various gender performances by staff members can reinforce it in a myriad of ways. Secondly, in line with Wilkins (2009) and Pfaffendorf (2017), my study adds to the growing scholarship on hybrid masculinities by finding that some men may embody a seemingly more progressive type of masculinity while distancing themselves from other men who they deem "sexist." This study also finds that some older men, generally in their late thirties to early sixties, can also engage in hybridized masculine practices and discourses, which is particularly notable given that most other studies have focused on young men in their late teens and early twenties.

Future research should more closely examine how whiteness serves to foster hegemonic masculinity within the BSA and its programs. Hybrid masculinity scholars would also be well served to examine how men's identities as Boy Scouts influence whether they choose to embody hybrid masculinity. Men in my study often talked about the influences of the BSA on their identity as a man, and they would describe those in the Boy Scouts as being superior citizens and people, "the cream of the crop" of young men in the United States. These recurring comments may indicate that the BSA has institutionalized a narrative embedded in discursive distancing that separates its

members from non-member "others." Such a study could therefore be a way to examine if hybrid masculinity itself is institutionalized.

A potential limitation of this study is that data collection occurred immediately following a natural disaster that disrupted the camp's normal operations. Consequently, I had to rely almost exclusively on phone instead of in-person interviews. Nevertheless, this change in Mountain View's normal operations is the main reason I became a leader of a forestry crew which was a source of rich ethnographic data. Additionally, although some might initially view the homogeneity of my sample (all participants identify as white and heterosexual) as a limitation, these characteristics actually mirror the demographics of the BSA and Mountain View. Also, it allowed me to garner crucial insights into how men's hybrid masculine performances can operate even within an organization that openly and continually valorizes a hegemonically masculine ideal.

These findings are significant because they demonstrate how space can be gendered both through material channels and through hybridized gender performances, which uphold existing structures of power. Finally, with the recent integration of women into the BSA, it is vital to identify some of the more subtle barriers that young women will undoubtedly face in this program. Doing so will ideally allow outdoor educators and members of the Scouts to begin the process of working together to ensure that these newly co-ed spaces are ones in which gendered hierarchies are challenged and dismantled.

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Endnotes

[1] As of February 1, 2019, the Boy Scouts of America officially changed the name of its flagship program from Boy Scouts to Scouts BSA in an effort to reflect its newly gender integrated status. I refer to the Scouts BSA program by its former title of Boy Scouts to reflect the time during which I completed my research. The national organization remains the Boy Scouts of America or BSA to this day.

[2] This name is a pseudonym for my research site as per my agreement with its higher leadership.

[3] In an effort to mask the identity of my research site, this name is a pseudonym which captures the general spirit of the original title.

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"There's A Little Bit of That Magic Where I'm Becoming Something Else": LGBT+ Furry Identity Formation and Belonging Online

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ABSTRACT

Active and open identification with animals and the creation of anthropomorphic (or zoomorphic) fursonas have become infamous on the internet, yet published research on the subculture is lacking. This ethnographic study explores this under-examined subculture by considering how individuals who identify as LGBT+ and as furry find and experience community online in ways that contribute to feelings of belonging, inclusion, and overall well-being. Through a series of semi-structured interviews, it was found that participating LGBT+ furries experienced an increase in self-reported emotional well-being when allowed to engage with online furry fandom. Given that furry identity is inherently non-normative, the fandom becomes an accepting space for other non-normative identities, like LGBT+ identities. By creating accepting online communities, those without access to supportive communities in their off-line lives can learn about and explore non-normative identity without judgement. These spaces may allow for the accumulation of multiple non-normative identities, all of which are in relative harmony within online furry fandom, which serves as a "catch-all" identity. Existing within this space had positive affects on the well-being of the participants.

Keywords: anthropomorphism; dialogism; furry fandom; intersectionality; LGBT+

In 1993, Peter Steiner illustrated a comic featuring two dogs for *The New Yorker*: one is on the computer while the other looks on. The first dog says to the other, "On the internet, nobody knows you're a dog" (Steiner 1993; see also Wikipedia, 2020). At that time, the anonymity of the internet was alluring and presented users with the opportunity to be other people or to play with their identity (Boellstorff 2008). Today, in 2019, the opposite has become true. According to some studies, the internet is no longer as seductively anonymous as it once was, as contemporary users of social media are more likely to present their in real life (IRL) selves instead of constructing entirely new identities (Davis and Weinstein 2017).

If you identify as or with dogs on the internet today, everyone seems to know about it. Active and open identification with animals and the creation of anthropomorphic (or zoomorphic) fursonas have become infamous on the internet. Anthropomorphism indicates the application of human characteristics to animals, whereas zoomorphism is the application of animal characteristics to humans (Gerbasi et al. 2008). Within the literature on furry identity and identity performance, the terms appear to be used interchangeably, with anthropomorphism used more frequently. For the sake of this paper, anthropomorphism will be used to describe both phenomena.

Furries and non-furries alike enjoy making jokes and memes at the expense of furry fandom, a prominent internet and IRL subculture. Yet, infamy does not lead to understanding. Popular conceptualizations of furries often paint them as mentally ill sexual deviants (Gerbasi et al. 2008, 199). While sexuality can be a part of one's experience with furry identity (Strike 2017), perceptions of the

fandom by outsiders tend to frame furry experience as exclusively erotic in nature (Jeannsone 2012, 5). This leads to backlash from non-furries in the form of bullying or exclusion. A notable example of maliciousness from non-furries to furries occurred in 2014. Midwest Furfest, a large, annual furry convention in Chicago, was interrupted by an "intentional gas incident" that some consider to be a terrorist attack. Nineteen convention goers were hospitalized due to chlorine gas exposure. As reports of the attack spread, what followed suit was not horror but humor at the expense of the convention goers because they were furries. Additional claims were made that, because furries are considered deviant, they deserved the attack and bullying that followed. Victoria McNally (2014) writes extensively on the incident. Although this is an extreme example, it emphasizes how furries are viewed by mainstream society. Many furries also identify with the acronym LGBT+, which can exacerbate the backlash they experience since LGBT+ identities are also commonly considered deviant. In the context of this paper, the LGBT+ label refers to lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgender people, as well as the many other nuanced individuals that find themselves identifying with communities and labels outside of heterosexual and/or cisgender identity.

Furry fandom is much more beyond stereotypical views. Joe Strike (2017), a self-identified furry, defines a furry as anyone with an above-average interest in anthropomorphic characters, even if they do not self-identify with the term. The few academics who have pursued the study of furry subculture, however, consider furries to be those who strongly identify with, or view themselves as, an animal or other non-human creature and use the term to label themselves (Gerbasi et al. 2008, 198; Jeansonne 2012, 73; Půtová 2013, 246). For the sake of this study, I will use the academic definition of a furry: one who actively identifies with the term. Furries engage in the creation of art and music, participate in video gaming and dance competitions, and organize events ranging from several thousand visitors at a convention to ten friends at a bowling alley. Furry fandom has a thriving physical and virtual culture that involves more than what is perceived to be sexual deviance by outsiders.

Identifying as a furry can lead to the creation of a fursona, or an anthropomorphic character depicting the real or constructed personality of the maker (Jeansonne 2012, ix). Fursonas are made manifest through artwork shared in online spaces or fursuits—a handcrafted suit allowing the wearer to *become* their fursona in physical reality (Gerbasi et al 2008; Jeansonne 2012). In this way, a furry may experience a self-hood that is composed of dual identities or identifications. This, and the way furry fandom functions as an online community, is not widely explored by the available literature. Studies tend to focus on the physical embodiment of furry identity through fursuiting, instead of on the formation of identity and influences of the online furry fandom community on well-being. It is important to distinguish the embodied experience of identity and physical community from the performance of identity and online communities for several reasons. There is a notable cost barrier for physical embodiment. Fursuits, full or partial, can cost thousands of dollars, making it difficult to access that means of identity embodiment. A wider range of people can express their identities online because of the lower cost of entry to the community, making the scene more diverse in terms of socio-economic status and racial identity. The internet, as explored in the study presented herein, is also a place where individuals learn to accept and be themselves through access to information and other individuals who are socially deviant. This further contributes to the diversity of the fandom online, as individuals from all over the world can be exposed to the fandom and learn about it without physical exposure. Regional, racial, and socio-economic factors influence identity, furry or not, but these factors are not explored within the previous literature on furries. Past ethnographers attended conventions and studied fursuiters. Due to the cost of entry to the convention and fursuiting as a practice, those studied in past literature were, in general, white men (Gerbasi et al. 2008). It should also be noted that expression and experience of identity and community online may be inherently different from real life because of the medium, but this has not yet been explored within the field of furry studies.

Additionally, the ways in which furry identity intersects with other identities, like LGBT+ identities, and how that affects belonging and well-being is unexplored by the available literature. The following study aims to expand academic understanding of furry identity and how it intersects with LGBT+ identities through an exploration of the ways in which these identities are formed online and how they affect well-being and belonging. Based on the findings of this study, I assert that furry fandom, because of its role in the lives of participants as a positive and accepting space, grants those with socially deviant identities a place to belong and thrive.

What Do You Mean "Furry"?

The fandom gained traction as a North American subculture in the 1980s when the "founding" members of furry fandom began meeting at conventions intended for science fiction media enthusiasts (Strike 2017). Anthropomorphism is, however, a much older practice. Půtová (2013) compares contemporary furries, in their physical embodiment and online presentation of identity, to anthropomorphic depictions of sorcerers in cave paintings, some dating back to 30,000 BCE. She notes how both furries and sorcerers have the ability to transcend reality and assume multiple identities through their animal self or selves (Půtová 2013, 247). Although what transcendence means for the individual experiencing it is not defined in the article, Půtová's (2013) work is still noteworthy because she is the only academic author in this literature review to reference the role of the internet in furry identity. She claims that the internet allows furries to create multifaceted alternative selves, which further allows transcendence from the "real" self to a different form of self (Půtová 2013, 247).

Similar to other fandoms, furry fandom online may provide members with a sense of community and, therefore, allow members to reap the benefits of community engagement. One study found that, in addition to participants experiencing stronger community bonds with their fandom than with their local, real life communities, their strong association with their fan interest was correlated with

positive well-being (Chadborn, Reysen, and Edwards 2018, 247). For furries, much of the community they experience is online because conventions can be expensive and smaller meetups may be miles from home. While there is a common perception of internet communities and relationships as superficial or "not real" (Downing 2013), this is not necessarily the case for all online communities. Chadborn, Reysen, and Edwards (2018, 242) point out that communities are made up of four factors: a sense of belonging, integration, a shared emotional connection, and influence. These factors are all components of contemporary, online furry fandom.

Researchers agree that, because the internet is now highly integrated into our daily lives, its effects on tasks related to emotional and physical development, such as identity formation, have become an important avenue of exploration (Acosta et al. 2017; Downing 2013; Hatchel, Subrahmanyam, and Birkett 2017; Walks 2014). This study addresses a gap in the literature concerning furry fandom, which to date has focused on the physical manifestation of the fandom through fursuiting at conventions (Carlson 2011; Gerbasi et al. 2008; Jeansonne 2012). The importance and prominence of online communities that exist on websites like DeviantArt, FurAffinity, and Twitter is largely ignored. Thus, this study contributes to both furry studies and research concerning online communities. In order to frame my research on furry identity and community, I will examine how other online communities, including LGBT+ communities, have been analyzed with regards to online identity formation.

Considering Identity Formation Online: Intersections of LGBT+ and Furry Identity

Through fandom spaces, members are allowed to express and explore other aspects of self-identity that may be stigmatized outside of the fandom, including LGBT+ identities (Chadborn, Reysen, and Edwards 2018, 243). Due to this, furry fandom and the LGBT+ community are inherently linked. As a group that deviates from social norms, furry fandom tends to be more accepting of other identities labeled as deviant

or non-normative by mainstream societies; thus, a significant number of furries online are LGBT+ (Strike 2017). The internet allows both furries and LGBT+ individuals to establish social support networks where access to communities of like-minded individuals in real life is not possible (Acosta et al. 2017; Atay 2015; Downing 2013; Hatchel, Subrahmanyam, and Birkett 2017; Půtová 2013). Through communication with others of the same identity and interests, an individual is able to gain access to greater social support (Chadborn, Reysen, and Edwards 2018, 242), which can affect their well-being and identity formation.

Downing's (2013) study found that the community created by LGBT+ identities in online spaces became real community through the creation of highly valued relationships in online forums (51). The perceived value of these interactions therefore allows the internet to have significant effects on the development of those using it. One key aspect of identity development is the reciprocal nature of community involvement and identity formation. LGBT+ individuals share and gain self-knowledge by talking about their experiences and hearing the experiences of others, thereby asserting and forming their LGBT+ identity (Acosta et al. 2017, 91; Downing 2013, 48; Hatchel, Subrahmanyam, and Birkett 2017, 61). This reveals a dialogical aspect of identity creation and, potentially, selfhood in online spaces that will be further explained in the next section.

Studies within the field of sociology attribute the ability to share freely in this way to the anonymity of the internet (Acosta et al. 2017; Downing 2013). Davis and Weinstein (2017) argue that the increasing overlap of on- and offline life pressures LGBT+ people to be as consistent as possible across social media platforms (13). This contradicts the findings of similar studies which find it easy to compartmentalize one's role-identities and affiliate each with different social media platforms, blogs, or accounts on the same platform. Acosta et al. (2017), for example, found that many gay men participating in their study juggled multiple identities across internet platforms. This multiplicity is referenced with regards to furries by Půtová (2013) and is

similarly experienced through other mediums. Boellstroff's (2008) ethnography of an online role-playing game called *Second Life* found his participants reflecting on their possession of multiple identities, which he claimed were shaped largely by their perceived societal roles in the online game (119). This study implies that multiple identities can be accumulated online as users define the roles they want to have in their second lives, "unencumbered by social constraints or the particulars of physical embodiment" (Boellstroff 2008, 120). These identities, which are applied to and experienced through virtual characters, are developed using the same social tools as identities placed within the physical body (Tronstad 2008, 257). Within furry fandom, these multiple identities are similarly expressed through virtual characters that can be displayed through art or fursuits.

Understanding Furries Using Dialogism and Identity Accumulation Theory

Instead of relying on a view of a singular identity as the foundational core of a given person's selfhood, I take up the postmodernist school of identity theories where the self is composed of multiple and constantly changing identities (Brubaker and Cooper 2000, 8). As Půtová (2013, 247) notes in her analysis of furry fandom, furries often contain a multitude of identities that are created in the form of multiple fursonas and roles associated with the characterization of those fursonas. In addition to their identities as furries, however, individuals identify with multiple other roles that they serve within their communities, such as friend, co-worker, or deviant. The multiplicity within furry identities, as well as the multiplicity caused by the coexistence of at least two non-normative identities (furry and LGBT+) within a single individual, can be described by the concept of multiple selfhoods.

The purpose of this study is to explore how individuals who identify as LGBT+ and as furry find and experience community online in ways that contribute to feelings of belonging and overall well-being. In order to do this, I am utilizing a combination of two theories of identity: dialogism and identity accumulation theory. Dialogism claims that an understanding

of one's own self or culture is constructed through comparing oneself to an "other" who may be within one's cultural group or outside of it (Bandlamudi 1994, 463). In Bandlamudi's (1994) wording, this is the process that makes interpersonal events become intrapersonal and vice versa. This means that conversations, connections, or even witnessing another person outside of ourselves can create internal dialog about who we are, why we are, and whether or not to incorporate aspects of what we have learned into our sense of self. It also means that such an internal dialog can be turned outward to others through conversations, presentations of the self, and media, which, in turn, create internal dialog in others. This is a dialogical process in which the self both helps create and is created by the social and cultural worlds that surround it.

Dialogism is integrated within role-identity theory—a term used to describe identities related to the social position(s) one fills (Owens, Robinson, and Smith-Lovin 2010, 481). To explain, one can identify with the roles of mother, wife, daughter, friend, and co-worker all at once but only act within one or two of these roles at a time. Each have different niches to fill within our society and can have different linguistic and behavioral displays within a given individual. Similar to code-switching, an individual can move between these identities in order to better suit a given situation. Multiple role-identities has been found to positively affect well-being, as it can provide multiple avenues of support from those with similar role-identities and a sense that one's existence is meaningful because of the roles they serve (Lang and Lee 2005, 295). The same study found that multiple identities can contribute to a sense of existential security because an individual knows where they belong, but they can also cause internal and external conflict (Lang and Lee 2005, 295). For example, one's role as a co-worker could conflict with one's role as a parent through interpersonal events. These conflicts create intrapersonal dialogs between the role-identities that can reaffirm aspects of an identity and augment others.

This integration of dialogism and role-identity theory leads to the concept of the dialogical-self: a selfhood in which a diversity of role-identities interact with each other and the

outside world in a manner that synthesizes new and augmented identities and can affect the world around the self. It is a selfhood of constant change in which the "true self" is comprised of multiple moving parts, instead of one static, unchanging personality (Sampson 2008, 113-4; Van Meijl 2010). Viewing and interacting with others can lead to intrapersonal dialog about one's sense of self, leading to change in a given identity, and affecting the way an individual interacts with others and the world around them, thus continuing a cycle of creation.

For the participants of this study, these role-identities could include their position as a furry, their position as LGBT+, their position as deviant, and more, as it is common for furries to create additional real and hypothetical roles for themselves in online spaces through their fursonas (Jeansonne 2012, xi). The second theory, identity accumulation theory, claims that having multiple identities can contribute to enhancing the quality of an individual's physical and emotional well-being in ways that are similar to the ones explained above for role-identity theory (Lang and Lee 2005, 295; Owens, Robinson, and Smith-Lovin 2010, 482). Due to the multiplicity of identity that LGBT+ furries experience, they may have access to many online communities and reap the benefits of support from those communities. Multiple role-identities may provide niche avenues of support for dealing with the consequences of a specific role-identity. Just as mothers can seek comfort and advice from other mothers but turn to their sisters to confide about their experience as daughters, LGBT+ furries can find support from non-furry LGBT+ individuals about their experiences with deviancy and LGBT+ identity. They can also talk to other furries and niche subgroups of the furry fandom about deviancy, fringe interests, and more. By having multiple role identities provided by their LGBT+ identity, their furry identity, and identities that may come to them through the expression of their fursona, LGBT+ furries may have a wider support network and, therefore, better well-being than those who may not similarly identify. This study, however, found that this was not the case for this group of participants due to the LGBT+ friendly nature of the furry fandom.

Methodology

For this study, I created an account on Twitter, a social media website and app, in order to establish a social media presence and rapport with potential informants. Twitter was selected for recruiting participants due to its popularity among furries to interact with each other and post art. Seven interviewees who identified as LGBT+ and furry were recruited. One was a personal friend. The others were strangers I contacted through Twitter direct messages with a brief summary of my position as a student researcher, the purpose of the study, and an invitation to participate. This research protocol was approved by the Institutional Review Board of Goucher College after completing the "Protecting Human Research Participants Online Training".

Three of the interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview guide; one in-person and the others through Discord, an audio calling and chatting service favored by furries. These interviews were recorded and transcribed. The guide was designed to gauge how and why participants use the internet, how they came into their identities, who supported that transition, and how their identities and the communities they engage with online make them feel.

Four additional interviews were conducted using the same guide but in writing through Google Forums with additional follow-up through Twitter direct messages. While such an interview method can be considered unorthodox, I found it important to offer a variety of interview methods to potential participants. As a stranger to potential participants with little to no rapport between us, a request out of the blue for a spoken interview could be seen as frightening. As the researcher, I would have an audio recording of the informant's voice, which, for transgender people who are insecure with their voice, may be a daunting prospect and limit interest in the study. Additionally, anxiety related to phone conversations, especially with unfamiliar people, posed an issue. Through writing, a safe distance from the researcher and the informant is created, but valuable information is still gained. By offering this option, I made the study

more accessible to people from a variety of backgrounds.

The interviewees range in age between 22 and 28. Four of the seven interviewees were white, one was Asian American, one was African American, and one self-identified as mixed. LGBT+ is an acronym used throughout this article as an abbreviated descriptor of the sexual and/or gender identities of all informants involved. None of the interviewees were heterosexual, identifying themselves as lesbian, asexual, bisexual, pansexual, or queer, and only two were cisgender while the others identified as non-binary or transmasculine. LGBT+ is used herein as an umbrella term as it is the most inclusive while also the least controversial within spaces that identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or any additional labels. To protect the participants, pseudonyms were chosen by the participants themselves or myself.

Finding Space Where There Was None: Belonging Online

The dialogical-self, which consists of multiple identities in dialog with one another and with the society outside of the self, is a means of creation. It creates our sense of self and can create new or edit identities within that self (Sampson 2008). It is also a means of creating the world around the self, or spaces within it in which to belong (Bandlamundi 1994). For all of the study participants, achieving a sense of belonging influenced the acquisition and acceptance of their non-normative identities. These spaces in which they found belonging were created through the expression of identity online by the LGBT+ furries that came before them. Logan (22), for example, said that they found furry fandom through DeviantArt, an art sharing website, at the height of what they refer to as "its sparkle dog phase." This was a reference to the prominence of anthropomorphic or furry influenced artwork and culture on DeviantArt in the form of brightly colored wolf or dog characters that were created by teenagers or young adults in the mid- to late-2000s. DeviantArt's platform, as well as other art platforms like FurAffinity, provided them with a playground in which they learned to create not only their own identity but also to create art.

However, non-normative identities are often stigmatized for deviating from mainstream culture. This stigma can be internalized and lead to self-denial and self-critiques. For the participants in this study, the experience of stigma stems primarily from deviating from sexuality that is perceived to be normal. For LGBT+ identities, this connection is clear. Any sexuality or gender identity outside of cisgender heterosexuality can break societal norms and may be persecuted. Furry identity can also be stigmatized, although not as commonly. Furries are not as widely known about within mainstream culture and, while a convention center was attacked, a heterosexual cisgender furry does not have a fear for their lives in the same way as LGBT+ individuals. While furry identity can be viewed as a stigmatized sexual kink or a form of bestiality to some, leading to harsh stereotypes, bullying, and exclusion, legislators are not (at the time of writing) creating anti-furry laws. The stigma that surrounds furry identity stems from the prevalence of erotic artworks of fursonas and the consensual sex between furries in fursuits that can be found and shared online among groups who seek to make fun or ridicule the subculture. This can force those who feel a connection to these deviant identities to deny them. Two informants expressed that they were exposed to stigma due to their desire to make art featuring anthropomorphic characters when they were children. Ray (22), for example, described their experience drawing anthropomorphic characters as a child and feeling stigmatized as a result:

> Anything unfamiliar, or even anything seen as unpopular, in school is usually seen as lame, uncool, and/or something to be approached with scorn. For the most part, it was kids who weren't considered "nerds" who tended to approach any art I did as me being a furry. And the term furry carried such negativity in school that, even though I had no idea what it was and why they thought furry was wrong, I still vehemently said I wasn't one.

For Ray, childhood bullying led to the internalization of stigma and denial of furry identity for many years. This period of time was also marked by a lack of both self-esteem and

supportive communities in real life for deviant identities. In order to conform to the communities and support networks that were available to the informants during their youth, they denied their deviant identities they began to cultivate that felt genuine and comfortable in favor of "normal" identities that kept them safe.

Lack of conformity can have starkly negative impacts on well-being and drive a wedge between an individual and the communities that they would otherwise have access to through other identities, like racial identity. Terra (24), for example, described at length what it is like to be African American and LGBT+. They considered their blackness to be the most important part of themselves and referred to the community created by racial identity as their core, foundational support group. They noted, however, that African American and LGBT+ identities "just don't get along," alluding to the homophobia and transphobia that is present in some African American communities. They explained further: "it's really hard to be black and be gay, or bi, or pan, or anything like that, because you kind of lose a lot of support from your core." The homophobia and transphobia that Terra experienced has separated them from spaces they could have belonged if not for their deviant identity. They currently live in a predominantly white town and only interact with one other African American regularly in real life.

It can be easier to deny a deviant identity in order to protect one's own physical and emotional safety. Yet it seems these "normal" identities fit uncomfortably on the participants and, sometimes after a period of many years, they pushed them aside to find communities in which more comfortable selves could be forged. For reasons they did not articulate, participants who initially denied non-normative identity still sought out non-normative community later in life. The pervasiveness of the internet within the day-to-day lives of the participants further exposed them to online furry fandom through art, videos, photographs, Twitter threads, or online friends. Large numbers of furries and LGBT+ people use Twitter to post about themselves, their interests, and their art. Based on the experiences of my participants, the act of knowledge sharing about the experience of deviant identity and what that identity is does

not take place exclusively through direct conversation online through chat rooms, direct messages, or Twitter replies, which was the direct focus of Downing's (2013) research. Yet his concepts can still be applied here. What frequently takes place could be described as a form of witnessing positive representation by reading posts or viewing art and videos. Within his study, Downing (2013) determined that dialog between LGBT+ individuals about their deviant identities led to the individuals themselves gaining knowledge about themselves and others; these processes worked to affirm their identities as LGBT+. On contemporary social media websites, these kinds of conversations about deviant identities are not as common as what I refer to as "Show and Tell". While messaging is still common and part of the reason that the internet is important to several of the participants, it is overshadowed on Twitter by the creation of posts (text or image) that are then displayed on Twitter to be viewed and appreciated. The goal of these posts is not necessarily dialog; instead, the posts emphasize a want to Show (artwork, visual memes, etc.) or Tell (short tweets about one's day, Twitter essays on current events) something about a certain topic and share it with an audience for approval.

Show and Tell still functions as a means of gaining and sharing knowledge. Deviant creators produce content (artwork, videos, jokes, etc.) and others witness that content, gaining knowledge about the creator and their own identity through dialogical processes of identity creation or augmentation. Witnessing representation of the fandom or LGBT+ media encourages viewers to have internal dialogs about their role-identities. It enables those like Ray to challenge their denial and overcome it through exposure to deviant creators. Logan summarized the process by reflecting on their own experiences:

I was seeing people talk about it [gender and sexuality]. I was seeing people make jokes about it. I was seeing people poke fun and express it in a nonacademic way. The conversations around queerness, and gender fluidity, and all that. I was really thankful for it, because I think living in a highly gendered space was hard. And, I think

understanding what dysphoria was gave me a lot of peace [...]. So it was relieving to know that there was something else.

Through their experience of belonging in online spaces, Logan's well-being increased. Logan did not have a phase of denial and has a small yet supportive community in real life. However, they also reflect on the loneliness of experiencing dysphoria in an all-girls' school where traditional presentation of womanhood was constantly enforced through casual language and treatment of the "ladies" who attended classes therein. This was relieved through knowledge sharing that took place in online spaces created through Show and Tell. The jokes and expression of gender in nonacademic ways were posts or conversations Logan witnessed, instead of conversations participated in by Logan themselves. Thereby, Logan was *shown* information and internalized it by others passively *telling* them about it.

In these spaces, the participants feel a sense of community with others who share a similar or same deviant identity. According to the participants, this sense of belonging has significant effects on their well-being. Shank (27), for example, reflects on how being his true self online has improved his self-esteem and the self-esteem of others:

> I think a person is at their best when they feel free to express themselves genuinely and without inhibition. The way I identify is essentially me being true to myself allowing me to be more confident and secure in myself. When you're pretending to be someone you're not, I feel it often leads to self-doubt. There's that special little feeling you get when you say how you really feel out loud for the first time. Admitting something as simple as 'I like boys too' and meaning it feels really good.

Through furry fandom, he was able to freely express himself and his sexuality, which gave him greater confidence and better self-esteem.

With regards to well-being, it should be noted that within identity accumulation theory the identity that matters most to an individual is the most likely to have the greatest effect on one's well-being (Owens, Robinson, and Smith-Lovin 2010). When asked which one of their identities is the most important to them, some informants highlighted identities that made them feel the best, like their sexuality now that they are free to express it as they please. Others, paradoxically, highlighted identities that affected them the most negatively. Ray says the identity they consider to be the most important is their trans-masculine identity because of the frequent "face-to-face backlash" they experience daily. In response to me encouraging them to reflect on an identity that affects them positively, they doubled down on their initial answer. Despite the struggles, being out as a transgender person has improved their overall well-being. They now struggle less with self-doubt and body image issues because engagement with online communities helped them to accept this identity.

All is not perfect on the internet, however. Accepting and validating communities are not without their problems. Some of the informants did mention the existence of pedophiles, Nazis, incest advocates, or other problematic individuals within their fandom that give furry fandom a bad name outside of the community. Fandom members do take it upon themselves to police who can and cannot be within their fandom, actively trying to run out undesirables and their supporters through harassment, memes, and "cancel culture," or the process through which a community decides it is no longer ethical to follow or like a social media personality. Some consider this to be a good thing, but others find it treacherous. Terra refers to this pattern as "furry drama," but does not want to take the value of the work lightly. They do, however, express an intense desire to avoid "furry drama", a feeling that is mirrored by other participants in the study. However, avoiding this aspect of the fandom can be difficult if one has significant social capital— which comes in the form of followers, in this case. Terra describes posting potentially controversial statements or media on Twitter as, "kind of like, I pull the pin on the grenade and I throw it out, and then I'm just like, 'Okay, I can go back somewhere else,'" indicating that they, effectively, flee the scene to avoid drama or excessive attention associated with the post. Such posts usually involve a statement of opinion, usually concerning politics, or dislike of other fandom members or notable figures

online. This is followed by extensive discourse within the comments, ranging from blind support to aggressive dissent.

Terra was not able to verbally explain why they engage in Show and Tell despite the fear of backlash from their own community in real life. They instead remark, "I guess it's just the social media feedback loop. You see a ton, a whole bunch of people just liking your stuff and you're like, 'That's cool. I can do that again.' And You do." This may reflect a desire to feel a part of and contribute to the community, even if doing so puts oneself at risk of becoming "canceled".

As referenced in the introduction, online presentation of the self is more commonly in line with presentation of the self in real life (Davis and Weinstein 2017). Who the participants are online is, generally, who they are offline. After acquiring their deviant identities, they made no mention of intentionally hiding their identities from others in real life or the benefits of anonymity in online spaces. It appears that, for the participants in this study, being in online furry communities allows people to be themselves through their various role identities without feeling shame, both on and offline. The online self is fully integrated with the IRL self. Rubi (28) comments on this phenomenon by saying, "it's like you used to be able to go online and be something else, or whatever. Like you could have an alias, and now it's almost like you are the alias." He explains that this is caused by the omnipresence of the internet in our day-to-day lives, which falls in line with Davis and Weinstein's (2017) study. Through social media, the online self and the IRL self become one and the same. The infamous anonymity of the internet is lost. This finding is of note due to the emphasis on anonymity in past literature concerning identity formation of young LGBT+ people online (Acosta et al. 2017; Downing 2013; Hatchel, Subrahmanyam, and Birkett 2017).

For the participants in this study, the integration of these identities has benefits. As Ray and Shank note, exploring and performing identity online granted them greater self-confidence and self-esteem offline. In general, the well-being of the participants in this study increased as they were allowed to be themselves online, perhaps because they gained confidence in performing their identities in real life while knowing that a large support group waited for them online. This process can also, however, spur negativity. After noting the relationship between his alias and furry fandom, Rubi stated that the same occurs with internet trolls, or individuals that enjoy harassing, belittling, and bullying others online. He claimed that troll identity and politics, which was once a gag done solely online, has become more integrated with the identity of the person trolling. This may, in turn, affect the personalities and well-being of the troll. Trolling goes from being an act to a deviant identity that exists to bully and look down on others, often women. If rejected by mainstream society, they may then turn toward accepting deviant communities, like the alt-right or meninist groups. This could not be fully explored within the scope of this study and is based on the conjecture of a single participant. It should be, however, further explored in additional studies concerning internet subcultures.

Multiple Identities and Belonging: Being a Furry *and* LGBT+

Proponents of the dialogical-self refer to it as a diversity of voices, or identities, within an individual that converse with one another to create a sense of self (Owens, Robinson, and Smith-Lovin 2010). When an individual internalizes multiple deviant identities, these identities can be consciously viewed as separate aspects of a given person, instead of a descriptor of a whole. Logan, for example, describes their sense of self thusly:

> Instead of being here, a beautiful tapestry of who I am and the things that make me, it's: I'm naked and I can put on clothing—various identities—on like a paper doll and I can take them off later or replace them. And who knows what I am when I have nothing on, but I can take on and take off things and whatever I'm wearing right now is what I am right now.

Regardless of how explicit Logan's statement is, it is evident throughout my conversations with interviewees that multiple, distinct identities based on their internalized or assigned deviance exist within them. As discussed in the

literature review, furries can construct fantastic, alternate selves in the form of fursonas that can carry their own personalities. With his fursona, Rubi takes it a step further. He refers to his fursona as an entirely separate entity instead of an aspect of himself. He reflects that his fursona started as a version of his ideal self that then changed as his own confidence grew. He says, "I've given him some features, like personality traits and even a different voice than my actual voice," and he transforms into this alternate self when fursuiting: "there's a little bit of that magic where I'm becoming something else."

Ray's relationship with their fursona is similar, although the personality of their fursona is much more in line with Ray's own. They note, however, "he's [the fursona] not perfect and he's got flaws, reflective to my own but more pronounced, which I think helps me recognize and understand myself better." In this way, Ray's fursona is in dialog with other aspects of Ray's self, helping him grow as a person. It should also be noted that Ray refers to their fursona using he/him pronouns exclusively, but allows others to refer to themselves as they/them or he/him. This implies that Ray sees their fursona as a masculine ideal for themselves or as a more masculine version of themselves, which can affirm their identity or perhaps push them to achieve a specific form of gender embodiment.

But what happens with those identities? What happens when more than one non-normative identity is accumulated by an individual? Based on both Owens, Robinson, and Smith-Lovin's (2010) and Lang and Lee's (2005) discussion of identity accumulation theory, I had assumed multiple identities would enable those with deviant identities to access multiple supportive spaces online: furry exclusive spaces, LGBT+ exclusive spaces, and the intersection of the two. This is not the case in the experience of my participants. Instead, the number of deviant identities reduces the number of online groups that participants interact with due to an intense experience of belonging within one all-encompassing, niche group: furry fandom. It is not that they cannot engage with multiple communities associated with their multiple identities; they choose not to

because they have no need for those additional communities.

Among other identities that deviate from social norms, furry identity intersects strongly with LGBT+ identity. Through furry fandom, individuals are able to interact with similarly identifying people while consuming and producing content related to their niche interests, be those interests inherently furry or not. Unlike the members of LGBT+ exclusive communities that Acosta et al. (2014) and Downing (2013) studied, the LGBT+ furries that took part in this study did not have to or want to seek out exclusively LGBT+ spaces because online furry fandom is inherently LGBT+.

Several informants note that they did not know of many (or any) straight furries. There are so few cisgender straight furries that a relatively famous furry with whom I spoke casually about my research noted that he was the only cisgender straight furry he knew. This is an important aspect of furry fandom for the participants in this study. Terra, for example, states that they do not need other online communities because of the high LGBT+ population in furry fandom. They say, "It's just kind of like, they all get it. I don't have to explain what being non-binary is to someone. I don't have to explain what, like, they/them means to someone. It's just kind of, like, a prerequisite." Through furry fandom their need for belonging is largely satisfied.

Since the fandom online is so densely LGBT+, the content created and displayed through Show and Tell is also inherently LGBT+. It is not uncommon to see artwork of fursonas wearing pride merchandise, furries posting about their glowing love for their same-gender or trans partners, or intimate gift art for those same partners. Through Show and Tell, existing members of a deviant identity can create the means for others to further question their own identities, develop an interest in a new identity, or affirm existing identities. Logan notes that furry fandom is an accepting space for many deviant identities due to the fandom's own deviant nature. In this way, deviancy can beget deviancy because an individual has a secure sense of belonging in furry spaces to experience their multiple deviant identities.

Several informants note that their exposure to and acceptance of their LGBT+ identity occurred through online furry fandom. Shank reflects on his experience accepting his bisexuality through furry fandom like this:

The furry community is largely comprised of diverse artists who promote each other but when you follow them [] you get a sneak peek into their personal life; often they share stories both good and bad about their experiences as LGBT+. So I feel I get to listen to the often unheard stories of LGBT+ which challenge common preconceptions/ assumptions that I held myself at one point or another.

Just as Downing (2013) found, interactions with the community, although passive in these cases, create a means of knowledge sharing that contributes to identity formation and increased well-being. For the participants, being a part of furry fandom allowed them to see that they were not alone and did not need to be alone in their queer identity.

The Need to Belong and Improving Well-being

Based on my initial understanding of the theories of dialogism and identity accumulation theory, I hypothesized that, by having multiple identities through accumulation and dialogism, one that identified as LGBT+ *and* as a furry would have access to LGBT+, furry, *and* LGBT+ furry communities online. Through access to these multiple communities, I thought that individuals would likely experience greater access to multiple pathways to social support and positive relationships, thereby improving their overall well-being. However, what I found instead was that the number of deviant identities actually reduces the number of online groups that participants interact with due to an intense experience of belonging within one all-encompassing, niche group: furry fandom. They chose to engage online with this group because they have no need for additional niche groups to feel that they belong. In belonging to these spaces, I found that participants expressed a general improvement in their well-being.

LGBT+ furries of the past, through art, memes, videos, and snippets of their lives,

created online spaces for LGBT+ furries of the present. On Twitter, this creates an accepting and affirming space and community. Before the internet, those who felt affiliated with deviant identities like LGBT+ or furry identity may not have had an accepting space in which to play those identities. As this study shows, this can have negative effects on individual well-being. Performing identities accepted by mainstream society in order to experience belonging when, in reality, that identity feels wrong can lead to distress, low self-esteem, and body image issues. In instances where participants did not pursue conformity with the mainstream, they lost social support from certain groups due to the stigma associated with deviance.

Through the production of LGBT+ furry media, furries online create community in which other budding furries can interact with others, learn about themselves, and unlearn stigma. Based on my conversations with my informants, having a community space online greatly improves well-being. The fandom gives members a place to belong and experiment with their identity in a relatively safe environment, allowing them to solidify their sense of self while improving their own creative skills and socializing. Online support also contributes to the embodiment of these identities in real life. Participants did not necessarily talk about their deviant identities with those outside of the community unless explicitly asked, but were confident enough not to hide their identities on or offline.

Deviant identities formed online became fully integrated into participants' sense of self and narrowed the number of communities they engaged with. This expands on the literature of identity accumulation theory, which generally emphasizes how multiple identities can either be in conflict with one another or give individuals access to multiple identity-based support systems (Lang and Lee 2005; Owens, Robinson, and Smith-Lovin 2010). This study finds, however, that there are other ways that multiple identities may work. LGBT+ and furry identities coexisted harmoniously rather than in conflict within individuals and reduced rather than increased the number of online communities they engaged with to one: furry fandom. This overall dynamic is regarded positively by the participants. Participants find

no need to find other communities to belong to because furry fandom exists as a catch all. Every niche interest, every craft, every deviant identity exists within furry fandom, so there is no need to go elsewhere to feel like one belongs. Through this sense of community and belonging, the participants found themselves better off than before they joined the community.

Knowing how identity and belonging is experienced online is pertinent today because of the prevalence of the internet in the lives of those coming of age. Through studies like this, researchers can understand how the use of the internet affects people and culture. The worth of this study and other studies like it also rests in its humanizing element. Across the United States, LGBT+ identities are oppressed and furry identity is stigmatized, often due to misconceptions and misunderstandings. Studying people with these identities ethnographically can lift the veil of mystery around these identities, bringing awareness to the humanity of deviant identities. Anthropomorphizing the self is a very human practice, present throughout history in cave paintings and mythology. Through studies like this, we can humanize the stigmatized and further understand the colorful variance of human life.

Acknowledgements

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Epistemologies of Resistance: Knowledge in the Peruvian Amazon

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ABSTRACT

Epistemologies of resistance are knowledge frameworks that challenge oppressive structures and the ideologies that sustain them. In this paper, I analyze three weeks of ethnographic fieldwork among the Asháninka of the Peruvian Amazon to demonstrate the ways in which the epistemologies that I encountered challenge oppressive structures and their underlying ideologies. My findings consider the use of social and environmental context as epistemic indicators. I contrast these context-dependent epistemologies with the context-independent epistemologies that dominate contemporary "Western" thought, where the goal is to separate knowledge from context. I then consider how, as hybrid epistemologies that have emerged out of interaction and exchange in a globalized world, indigenous knowledge frameworks resist the notion of a binary difference between indigenous and "Western" itself. These epistemologies of resistance critique the double binds created and sustained through the colonial model.

Epistemology as Resistance

Epistemology is the study of how we know what we know. It refers to the explanations and justifications that ground our knowledge, or our reasons for believing what we believe. These epistemologies can be stabilizing if they reinforce the existing social order, or disruptive if they call that order into question. José Medina (2012) defines epistemic resistance as "the use of our epistemic resources and abilities to undermine and change oppressive normative structures and the complacent cognitive-affective functioning that sustains those structures" (3). Disruptive epistemologies expose the fault lines that underlie the ideologies of oppressive systems, calling those systems into question.

Indigenous ways of knowing constitute epistemologies of resistance. These are not "pure" forms of knowledge that lie beyond the influence of "Western" modernity, but hybrid ways of thinking and being that have developed in response to conditions of domination in the globalized world (Bhabha 1994; García Canclini 1995). Ramón Grosfoguel (2011) describes these syncretic epistemologies as "hybrid, transcultural forms of knowledge" and refers to them as "forms of resistance" (24). In the colonial context specifically, indigenous knowledge frameworks reveal epistemic hierarchies that give different weight to different ways of knowing. By pointing to histories of colonization and marginalization, these epistemologies shed light on global conditions of domination and call into question existing standards for what constitutes legitimate thought.

Of course, indigenous epistemologies have meaning and value in their own right, not just as acts of resistance. They did not come into being when Europeans arrived on the scene, and they are not defined solely in relation to colonialism. Still, indigenous epistemologies—just like non-indigenous epistemologies—are the result of historical processes involving interactions, exchanges, and encounters with other people and ways of life. Even before colonialism, they were not "pure" forms of knowledge, but hybrid ways of knowing that came into being through relations of contact and exchange.

In this paper, I analyze three weeks of ethnographic fieldwork that explored epistemology among the Asháninka of the Rio Ene region in the Peruvian Amazon. My findings consider the use of social and environmental context as epistemic indicators. I contrast these context-dependent epistemologies with the context-independent epistemologies that often dominate contemporary "Western" thought, where the goal is to separate knowledge from context. Finally, I consider how, as hybrid epistemologies that have emerged out of interaction and exchange, indigenous knowledge frameworks challenge the binary distinction between indigenous and "Western" itself. I end with a discussion of two cases of hybridity that I encountered among the Asháninka—changing social roles and the use of human rights discourse—which contribute to epistemic resistance by challenging the double binds of the colonial tradition.

Indigenous Knowledge as an Extractable Resource

Past research on indigenous ways of knowing has focused on specific spheres of knowledge seen as central to indigenous life. One such sphere, Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), considers the ever-evolving knowledge indigenous people hold of the land they inhabit. TEK has become particularly valuable in light of the contemporary environmental crisis and is now a key consideration in global conversations regarding natural resource management (Mishra 1998), biodiversity (Gadgil, Berkes, and Folke 1993), and sustainable agriculture (Sahai 1996). Indigenous knowledge has also been studied for its potential to contribute to medicinal practices (Orozco and Poonamallee

2014), and an entire legal field has developed to protect indigenous knowledge from "biopiracy"—the theft of indigenous knowledge by multinational pharmaceutical companies and other corporate stakeholders (Norchi 2000; Barsh 2001; Chowdhury 2004).

These considerations of indigenous knowledge recognize its value and potential to inform the way we approach problems on a global scale. But they also separate indigenous knowledge from the local contexts within which it has developed and held significance (Simpson 2004; Wohling 2009). Indigenous knowledge is treated as yet another extractable resource, valuable for use in very different contexts than those in which it arose. Furthermore, this research conceives of knowledge primarily as a set of facts related to ecology and medicine. But knowledge also includes more fundamental questions related to how we see the world. Carothers, Moritz, and Zarger (2014) highlight the importance of asking deeper ethnographic questions here: "What is knowledge? What is knowing? ...How do local people conceptualize knowledge? ...How do we best construct formal models of representation, and how do we represent not knowing?" (42). These studies move beyond an understanding of indigenous knowledge as factual information independent of context, highlighting instead the idea of knowledge as a particular way of orienting towards the world *within* a given context.

More recently, authors have aimed to better engage the notion of indigenous knowledge as a particular orientation towards the world. Waziyatawin Angela Wilson (2004), for example, writes that indigenous knowledge is holistic and tied to different spheres, like ethics, health, education, and in particular the land, from which it cannot be separated. Knowledge arises out of experiences with people, places, and contexts, and that knowledge is fundamentally relational. It both shapes and is shaped by the people we interact with and the places we inhabit. Wilson advocates for the recovery of traditional indigenous knowledge in order to regain "the ways of being that allowed our peoples to live a spiritually balanced, sustainable existence within our ancient homelands for thousands of years" (359). Indigenous knowledge here is not just

knowledge of information, but knowledge of how to live well within a particular context. The idea of *buen vivir*, or sustainable well-being, is inseparable from knowledge.

Much of this literature considers indigenous knowledge to be a matter of tradition that must be safeguarded and preserved. Traditional knowledge is seen as key to indigenous identity and culture, and as with language and folklore, anthropologists have felt pressure to learn and record it so it can be preserved before it is lost forever. This approach recognizes the value of indigenous ideas and underscores the many ways that we can learn from indigenous thought. But at the same time, it fails to consider the colonial context and new, changing notions of indigenous identity and knowledge. Culture and knowledge are viewed as islands, pure entities untouched by interaction and exchange. But indigenous cultures and epistemologies are just as much the result of ongoing processes of adaptation, transformation, and hybridity as other cultures and epistemic frameworks. Cultural change is a genuine concern for many indigenous people, but framing change as a matter of either preservation or extinction fails to take into account the way in which cultures adapt and express agency through processes of change.

Agency and Double Binds

In a world shaped by colonial structures, double bind situations—where all available options serve to reinforce one's own oppression—are found in abundance. Making sense of agency in these situations is a major ethnographic predicament. Franz Fanon (1967) considers this dilemma in his examination of the racial frameworks that have arisen out of colonial encounters. Among the characteristics that have become associated with blackness are instinct, irrational impulse, and primal sensuality. Fanon writes that this traps him in the double bind of a binary framework. If he acts rationally, he becomes "less black" and inadequately represents his people and culture. But if he acts irrationally, he reinforces the idea that black people are irrational. No matter what choice he makes, he loses.

Building on the work of Fanon, Achille Mbembe (2017) examines related questions of

agency and constraint by mapping out a genealogy of black reason. He outlines the historical construction of black identity and rationality from the trans-Atlantic slave trade to the contemporary world. Mbembe's historical lens reveals the process by which "black" has become a signifier for irrationality. At the same time, Mbembe indicates the many ways in which black people have resisted this domination by adopting new subjectivities—learning to read and write, leading slave revolts, and initiating abolition movements—that express agency.

Like black identity, indigeneity has come into being as the irrational Other to "Western" rationality. The irrationality of indigenous peoples was codified through the creation of explicit categories that distinguished "civilized" Europeans from "savage" natives. Bartolomé de las Casas argued in 1552 that the natives of Latin America were human beings just like European colonists, and this led to the belief that the natives of the land had souls and could not be killed indiscriminately. But this concession of humanity was accompanied by an epistemic distinction between white Europeans and the native inhabitants of the lands they colonized. Europeans occupied the top of the epistemic ladder, while the "savage" inhabitants of the jungle, seen as lacking both written language and political organization, occupied the bottom (de Acosta [1590] 2002). A racial hierarchy became an epistemic one, with "Western" identity and thought designated as the pinnacle of rationality.

This epistemic hierarchy forms the historical backdrop against which indigenous ways of knowing are perceived. Given these conditions, painting indigenous epistemologies as legitimate forms of rationality means locating them within a framework in which the more rational they are, the less indigenous they become. But the alternative—claiming that the indigenous somehow oppose rationality or modernity—only serves to reinforce the dualistic framework created by colonialism in the first place. As Santiago Castro-Gómez (2015) argues, indigenous identity is located on the fringes of modernity and rationality, not outside of these. Its perspective is thus neither anti-modern nor irrational. The critique indigeneity offers of coloniality is powerful precisely

because it represents an experience of an alternative rationality, which de-centers the "Western" tradition from the position it has claimed at the forefront of rational thought.

Methodology

In August of 2018, I conducted three weeks of ethnographic fieldwork in the Rio Ene region of Peru, located in the province of Junín in the Central Amazon. Prior to that time, from August of 2017 to July of 2018, I had spent two semesters as an exchange student at the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú (PUCP) in the capital city of Lima. In February, during a break between semesters, I worked for several weeks as a volunteer on an organic farm in Junín. During my time there, I was introduced to Lourdes, the assistant director of development projects for the native communities in the district. She was a young, easy-going Asháninka woman who had grown up in a nearby native community. She became interested in my research, and we maintained contact during the months that followed after I returned to Lima. During that time, I completed the Institutional Review Board (IRB) process at Messiah College and received approval to conduct fieldwork in her community. When I returned to Junín in August, she brought me to her parents' house, where I stayed over the course of my fieldwork.

My fieldwork itself consisted primarily of participant observation, which I conducted at typical community events like church services, sports games, and political gatherings. I also conducted interviews, both unstructured and semi-structured, with people who had ties to the community. Some lived there permanently, while others had grown up in the community but lived in nearby towns. Still others lived in the capital city of Lima, approximately eight hours away by bus, and returned only occasionally to visit their families. Though most were native Asháninka, some were *colonos*, migrants from the Andean highlands who lived in neighboring villages or who had married Asháninka members of the community. Some older members of the community still spoke the native Asháninka language to one another, but the majority of Asháninka people were more comfortable speaking Spanish. Apart from a few basic phrases I learned in the Asháninka language, all my communication with

Asháninka people took place in Spanish. Quotes from conversations and interviews are my own translations.

Because I had not arrived in the community through a formal program, the contributions I made were arranged informally, through conversations with the *jefa* (elected leader) and the family with whom I was staying. Most evenings during my fieldwork, I taught English, which the *jefa* had requested of me as a contribution to the community. Due to a national holiday, school was not in session during the first two weeks of my fieldwork. During that time, I held evening classes for both children and adults in the village's community center. At the beginning of my third and final week of fieldwork, school resumed, and I taught at the elementary school. There were around 15 students, ranging from first graders to sixth graders, in a single combined classroom.

Most mornings when school was not in session, I accompanied Lourdes' mother Angélica, with whom I was staying, to the cacao fields. The cacao harvest was in full swing when I arrived, and there was plenty for me to assist with—harvesting the ripe cacao pods from the plants where they hung, cutting them open and removing the seeds from inside, and moving the seeds into burlap sacks to take to the local cacao cooperative. In addition to this, I also helped with the cooking and cleaning, and I sometimes purchased food to contribute to meals.

Still, I often wondered how much I was contributing, and what constituted an equal exchange. My own positionality within the community was a constant question mark. My cooking abilities were less than ideal, so in that regard I often felt useless. During English classes, too, I found myself wondering what I had to offer. Several members of the community had told me that learning English was important to them for labor opportunities, tourism prospects, and higher education possibilities. But my presence in the community was short-term, and teaching in the elementary school meant that students were forgoing their usual curriculum during that time. Was that sustainable? Was my contribution genuine? My identity as a white, English-speaking American shaped the epistemic authority I was granted,

and I was continually reminded of that during my time in the community.

The Question of Why

When I first began my fieldwork among the Asháninka, I found myself frequently asking the question, "Why?" Even when I did not use the word "why" specifically, I usually made an effort to probe for clarifying details when I received information that seemed confusing to me. It became my standard reaction when I did not understand the purpose or reason for something, which was a frequent occurrence. I assumed that if I knew why things were happening—if I could get an explanation for a given statement or situation—I would better understand what was going on around me, and I would have a better sense of how people thought about their own beliefs, actions, and values.

This approach soon proved ineffective as I began to realize that my requests for an explanation were typically ignored. In response to my queries, I often received the same information I had just been given, formulated in a slightly different way, or I would be given new details that had nothing to do with the question I had asked. When the Asháninka family I was living with told me one day that I should not remove the shells from the sacha inchi nuts they had recently harvested, even though we had spent most previous afternoons taking the shells off the nuts, my "why" query was met with the responses, "It's not good to take the shells off," and, "It would be better to work in the cacao fields today." Days later, someone mentioned the explanation I had been looking for—that this particular batch of nuts had contained a large amount of moisture, and that we had waited a few days to take the shells off because the process was much easier when they were dry. This kind of information was seldom communicated to me in response to my "why" queries.

Members of the community also seemed uninterested in finding explanations for my own actions, which must have seemed confusing to them the same way their actions sometimes seemed strange to me. I began to notice that "why" was not a question people frequently posed to one another. They rarely

drew upon cause and effect explanations or universal reasoning to make sense of their beliefs and actions. If these explanations were not common justifications for people's beliefs and actions, I wondered, how were these legitimated? What made a belief true, or a person's knowledge justified?

Person-related Epistemology

Angélica, the mother of the family that I lived with in the community, often told stories about the self-help seminars she had attended. Sometimes medical professionals came to the community to talk about health and nutrition, and Angélica always made sure to attend these meetings. Other organizations occasionally offered workshops on conflict resolution or self-improvement, and Angélica would go out of her way to participate in those, too. As a devout Seventh-day Adventist, she also took the opinions of religious leaders seriously. As often as several times a month, she traveled to the city an hour away to consult a well-known religious leader on issues that concerned her.

In each of these cases, Angélica justified the knowledge she received on the basis of the personal qualifications of the people who shared their expertise with her. In the context of health, she explained that the knowledge she gained was justified because the people who shared it were experts in the field of nutrition. The seminars she attended on conflict resolution and self-improvement were organized by professionals who had also studied and practiced the techniques they shared. Their knowledge was reliable because they were considered experts. In the same way, the advice she sought from Adventists was legitimate because of their role as religious leaders. Angélica used personal characteristics of the people who shared their knowledge with her to justify its legitimacy. Both their educational qualifications and their social position as a professional or religious leader were taken into account. These examples show that for Angélica, epistemology was fundamentally connected to people and their identities.

The Seventh-day Adventist church has been present in the Central Amazon since the arrival of the first missionaries in the 1920s (Rojas Zolezzi 2014). In the community where I conducted fieldwork, Angélica was the only Asháninka person who regularly attended Adventist services. She was sometimes criticized by her children for her religiosity, and they refused to accompany her to weekly services and prayer meetings. In neighboring Asháninka communities, however, Adventism remains prevalent. Juan Carlos La Serna Salcedo (2010), writing to explain the growth of Adventism among the Asháninka, argues that adscription to Adventism may be viewed as a "test of civilization" in the context of a traditional belief system viewed by the surrounding society as "uncivilized" (21). In other words, joining a Christian church may offer Asháninka people epistemic credibility by providing them with what is perceived as a coherent belief system to replace their own "irrational" set of beliefs. Yet, as La Serna Salcedo indicates, indigenous Adventism is a syncretic tradition. The person-related epistemology modeled by Angélica, who used the social role of religious leaders to justify the knowledge they offered, indicates that this way of knowing is present in contemporary indigenous Adventism.

My own knowledge was frequently tied to my qualifications and social position as well. Aspects of my identity were made explicit when members of the community asked for my opinion. Often, family members would ask me for information or advice on topics related to health and nutrition. They cited my status as a "professional"—someone who has formally studied for a profession—as evidence for why my opinion was reliable, even though I had no formal qualifications that would legitimate my knowledge on topics in these fields.

My personal qualifications were also used as an indicator of my knowledge in the realm of education. On days I taught English at the elementary school in the community, the teacher often asked me to continue teaching the class even after I had finished my English lesson. Again, the word "professional" was used to describe me and to indicate that my knowledge was reliable. I was not formally qualified to teach, and there was no way to verify if the information I taught was true by detaching it from me as the knower and

considering it independently of myself. My status as a university student from the United States granted me epistemic authority. I taught English, geography, and history, sometimes for over half of the school day. Had I not stopped and gone to take a seat, the teacher probably would have asked me to continue for the rest of the day.

Gender was also cited as an aspect of my identity that determined what knowledge I was qualified to share. In the home, most responsibilities fell upon women. They were responsible for cooking, cleaning, and caring for children. As a woman, I was expected to have knowledge pertaining to each of these things. When it came to cleaning and caring for children, I fulfilled these expectations. I knew how to wash my clothes by hand properly, and the adults of the community entrusted their children to me, particularly when they were busy or needed a break. But I did not know how to cook, and that was a serious problem.

Angélica's request one day was simple: "I won't be home until late, and there's not enough rice for everyone to eat. Can you cook more?" I told her yes. *It's just rice*, I thought. *It can't be that hard*. But I had spoken too soon. First, the matches were too tiny for my large hands, and my repeated attempts at lighting the stove were useless. Then, after Angélica's son came and lit the burner for me, I overestimated the amount of water to add to the rice. It cooked eventually, but it was soggy and inedible. When even the dogs refused to eat it, I carried it to the ditch where food waste went, dumped it all in, and covered it with banana leaves.

When Angélica and her husband came home, they scolded me and told me that it is essential for a *señorita*, a young lady, to know how to cook rice. Angélica remarked that my mother had failed to teach me one of the most important skills a *señorita* should have. As time went on, the problem grew. I often offered to help with the cooking, but Angélica soon realized that this would require her to take the time to explain what to do to me, which was not actually helpful at all. I did not have the knowledge that corresponded to my social role. That was a problem. These experiences brought to the forefront my own positionality in the community. Was this an equal exchange? Was I contributing enough? How did my own identity as a white, English-speaking American impact how I was perceived—and what I perceived—during my time in the community?

The cooking situation repeated itself when Angélica's twelve-year-old granddaughter came to visit from the nearby town where she lived with her mother. She was chastised many times for not knowing how to do tasks like cook and wash clothes, seen as basic responsibilities for a girl her age. When Angélica asked her to make rice one day, she protested that she did not know how. Angélica's husband scolded her: "She doesn't know anything! She doesn't even know how to make rice. That's not okay. That's not how it should be. A *señorita* should know how to cook." Angélica stood up for her by responding, "She's just a girl! When I was her age, I didn't know either. I had to learn little by little."

At its core, the argument between Angélica and her husband revolved around the relationship between knowledge and social identity, and in particular what knowledge their granddaughter's identity should merit. This was characteristic of discussions about whether or not someone should be expected to know something and whether or not their knowledge should be considered legitimate. The heart of the debate lay in whether or not characteristics of the knower merited knowledge of the topic, not in consideration of the knowledge as an independent, stand-alone piece of information.

Characteristics of the knower were also used to disqualify that person's knowledge when it came to topics they were unlikely to be familiar with based on their social position. In these cases, the person's social identity was invoked as an explanation for why their knowledge was unreliable. I experienced this in the context of agriculture and in other situations where Asháninka people believed that my social role disqualified me from knowing something that their identity qualified them to know. Members of the community referred to my status as a professional to indicate that I lacked legitimate knowledge of cacao and other crops. Angélica told me straightforwardly while working in the cacao fields one day, "You're a professional. That's why you don't understand cacao." My

educational background indicated that I lacked legitimate knowledge of the agricultural world.

On another occasion, a friend of Angélica's daughter shot a deer and sent meat home with everyone in the family. I told Angélica and her husband that there are deer where I'm from, too, and that my father and brother often go hunting. My own social identity as a North American "professional" undermined the legitimacy of my claim and aroused skepticism. Angélica's husband asked me what color deer were, and I responded that they were brown with white spots. He then asked me if they had antlers. I answered yes, then clarified that they do if they are male. He was shocked and exclaimed, "I thought you were trying to trick me! But I guess you're telling the truth." My own identity initially disqualified me from having legitimate knowledge of hunting. My reliability as a knower was only restored after I had correctly answered his questions. This tactic seemed to be used for all topics related to agriculture and ecology, sectors someone in my social position would likely know little about.

Person-related characteristics connected to the identity, experiences, and qualifications of individuals were key to establishing epistemic legitimacy among the Asháninka. Members of the community used these characteristics to both assert the legitimacy of someone's knowledge and to discount it. Knowledge was not considered on its own terms, as isolated information, but was instead evaluated on the basis of the identity of the knower. Person-related epistemology thus formed the foundation of knowledge for the Asháninka.

Place-related Epistemology

On walks to and from the family's fields, about a half hour in each direction, Angélica often pointed out the plants that lined the path along the way. She would tell me their names in both Spanish and the native Asháninka language and explain how each one could be used to treat an illness. Occasionally, she collected the leaves from a plant and took them back to her house, where she would prepare a remedy for a friend or family member who she knew suffered from a certain ailment.

While most remedies involved drinking water that had been boiled with the leaves of a plant,

herbal baths were another treatment option. Angélica recounted story after story of people with physical or psychological ailments who had taken herbal baths and then been cured of their suffering. When her aunt suffered a stroke that paralyzed her from the neck down not long after I arrived in the community, Angélica collected medicinal plants and took them to her aunt's house. She used them to give her aunt an herbal bath, which she hoped would improve her health. Angélica's actions demonstrate the importance of the environment as a source of knowledge for the Asháninka. The legitimacy of knowledge in the realm of medicine and health stemmed from ecological knowledge of plants and their uses. Environmental context was foundational to knowledge the same way that social context was.

The herbal bath for Angélica's aunt was intended to treat a physical ailment, but plants were used as a treatment for psychological and spiritual problems as well. For instance, Angélica's twelve-year-old granddaughter had been significantly impacted by an ongoing conflict between her parents that had caused them to separate the previous year. She was often irritable and would challenge her mother, grandmother, and other authority figures when instructed to do something. When Angélica's granddaughter left the indigenous community to return home to her mother's house after spending a week with her grandmother, Angélica brought along special herbs that she planned to use to bathe both her daughter and granddaughter upon reaching their house.

When they arrived, however, Angélica realized she had left the bag of herbs on the bus they had taken to reach the town where her daughter and granddaughter lived. She was distraught for several days. Their situation surely would have improved, she told me, if only she had been able to bathe them both with the herbs she had collected. This scenario, like the previous one with Angélica's aunt, indicates that the environment played an important role in knowledge for Angélica. Because she was familiar with the land she inhabited and the plants that grew there, she was able to treat both physical and psychological ailments. Having legitimate knowledge in the realm of

health and medicine was dependent on her connection to the land. Context, in this case environmental, was inseparable from epistemology.

Changing cultural practices, though, have brought changes to this tie to the land. When Angélica pointed out plants to me on walks, she often added wistfully that her children no longer knew the names and uses of the plants that were so important to her and others in her generation. Younger generations preferred to take medicine when they were sick instead of using plants as remedies, and Angélica herself looked first to doctors and psychologists when something went wrong, using medicinal plants only to supplement the treatments they prescribed.

Others in the community echoed Angélica's concerns about changing relationships with the land. Many told stories of their grandparents and great-grandparents who used to go hunting and bring home game for the entire community to share. The community's current territory does not include forests, and even in nearby areas where there are forests, game is sparse. Changing environmental conditions like mining, deforestation, and climate change have meant that many past ways of life are no longer viable options for indigenous peoples. In the community where I conducted fieldwork, there is no longer any game to hunt or fish to fish for. But as an alternative, members of the community have formed a cacao cooperative, transitioning from a foraging society to an agricultural society. Current processes of change have added wage labor and "professional" occupations into the mix. These transformations have changed the Asháninka's relation to the land and, therefore, to knowledge. Even so, place continues to play a significant role in indigenous epistemology.

The Asháninka's relation to these changes is complex and multifaceted. Indigenous peoples are not passive bystanders in the face of environmental change, but neither are all indigenous people ardent environmentalists. The largest indigenous organization in the Rio Ene region where I conducted fieldwork is called La Central Asháninka del Río Ene (CARE) and legally represents 18 Asháninka communities and 33 annexes ("¿Quién es CARE?" n.d.). CARE has successfully countered several proposed hydroelectric projects in the region and has obtained land titles for 18 native communities since it was established in 1993. Its most notable project is Kemito-Ene, a cacao cooperative with over 250 partners and both Organic and Fair Trade certifications. In 2019, CARE president Ángel Pedro Valerio, who started the cooperative in 2010, was awarded the United Nations Equator Prize for innovative, nature-based climate change solutions in recognition of Kemito-Ene's impact. He was invited to speak at the UN Climate Summit in New York City in September 2019, where he advocated for indigenous land rights and for greater protections against the encroachment of narcotraffickers on indigenous territory ("Líder indígena amenazado por narcotraficantes pidió garantías para su vida" 2019).

Still, not all indigenous people support conservation initiatives. Beth Conklin and Laura Graham (1995) use the term "ecologically noble savage" to refer to the image of indigenous peoples living in harmony with nature that dominates the contemporary imagination. Conklin and Graham write that "(in) the past two decades, the noble savage theme was recast with a distinctly ecological emphasis. Native peoples in general, and Native Americans in particular, came to be widely viewed as 'natural conservationists' who use environmental resources in ways that are nondestructive, sustainable, and mindful of effects on future generations" (697). This image is due in part to the joint rise of environmentalism and the indigenous rights movement at the end of the twentieth century, when both groups realized it was in their interest to incorporate the symbols and causes of the other (Pimenta 2007).

However, as Colchester and Gray (1997) indicate, conservation interests and indigenous autonomy do not always align. Many designated protected areas worldwide ban shifting agriculture and heavily restrict hunting, limiting food access for indigenous peoples whose presence in the area long precedes their establishment (Sylvester, García Segura, and Davidson-Hunt 2016). Conservation interests typically include habitat conservation and

biodiversity preservation. In contrast, indigenous autonomy may favor economically viable options like mining, lumber, and monocrop agriculture—for example, cacao farming among the Asháninka. In addition, many creative, well-intentioned sustainability initiatives, such as the cacao cooperative located in the community where I conducted fieldwork, continue to fall short of meeting families' basic economic needs, including the ability to access quality food, education, and healthcare.

Indigenous peoples in favor of conservation initiatives may face the further challenge that their conception of nature differs from the conception that dominates the global environmental movement, which commonly advocates for ecological preservation and sustainable resource use. Nadasdy (1999) notes that the very terms "environmental" and "ecological" are products of a "Western" conception of the world. This is because "implicit in their use is the notion that human beings are separate and distinct from the rest of the world, and it is specifically the non-human part of the world which constitutes the 'environment'" (4). Yet there are those, among them many indigenous peoples, who make no rigid distinction between humans and the environment. They refer to themselves as "part of the land, part of the water" (McClellan 1987, 1). Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (2005) and Philippe Descola (2013) call attention to the presence of this conception of nature in Amazonia.

In order to gain the support of the environmental movement, indigenous peoples often are obligated to adopt the language, symbols, and views of nature that are internationally dominant. Conklin and Graham (1995) refer to this as "middle ground." This occurs when indigenous peoples frame their causes in terms that appeal to the concepts and values of the global environmental movement, even when these are not necessarily indicative of indigenous peoples' own worldviews and priorities. In the case of the Asháninka community where I conducted fieldwork, "middle ground" may generate pressure to represent their relationship with the land in terms of a romanticized connection to forests,

even when priorities have shifted and the connection to the land looks different.

Sally Falk Moore (1987) asserts that cultural transformation involves processes of continuity as well as processes of change. Though cultural practices change over time, a cultural "structure" comprised of historically significant values and practices underlies those processes of change and shapes how they unfold (Leach 1961). Indigenous communities are navigating changing relationships with the land, but these processes of change are guided by collectively held practices and values. For the Asháninka, knowledge of plants and animals has changed from knowledge of hunting practices to knowledge of crops and potential diseases.

As younger generations become more and more connected to the capital city of Lima and to the world beyond Peru, the way in which indigenous peoples relate to the land, and the knowledge that underlies this connection, will continue to change. In the future, the Asháninka may no longer be able to identify medicinal plants, catch fish, or tend cacao fields. Still, place-based epistemology will likely continue to shape indigenous life. Perhaps it will be marked by a shift in focus from rural places to urban ones, or from agricultural contexts to industrial and service-sector ones. As social, cultural, and environmental changes occur, person- and place-related epistemologies look different. Yet, they continue to form the historical backdrop against which indigenous communities navigate the transitions they are experiencing.

The Ethics of Knowing

These research findings demonstrate that for the Asháninka, epistemology tends to be context-dependent. Social and environmental setting is inseparable from knowledge. In the contemporary world, however, context-independent ways of knowing are dominant. Preference is given to knowledge that can be disconnected from the social and material conditions in which it is found. The scientific knowledge paradigm seeks to quantify and classify knowledge, providing universal explanations that hold true across contexts. The implication of this is that "the rich social and physical complexities of place are

expressed as a set of numbers" (Nadasdy 1999, 11). Universal knowledge is privileged over particular, contextualized knowledge. The objects of scientific inquiry are also removed from their contexts and considered as independent entities. Plants are uprooted from the ground and placed on a black metal microscope where they are viewed as solitary specimen independent of larger landscapes. This scientific method is prioritized over an approach that studies plants within specific environmental contexts and sees their meaning as inherently tied to surrounding ecosystems.

The structure of the "Western" education system itself privileges context-independent epistemologies over context-dependent ways of knowing. Students are removed from the contexts of their ordinary lives and required to sit in confined spaces for hours on end. This physical separation between learners and their particular contexts is believed to facilitate learning, not to hinder it. Seana Mcgovern (2000) notes that "the establishment of school buildings in the Peruvian Amazon created indoor education, separating 'learning from the territory' and resulting in the 'resettlement of… dispersed clans to living in concentrated native communities'" (525). The dominant model of "Western" education fails to allow for learning in context, learning in nature, and learning while moving—all approaches that are central to indigenous learning. What matters is not personal experience in a particular context, but universal principles that can be abstracted from context. Separating knowledge from the conditions that give rise to it is seen as the goal.

The questions Carothers, Moritz, and Zarger (2014) raise become important in this context. "What is knowledge? What is knowing?" These queries force us to think about why we know and how we should know. The way in which we know is not neutral. Our epistemologies, or justifications for our knowledge, are indicative of our values. Justification based on principles tied to reason and argumentation—legitimacy that can be abstracted from context, made universal, and considered on its own terms—indicates cultural values of universality and consistency. This ethical framework can be traced back to the liberal tradition that came out of the Enlightenment, when modern

philosophers like Hobbes, Locke, and Kant sought to establish ethical models that would hold true across all contexts (Nowak 2017). These universal frameworks gave rise to "Western" epistemologies, which aim to distinguish knowledge from context.

If justifications for knowledge that can be abstracted and made universal are indicative of a cultural context that places value on these things, justifications based on contextualized, localized factors are indicative of a value system that places priority on particularity and context. This kind of epistemology regards knowledge as an interconnected act whose purpose is to relate us to the surrounding world. When knowledge is inseparable from people and places, acts of knowing and legitimating knowledge connect us to our social and environmental realities. Knowledge and truth do not abstract us from gender, ethnicity, geography, and language—the things that make us who we are—but instead more deeply connect us to these identities.

Hybridity as Epistemic Resistance

Even the distinction between context-dependent and context-independent epistemology, however, is connected to a history of oppression. The ethnic and epistemic hierarchies codified through colonial structures served to ensure that indigenous identity and knowledge were kept separate from "Western" identity and knowledge (de Acosta [1590] 2002). Binary classifications between indigenous context-dependent epistemology and "Western" context-independent epistemology merely reinforce this dichotomy, creating a double bind where indigenous peoples must choose between being rational and being indigenous.

Despite this, both indigenous and "Western" forms of knowledge and identity are hybrids, not "pure" forms of knowledge. Indigenous peoples are not restricted to using only context-dependent epistemologies. They are not incapable of invoking universal justifications or reasoning from first principles. Similarly, "Westerners" are not entirely unaware of the importance of context. They may look to experts, social cues, or environmental context as ways of justifying knowledge in given scenarios. The primary difference between the

two lies in which way of knowing is dominant and which tends to be conferred collective authority in society and its institutions. In contemporary "Western" culture and in the postcolonial world, context-independent ways of knowing are dominant. Among the Asháninka I studied, context-dependent ways of knowing prevail. Yet as hybrid, syncretic forms of knowledge shaped by colonial legacies, indigenous epistemologies resist the limitations of binary distinctions. Drawing upon examples from my fieldwork, I consider two cases of hybridity that I encountered—changing social roles and human rights discourse—as examples of ways indigenous epistemologies counter binary frameworks and the double binds they produce.

Changing Social Roles

The first key indicator of epistemic legitimacy I encountered among the Asháninka was social role. The social category "professional" was mentioned constantly and held particular significance. It was used to indicate that my knowledge on matters regarding education, health, and nutrition was legitimate, though I had no formal training as a teacher or health professional. My social role as a professional was also used to undermine the reliability of my knowledge when it came to agriculture and the land, topics that someone in that social role would likely know little about. Gender was another social indicator used to identify the kinds of knowledge a person should have. For women, this meant knowledge of cooking, cleaning, and caring for children. There was no expectation that men would know how to do these things, and when they claimed they could prepare food or care for children, this knowledge was seldom considered legitimate.

When there is relative equality between social roles and tasks are seen as equal in importance, using social role as an indicator of epistemic legitimacy results in relative epistemic equality. The knowledge of both professionals and non-professionals, both men and women, is granted equal importance. In general, in foraging societies where men hunt and fish and women gather fruit, cook, and care for children, both kinds of tasks are considered equally important. The knowledge associated

with both roles is valued more or less equivalently.

On the other hand, when epistemology is tied to social role in an unequal society, epistemic inequality ensues. When one social role is privileged over another, one kind of knowledge is also privileged over another. In a context where the benchmark of success is often professional occupation and those who have white-collar jobs enjoy a significantly higher standard of living than their blue-collar, non-professional counterparts, the ways of knowing associated with professional social roles hold more clout than those linked to non-professional social roles. In the same way, a gender hierarchy that values the social role of men over the role of women indicates that, in general, the knowledge associated with men is considered more legitimate and valuable than the knowledge associated with women.

But changing social roles among indigenous peoples have given rise to processes of hybridization in both social role and epistemic legitimacy. Environmental changes like deforestation and climate change have caused foraging and agriculture to become less viable economic options for indigenous peoples. As they more often opt to travel to urban centers to study for a profession—and as more universities are constructed outside of urban centers near the regions where indigenous peoples are concentrated—the clear-cut, binary distinction between professional and non-professional has begun to change. Indigenous people may occupy professional roles and, at the same, cultivate fields that have been in their families for generations. The lines between categories have begun to blur, indicating hybridity. Accompanying this hybridization of social role is the hybridization of epistemology, since the category "professional" serves less and less as a clear-cut epistemic indicator.

The same process of hybridization has impacted gender roles as well. NGOs, churches, and society as a whole have all contributed to the diffusion of new ideas about gender. Some of these groups have reinforced the idea that gender equality is "ideology" and must be opposed, while others have advanced feminist ideas regarding a woman's role in society (Espinosa 2017). In the economic sphere,

change has been stimulated by a lack of labor opportunities in and near indigenous communities. When men leave the community in search of wage labor and are absent for extended periods of time, women take on men's roles in addition to their own. Their responsibilities include performing agricultural duties and occasionally even hunting, meaning that the epistemic expectations associated with being women also change. As roles adapt and change, the boundaries between them become less clearly defined. Binary epistemic distinctions begin to lose weight.

The growth of tourism and the sale of handcrafted products have provided women with more economic control as well. Women are often responsible for bringing tourists into their communities, and they are the ones who sell the handicrafts they make. The Asháninka community where I conducted fieldwork was not officially open to tourists, but those considering the possibility of involving the community in tourism were women. As women take on new roles and gain new knowledge, hybridization occurs. Clear-cut classifications of identity and knowledge begin to unravel. While these changes pose challenges to indigenous peoples, who are forced to renegotiate social roles and cultural identity, they also create hybrid identities and epistemologies. These new forms of knowledge and identity challenge simplistic dichotomies and demonstrate indigenous agency.

Human Rights Discourse

A second case of hybridization, the use of human rights discourse by indigenous peoples, undermines the oppressive structures of dominant knowledge frameworks in a different way. While many cultures have some notion of the values that underlie human rights theory, the genealogical roots of contemporary human rights discourse lie in "Western" modernity. Manfred Nowak (2017) explains, "Although the values underlying human rights can be found in most religions, cultures, and philosophies, the very idea of human rights as legal claims of human beings against those who have the power, on the one hand, to violate such rights, and on the other hand, to respect, protect, and fulfill such rights, only developed during the age of Enlightenment" (7). As a product of Enlightenment thought, contemporary human rights theory was built upon universal principles. The notion of human rights as universal standards that are true in every time and in every place, independent of ethnicity, gender, religion, or place of origin, comes from a system of ethics tied to universal law rather than situated values.

Yet in my interviews with the Asháninka, human rights discourse was often used to defend indigenous identity and interests. One of my interview questions presented a scenario in which someone believed a particular ethnic group was inferior to another and stated that the two groups should not have equal privileges. I asked what each interviewee thought of this opinion and then, if they believed it was wrong, how they knew. Interviewees consistently answered that the person's opinion was wrong because all ethnic groups have equal rights, which means one group cannot be denied the same rights that another group is granted. The notion of human rights was used to justify the equitable treatment of all ethnic groups.

Among indigenous peoples, human rights discourse is often used in this way to counter practices of exclusion and marginalization (Thornberry 2002). When indigenous peoples argue that they have a right to the land they have inhabited for centuries, that they deserve access to a quality education, or that they are entitled to self-government, they are appealing to a system of human rights that arose out of the context-independent ethics of the Enlightenment. By adopting human rights discourse, they employ hybrid epistemic thought and demonstrate indigenous agency.

From their location on the fringes of "Western" modernity, indigenous peoples thus critique it by its own standards. To the extent that the structures and practices set into motion by "Western" modernity violate indigenous rights, the human rights discourse indigenous peoples employ serves as a mirror held up against it to indicate that it has fallen short of its own moral aims. Hybridity in human rights ideology offers a powerful critique of "Western" structures, not because it lies outside of them, but because it indicates the places where they break down.

Conclusions

The ways of knowing that I encountered among the Asháninka contribute to epistemic resistance. They undermine and challenge oppressive structures along with the epistemic scaffolding that sustains them. First, these epistemologies challenge the notion of knowledge as information that can be extracted and applied indiscriminately of context. Knowledge is recast as a way of orienting towards the world *within* a particular context. For the Asháninka, knowledge and its justifications are person- and place-related. People and places are important not only with respect to what knowledge is known, but also for how legitimacy is established. Ethically, this reveals the importance of social and environmental context for *buen vivir*, or sustainable well-being. We know and live well when our epistemologies connect us to our identities and surroundings instead of requiring us to abstract from them. The epistemologies of the Asháninka de-center context-independent epistemologies, which justify knowledge according to criteria that can be universalized, from the place they occupy at the forefront of rational thought.

Secondly, the epistemologies I encountered among the Asháninka demonstrate hybridity. Hybrid epistemologies indicate both continuity and change among indigenous peoples, preserving important values and, at the same time, expressing adaptation and agency in the face of social, cultural, and environmental transitions. They also provide a glimpse into what resistance looks like in double bind situations where any available option reinforces one's own oppression. In these situations, hybridity provides a "third way," enabling people to express agency by weaving a different path. When colonial legacies that designate "indigenous" as "irrational" lock indigenous peoples into a double bind scenario where they must choose between being rational and being indigenous, hybridity provides an alternative that enables them to act with agency. Through their use of hybrid epistemologies, indigenous peoples resist the binary models of knowledge and identity that have been created and sustained through structures of coloniality.

Acknowledgements

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"You can't forget our roots anyway": French College Students' views on a Racially and Religiously Pluralistic France

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ABSTRACT

Despite the longstanding presence of Islam in the territory of France, Muslim French must still claim and justify their belonging in the context of widespread public skepticism over Islam's compatibility with "French" social and cultural values, such as *laïcité*, or secularism. The general public's skepticism is also, in part, due to the historical and ongoing racialization of Muslim populations. Many French sub-populations, including those who are perceived as more "liberal" such as college students, are a part of this skeptical public. Therefore, how have these students specifically been shaped by contemporary French discourses and understandings of *laïcité*? There is a lack of scholarly research on French college students in particular and their understandings of French identity, *laïcité*, and Muslims in France. To fill this gap, I conducted nine semi-structured interviews and drew on informal participant observation. In this article, I discuss French college students' opinions on French identity as well as the desire for widespread assimilation, specifically regarding Muslim women and their choice to wear a hijab in France. I examine these viewpoints within the framework of dominant French discourse, which often perpetuates the idea of a racialized Islam that is inherently incompatible with French culture. I argue that students on both the left and right sides of the political spectrum still reiterate opinions that fit within this dominant French discourse.

Keywords: secularism; Islam; France; *laïcité*; racism

I was sitting down at a crowded table next to a French friend from high school, Paul, and some other students who were working on a group project. I had just finished a group interview with Paul and his friends at a business school outside of Paris and was now waiting for him to finish up some work before we headed to the student bar. Before I knew it, Paul had run away from the table to call over someone who he thought would be the perfect person to talk to for my research. That is when I met Helene, who had just grabbed a chocolate bar from a nearby vending machine and sat next to me, eager to speak about her views on France and French identity.

I was surprised to learn that Helene is a member of the *Le Front Nationale*, the far-right party led by Marine Le Pen. She told me that she is active in *Le Front Nationale* and was especially active during the 2017 presidential election, sticking up posters, handing out flyers, handling money for the campaign, and even participating in a think tank about the French-speaking world. While Helene became interested in activism at the age of 14, her parents, who are more liberal, never approved of her affinity for *Le Front Nationale*. Helene and I spent a lot of time talking about how she understands her French identity, especially in the context of increasing immigration to France. She believes that French culture is being lost and that people are no longer proud to be French. According to Helene, if you want to wear anything "French," such as a clothing item with a French flag design, people will think you are a right-wing extremist. Ultimately, she laments the fact that France has not done anything "impressive" since colonialism and World War II and therefore, French people have nothing to be proud of anymore.

At the end of our interview, Helene got into a heated debate with Paul, who was doing homework next to Helene and I, when he overheard Helene's solution to immigration and how to preserve French culture. In Helene's opinion, immigration should be completely stopped and the focus should shift onto developing the home countries of immigrants. Paul began to argue with Helene, asking her to explain her plan to "fix" the immigration crisis and questioning the validity and viability of this plan. Helene defended her idea by saying that direct intervention is needed in other countries in order for them to progress. The idea that direct intervention is necessary can be tied to colonialist discourse on how it is imperative that Europe colonizes other nations in order to civilize and modernize these societies. Helene's plan would stop immigration and allow France to keep its historically white Christian culture while simultaneously pretending to aid others.

While many may assume that Helene's positionality is specific to the ideologies of the far-right in France, the complex intersection of race, religion, and republicanism in France displays a more nuanced picture-–—it shows that students of diverse political opinions still often agree with mainstream conservative discourses. Opinions surrounding French identity today are inextricably tied to France's minority populations, specifically French Muslims, who have been targeted in part because of their visible religious expression. French Muslims face discrimination and prejudice in the name of French republicanism, which emphasizes the privatization of religion. Within the framework of French republicanism it is necessary that the wider community work together towards the greater good, with a specific focus on self-realization through civic participation. In other words, "citizens must embrace the democratic process and its attendant obligation for reasonable, good faith interaction resulting in eventual consensus" (Mechoulon 2017, 239).

France's history with secularism began with the *laïcité* law of 1905, which established the separation of church and state. This law was originally created to act against the immense power of the Catholic church in France (Kelly 2017, 111). While the concept of *laïcité* was initially founded on the idea of limiting the

Catholic Church's power and privatizing religious identities, the meaning of *laïcité* has evolved over time and has various definitions according to different academics. According to Idriss (2005), "behind the French secular system is the principle that no one religious code should be imposed by the state on its citizens, and references to religious beliefs in order to justify public policies are considered politically wrong" (261). This necessitates that religious beliefs and customs should be relegated to the private sphere. The emergence of new Islamic identities among France's post-colonial minorities led to the reworking of the historical notion of *laïcité* (Kelly 2017, 4). The recent re-articulations of *laïcité*—a notion that can be described as elastic as opposed to immutable—have primarily impacted the Muslim population in France, further isolating French Muslim citizens for their religious and cultural differences.

Furthermore, certain French republican ideals, such as secularism, have painted Islam as fundamentally incompatible with French culture. This has resulted from the racialization of French Muslims, where race is defined as an "abstract signifier for separating human groups socially, politically, and economically. As such, culture, ethnicity, religion, nationality and (but not always) skin colour can all stand for race at different times" (Lentin 2008, 490). More specifically, the racialization of Muslims in France has been an ongoing process of dehumanization and infantilization (Fanon 1967) that allows religious affiliation to be equated with race while subsuming both under a more general label of "ethnicity" or "culture" (Lentin 2008).

The idea that one must be secular in order to be a modern French citizen has widely affected Muslims in France, who are perceived to practice their religion in the public as opposed to private sphere. Despite the prominence of Catholicism and Christian religious traditions in the public sphere, Muslim religious traditions are not afforded the same space. French Muslim individuals find themselves in the midst of constant debates about Muslim practices deemed to be incompatible with French norms. Therefore, my article examines how French college students understand the question of religion and *laïcité* within contemporary France and how they position themselves in a way that simultaneously feeds into the racialization of French Muslims and publicly challenges visible Muslim religious expression. These urban students have not only grown up in a time of de-facto racial and religious pluralism, but also following the 9/11 attacks in the United States and the French 2004 headscarf debates. This is a unique context where there is a lack of studies that examine the majority's views of the French-Muslim population through an academic perspective. More specifically, there is a lack of literature on French college students and their unique positionality within French society. Through this analysis, I seek to understand how the positions of students undermine or reinforce the racialization of the French-Muslim population.

In the spring and summer of 2018, I spent a total of six months conducting ethnographic research in Paris. I spent time with and interviewed nine French college students studying for professional degrees in order to better understand how these young students have been shaped by contemporary French discourses and understandings of *laïcité*. The only requirements for the participants were that they hold French citizenship and are between the ages of 18 and 27. I did not aim to obtain only non-Muslim students, but all of my interlocutors self-identified as non-Muslim. Furthermore, all of the participants came from a relatively similar middle to upper-middle class economic background and were a mix of men and women. My own identity as a young person studying for a university degree positions me as an in-group member to my interlocutors, but I was also an out-group member because I am not French. Specifically, as an in-group member, I felt as though my interlocutors were more comfortable discussing certain issues that may have been harder to discuss with an older researcher. As an out-group member, I felt that my status as an American inhibited discussion, as there may have been an assumption that I was ignorant about French history and culture.

Based on my interviews, I argue that urban French students' views are, in fact, consistent with the dominant French discourse surrounding Muslims and *laïcité*. Furthermore,

although I am researching a younger generation and younger generations tend to think more liberally than their predecessors, as we tend to think in the United States, I argue that some concepts may be so culturally ingrained that it often makes it difficult for young students to critically deconstruct the norm. While the students have a variety of opinions about how Muslims fit into a "secular" France, they often stay within mainstream French discourse. This impacts how we understand the influence of social and religious cultural norms, traditions, and histories on younger populations within France. Ultimately, often in spite of claiming to be anti-racist, these cultural norms undermine the capacity of some of these young, well-meaning students to become aware of the racializing narratives in their own understandings of difference.

French Students' thoughts on French identity

I was astonished to discover how important yet contentious France's relationship to Christianity was for my interlocutors, especially after reading so much literature on the importance of secularism to the French state. During a group interview, an argument about France's origins and identity emerged almost immediately. During this interview, I was joined by four friends in Paul's apartment, located near his business school in the suburbs of Paris. At the table, I sat between Paul and another boy, Thomas, who was rather timidly sitting next to me. Across from me were two girls, Christine and Ariane, wide-eyed and seemingly excited to start the interview. Both Paul and Thomas are white French and did not say they were particularly religious. In contrast, Christine is of French and Vietnamese background and Ariane's father is from Northern Africa, but Ariane does not identify as Muslim.

The topic of French origins specifically emerged in reference to a particular incident in the West of France. In 2014, the small town of La-Roche-sur-Yon (in Pays de la Loire) installed a nativity scene on the public property of their town hall. The nativity scene was quickly banned by a local court after the secular campaign group, *Fédération Nationale de la Libre Pensée*, complained about the scene. Other small towns faced similar problems regarding their nativity scenes which were located on public property. Ultimately, there were widespread debates among citizens who supported the secular protests and others who argued that secularism, in this scenario, was being taken too far (Dunham 2014).

Although I spoke with the group interviewees four years after the nativity scene controversy, the topic was brought up early on in our interview. Christine chimed in first, bringing up the nativity scene scandal, mentioning that not everybody was upset and that the small controversy is related to France's interconnectedness with Christianity. She goes on to say:

> Nobody's Christian in my family, but we still celebrate Christmas and Easter and stuff like that. It's just ingrained in the French culture in some way. My mom's not even French to begin with; she moved to France when she was seven. She's Vietnamese. So, that really wasn't her culture to start with, but all the holidays are based on…they still happen around all the Christian religious days like Toussaint, All saints, Christmas…and then there is Easter. So, there are many things that revolve around it and it's hard to get away from it because it's really just French culture or French Catholic culture.

As Christine understands it, despite the fact that her family is not Christian, she still celebrates Christian holidays. Four of my interviewees share a similar sentiment with Christine, saying that they or their family are not religious, but they still often celebrate Christian holidays, especially because they are seen as cultural facets. This shows how Christianity has become a cultural staple of France, in contrast to religions such as Judaism or Islam, which are not considered to be part of the cultural landscape.

Throughout my conversations, the dominant narrative that France is now a very "secular" nation occasionally came into conflict with France's proclaimed Christian history. In the group conversation, Thomas in particular was quick to interject his opinion on the true origins of France as a nation. He stated: "About the whole Christianity in France…in France we can

say that France was actually born when Claudius was baptized. So the roots of France, it's a Christian thing." Later in the discussion Thomas states, "*Nos ancetres sont les Gaulois*," which means "Our ancestors are the *Gaulois*," another saying that clarifies French origins and dates French roots back to the *Gaulois* tribe or the Gauls (5th c. BC- 5th c. AD). The Gauls, a group of Celtic people, emerged north of the Alps around 5th c. BC and spread throughout modern-day France and nearby countries. To forge a sense of national identity in post-revolutionary France, there was an appeal "to the antiquity of a common ethnic heritage" (Dietler 1994, 587). Consequently, some French citizens will refer back to the Gauls when discussing the origins of French identity. While Thomas may have made the comment about the *Gaulois* a bit ironically, a couple of minutes later in our discussion he states, "you can't forget our roots anyway." Thomas' statement about the *Gaulois* and French ancestry not only places French identity in the context of Christianity and a long history dating back to the *Gaulois* tribe, but also inextricably ties together religion, culture, and ethnicity. In fact, referencing the *Gaulois* to demarcate French origins is done in order to make the case for a real French bloodline or to authenticate one's Frenchness. In this understanding of the origins of French roots, Christianity becomes tied to both whiteness and Frenchness, in turn racializing religious affiliation. This racialization happens when "a particular set of phenotypic features, understood in a specific social and historical context in western nations, comes to be associated in the popular mind with a given religion and/or with other social traits" (Joshi 2016, 127). This process is specifically tied to Western expansion and colonialism. In general, associating French identity with the *Gaulois* (and thus whiteness) excludes other possible formations of French identity.

The point made by Thomas was immediately rebuked by Ariane, who argued that there is a difference between the kingdom of France and the Republic of France. She clarifies: "I don't believe in France. I do believe in the 5th Republic. To me, it's France. France is an abstract notion. The political regime of France is a reality. It is the 5th Republic." Ariane made it clear that she believes that the only France that matters today is the French Republic, as opposed to the French monarchy or the history of the *Gaulois*. The issue that this argument reveals is part of a wider tension between French republicanism, which encompasses the concepts of universalism and secularism, and French Catholicism, which has been so culturally ingrained that even non-religious people treat Christianity as the norm. Many scholars have noted the prominence of Catholicism in French society (Gray 2008; Laborde 2008), an institution so powerful that it remains socially relevant even after the introduction of *laïcité*. This has become increasingly relevant with the changing demographics of France, which places immigrants and Muslims in a precarious position in a society that promotes universalism yet points out visible differences.

Other students also grappled with the contradictory nature of Christianity and secularism in France. I met with Jean, a French white engineering student, on a beautiful sunny day in July. We sat outside on a picnic bench in the middle of a large, green grassy area located in the center of his university campus, and we began our interview by talking about Jean's understanding of *laïcité*. This quickly led Jean to discuss how *laïcité* is understood on his campus. Jean goes to a top military engineering school outside of Paris, and the school has about 2,000 students—500 per class, 20% of whom are female and barely any, to his knowledge, who are Muslim. I also noticed that the campus contained mostly white men. Jean told me that there are a lot of Christian students at his school, including students who formed an association that organizes Christian events that happen up to four times a week. Jean also mentioned that the group had recently organized a debate over the question, "Is God real?" which he respects as it opens up a dialogue and shows that this group of Christians is "good" and "open-minded." Despite the existence of this Christian group at his school, Jean says that it is often the norm in France to be secular and that many people in France do not believe in God anymore. Jean's anecdote about the Christian organization on his campus is not common, and none of my other interviewees mentioned a similar

experience on their campuses. Ultimately, Jean's explanation shows the potential acceptability of Christianity in places that normally remain secular.

Furthermore, when talking about French origins with my interviewees, most students did not directly address how the prominence of Christianity excludes other populations. Only Danielle, a French white student who I met in an airy bright apartment in the center of Paris, explicitly mentioned the hypocrisy of allowing Christian symbols to be displayed publicly while other religious symbols are seen as opposing French culture. She specifically states:

> I know that's quite a contradiction from what I said before on public schools, but as the state should not interfere, I was quite disturbed. I agree with what you said, you will never see Jewish or Muslim symbols on the city hall. To me, there is a huge difference between one person having a hijab or a religious sign on them and the mayor who has a public role and who represents the state in a way, showing that. I know that in France, even people who are not religious at all have a *crèche* [nativity scene] in their houses. Just like my boyfriend has a huge *crèche* and nobody's Christian in his family.

Danielle was the only interviewee to acknowledge the double standard between how Muslims and Christians are able to visibly express their religion. Most of the other interviewees did not express discontent with the prominence of Christianity in French culture but treated it as a given and something immutable within French society. Christianity is clearly not something that can be left in the past, as its influence can be seen in various public places. Similarly, the connection between French culture and whiteness is also seen as a given, unchanging aspect of French identity.

Although France's history is rooted in a Catholic past, the relationship that many French citizens have with this French-Christian identity varies. Throughout France's history, Catholicism has been an essential part of French culture. Before the establishment of the Republic, the French government consisted of "divine" monarchies, meaning the French king or queen had the God-given right to be the ruler. During

the French Revolution of 1789, certain ideologies, such as secularism, began to develop into central tenets of French political self-understanding in order to curtail the power of the monarchy and its close ties to the Catholic church. The desire for a secular state became most evident with the codification of the 1905 *laïcité* law that "officially" separated church and state. This accelerated the process through which Catholicism was refashioned into a cultural staple as opposed to a dominant religion. While France takes pride in its secularism, Christian traditions and norms have been transformed into taken-for-granted facets of French culture. Therefore, the modern nation-state almost expresses a "crypto-Christianity" (Scott 2007, 92), a term that refers to the secret practice of Christianity by pretending to celebrate other religions publicly or through other means of camouflage. Joan Scott understands crypto-Christianity in France as the covert way in which Christian traditions have become a central part of secular French society.

Overall, it is important to consider how my interviewees view the role of Catholicism within French identity in order to better understand how they perceive others. Most of my interviewees recognize that there is an inextricable tie between Christianity and French history. Whether they believe this connection is crucial to French identity varies. Furthermore, while some interviewees recognized that most French citizens are non-religious, many still celebrate Christian holidays—an act that excludes those who are religiously different. This demonstrates that these French students understand that there is some interplay between the Christian cultural aspects of French society and France's republican ideals. It is important to keep this in mind in the following section, as the students' understanding of French identity and origins will inform how they understand the French-Muslim population and their place in French society.

Assimilation: Culture, Religion, and Minimizing Visible Otherness

From the first moment I sat down at the kitchen table for my group interview, Christine was enthusiastic, alert, and engaged. Although she

was busy with her schoolwork, she made time to sit with me and her friends to talk about their perspectives and experiences. Christine was specifically very open about her background throughout the interview, which is important to know in order to contextualize her viewpoints. As mentioned above, Christine's mother is Vietnamese and, while Christine wants to keep learning about her heritage, growing up, her mother continuously made sure Christine understood French culture, including Catholicism. Christine's mother does not believe in God but would urge Christine and her sister to learn about Catholicism because they lived in France. Her mother knew the best way for her to fit in was to thoroughly understand, as Christine puts it, "old French conservative culture." Christine admits that by learning about Catholicism, she was better able to understand French culture. This is not uncommon as "the normative power of whiteness and Christianity in the West…results in the racialization of religion. For non-white non-Christian immigrants who have settled in western nations, their racial and religious minority status…is an essential challenge in becoming part of the social fabric of the receiving nation" (Joshi 2016, 128). Throughout our discussion, Christine uses her personal experience as half-Vietnamese to explain her complex understanding of assimilation.

Her mother's desire for Christine to fit in with French culture is one reason why she attended a private Catholic high school in the south of France. After spending a lot of time learning about French culture, Christine is trying to actively learn about her Vietnamese heritage. Although balancing these two realities may be difficult, Christine talked about navigating cultures with ease. Despite this, racism often acts as an impediment to integration. In fact, Christine states: "I've had people ask me 'oh, does your mom speak French?' when she arrives. Because she's Vietnamese, so she looks Asian. 'Does your mom speak French?' And I'm like yeah, duh. I can't speak Vietnamese. What language do you think we speak together?" She goes on to say:

> She's the only person in the family who married a French guy so I'm half Vietnamese. All her sisters and brothers married other Asian people, so when we're with my cousins, depending on if I'm standing by my mom or my sisters, or if my cousins are standing beside us, you can see the way people look which is very different. When they see my sisters or me, we look more French. We don't look more Asian, so she feels more integrated. She speaks French.

Here, Christine explains how the presumed whiteness of French identity affects her mother, who feels more assimilated when she is with her daughters who "look" more French, meaning they look less Asian. In short, the assessment of Christine's or her mother's "Frenchness" is racialized.

It is evident from this anecdote that a certain level of assimilation helps Christine's mother to feel more "French." By speaking French and learning about French culture from her mother, Christine was able to more easily assimilate into French society. Although both Christine and her mother were able to employ certain tactics in order to assimilate, their visible "otherness"— which is racialized—still makes it almost impossible to be perceived as completely French. This is seen in the case of Christine's mother who is often impacted by racist attitudes, including when she went to go vote in the 2017 French presidential election. At the voting poll, Christine's mother had a small issue with her registration when suddenly, out of nowhere, a man walked up to her and yelled, "you're foreign, you shouldn't have the right to vote." According to Christine, her mother screamed at the man in response, but this type of othering is not uncommon. Christine's mother is the perfect example of an assimilated non-European migrant who is still impacted by exclusionary racist mechanisms that are a part of the French imaginary. This again exemplifies how French identity gets tied to racial identity, thus permanently excluding those who have different religious and racial subjectivities.

As discussed previously, when it became clear that Muslim immigrants who migrated during the 20th century were in France to stay, it became a goal of many French politicians and citizens to promote their assimilation, while others wanted these immigrants to return to their respective home countries. Despite this, much of the immigrant population from West

and North Africa, many of whom migrated after World War II, decided to stay in France because of financial incentives provided by the French government. In order to fit into wider French culture, many of these immigrants had to compartmentalize their cultural differences into their private lives (Parekh 2008; Fernando 2014). Some immigrants even stopped practicing their religion as well as further separating themselves from their home culture by speaking French and teaching their children only French cultural norms.

Multiple interviewees recognize this complex nature of assimilation and expressed this in their interviews. They understand that while it is a reality that residential segregation has caused many segments of the French Muslim population to live in the same neighborhoods, which is perceived by the French as "separate communities," these individuals did not necessarily choose to be isolationist of their own volition. External factors, including policies by the French government, have forced various populations to separate themselves. Christine personally understands this reality and compares it to the United States when she states:

> The American way of integration is more like a melting pot, you bring your own culture. In France, you really have to leave your culture back. You have to fit inside the pieces and it's really, really tough and when you finally fit inside the pieces, you have forgotten where you come from.

Here, Christine is exposing an emotional personal reality, a sense of loss that she feels in relation to her heritage. She is saying that, unfortunately, in France, you have to compartmentalize your different identities in an effort to assimilate, but this often leads to the forgetting of certain aspects of oneself. Some interviewees share a similar understanding of the loss of cultural identity while simultaneously arguing for a certain level of assimilation. This is one reason why many children and grandchildren of immigrants are, in fact, very culturally French, but are not fluent in their parents' native language and do not feel any patriotic attachment to their home countries (Silverstein 2018). Often, many second and third generation immigrants simultaneously want to know and understand their heritage while also navigating acceptance into French society. This idea is most clearly recognized by Christine, who states that many second or third generation immigrants, including herself, try to find different ways to connect to their heritage; often, they do this through religion. She states: "They [second and third generation immigrants] don't know the place they come from, or if they've never been there, or don't really speak the language. The only thing they can find often that really links them is religion."

Religion then becomes a way for both immigrants and their children to remain connected to their heritage. Yet, from the perspective of the republican assimilationist model, Muslim immigrants and their children are seen as individuals who "refuse" to assimilate because of their desire to practice their religion. The idea that many Muslims "refuse" to assimilate is reiterated in various ways by some of my interviewees, who believe that Muslims can still practice their religion and simultaneously assimilate into French culture. Jean, the student at the military-engineering university, expresses the notion that steps must be taken to avoid segregation amongst communities in France. In order to avoid segregation, minority communities, not the state nor majority communities, must actively try to "mix in well." He goes on to say:

> In France, it is not a question of color or origins, it's just your culture. If you reject French culture, people won't be nice to you. You can be whatever color, whatever race. If you have lived in France all of your life and you understand how it works, there is no problem at all.

As Jean points out, as long as you understand French culture, such as the French republican ideal of *laïcité*, you will not have a problem. Jean reiterates the widespread French discourse of color blindness by reinforcing the idea that assimilation is not a matter of skin color, but instead simply a matter of knowing French culture and choosing to fit in. Furthermore, elements of racial tension exist in Jean's desire for social integration, specifically in his sense of discomfort of separate communities. Alana Lentin (2008) emphasizes that this discomfort "impels us to find solutions to the 'living

together' (Touraine 2000), of culturally (racially) different—incompatible groups" (498). Jean specifically uses the phrasing to "mix in well," which is an English translation of the French concept *mixité sociale*.

In general, the concept of *mixité sociale* promotes the idea of social mixing, which assumes that an individual will have more opportunities for social mobility if they mix with people of different social classes, participating in the ideal French republican model (Sabeg and Xuan 2006). While Jean promotes the idea of *mixité*, he ignores the social reality for Muslim populations. In fact, Jean is fully subscribing to the French doctrine of color blindness, which makes it nearly impossible for people to recognize racism and different forms of racialization. According to Beaman and Petts (2020), "Colorblindness is an ideology that enables people to ignore the persistence of racism by providing nonracial explanations for enduring racial inequalities" (1).

Furthermore, Muslims who are not considered by others to fit into the mainstream idea of a "French citizen" face discrimination based on their actions. This is because Muslim and black migrants and their descendants are seen as "mobilizers of cultural and religious values fundamentally deemed incompatible with French secular, liberal norms" (Silverstein 2018, location 713). Therefore, Muslim populations are seen as separate communities that are unable to assimilate. In general, it is seen as a good goal by various French pundits to rid France of "communalism" or *communautarisme*, a term deployed in media and political discourse to suggest a tendency for Muslim French and other immigrant populations to congregate in "enclaves" with their own community values (Silverstein 2018). By doing this, France can achieve its goal of having all citizens seen as simply French as opposed to any other hyphenated identity. As various political actors state, living together would improve conditions for immigrant and Muslim communities. In fact, "in 2010 Interior Minister Claude Guéant said that high unemployment among those who come to France from outside the European Union proves 'the failure of communalisms' because those immigrants tend to clump together by culture and doing so keeps them from getting

jobs" (Bowen 2011, 33). In this statement, Guéant shows how the culture of Muslims has been problematized instead of focusing on the socio-economic issues that they face (Yilmaz 2016). The racial to culturalist discourses about the very heterogeneous Muslim populations in Europe, in combination with concerns over economic stability, has ultimately led to the stigmatization of Muslim minority populations. In previous times of economic instability, Muslim communities were targeted as "alien" populations that threatened social cohesion. In the 1980s specifically, with the rise of neoliberalism, the focus changed from Muslim immigrants' social problems to their "problematic" culture culminating in the shift from an economic to a cultural burden. This process resulted in the racialization of Muslim populations in France who are consistently associated with specific inherent cultural norms (Yilmaz 2016).

Ultimately, the notion that separate communities are bad for immigrants both socially and politically is consistently spread by politicians, despite the lack of ideas for how to economically integrate marginalized populations. Although there is a lack of concrete policy ideas to tackle what is perceived to be communalism, some of my interviewees still believe that it is important for secluded communities to make a *personal* effort to assimilate. In this way, some interviewees seem to prioritize, in quite a neoliberal fashion, individual initiative over structural policies targeting the socio-economic issues faced by Muslim and immigrant populations.

Ariane, who has made strong statements in favor of assimilation, understands that it is important to keep your own culture while simultaneously adjusting to life in France. She states:

> I think that you can live with your own culture within another frame and I think that the French *laïcité* is good. I like this model. Sometimes people are thinking that it's tough and that it's a way to erase the culture of the immigrants, but you can still have your culture and adopt to some codes and I'm okay with these codes, because I still want the *laïcité* to apply to the Catholic church.

Ariane uses the concept of *laïcité* to express why it is crucial for immigrants to assimilate. She also highlights that some parts of cultural heritage are more acceptable, while others must be hidden away. By assimilating, immigrants show that they recognize the importance of *laïcité* to the French Republic and its citizens. By publicly expressing their religious beliefs and living in separate communities, which were created by segregating housing policies, immigrant communities are interacting with the French Republic in a way that is different from many other French citizens. This often becomes a point of tension and is expressed in some of Ariane's and Jean's sentiments.

It cannot be concluded from these interviews how being of mixed ethnic background affects one's opinion on assimilation. Christine comes from a multi-ethnic background and talks negatively about various aspects of assimilation, especially the loss of cultural heritage. Christine also recognizes the pressures of assimilation that many individuals face. In contrast, Ariane, whose father is from North Africa and therefore is also of mixed heritage, has differing opinions about assimilation. In her view, you can simultaneously hold onto your culture, that is certain legitimate aspects of your culture, and fit within the framework of the French Republic. In general, Ariane is very optimistic about the possibility of maintaining some cultural aspects. It thus follows that perhaps the only real French republican way to "live with your own culture within another frame," as Ariane states, is reduced to facets such as food and music. In general, the other interviewees tended to agree that assimilation is important, although some were more hesitant about how to assimilate immigrants.

From these interviews, there seems to be a general consensus that Muslims should be assimilated in some way in order to fit into French society. To what extent they should be assimilated was a more difficult question for my interlocutors to answer. Ultimately, even the most seemingly assimilated individuals still face discrimination.

Muslim Women and the Hijab in France

The hijab in France is a sensitive topic and was especially contentious amongst the students in the group interview. In the beginning of the interview, after I explained the premise of my research, I asked my interviewees about the recent incident involving Maryam Pougetoux, a student union leader who, while speaking on television about student reform, became known and then criticized for wearing her hijab. Ariane was quick to state her opinion:

> This kind of reaction...can come from both sides of the political landscape. From the right because people are like, "she's Muslim and she's wearing a hijab so this is not possible because if she wants to be French, she has to endorse the values of France," whether that is to say *laïcité* or Catholicism. But there is also a trend on the left side, that is to say that she's fighting for freedom, equality, and things like that and she cannot do it with a hijab on her head, because a hijab is basically the opposite of freedom.

Christine elaborated on this point by describing how the political right views the hijab as an instrument of oppression, but in France it cannot necessarily be considered an instrument of oppression, at least not in the same way. Ariane solidifies her viewpoint when she says that personally, she thinks that anything that a woman has to do, that a man does not, is a form of oppression. She goes on to say that there are two cases in regard to the hijab:

> The case where you have to do it, someone tells you to do it or you have to do it to be integrated into your family and community. And there's another case where you choose it, you are free to choose it. But it is not because you are free to choose that you are not alienating anyone.

In this understanding, a Muslim woman is either forced to wear a hijab or has chosen to wear a hijab, but then has willingly alienated herself from society at large. Christine quickly agreed that a hijab-wearing Muslim woman is excluding herself from broader French society, no matter her intentions. Christine tentatively expresses that "it is not integration." Whether

or not she personally believes this notion is difficult to decipher. I saw during this discussion that Christine had a hard time explaining how others may understand the hijab and reconciling her own views surrounding the hijab. Despite earlier expressing her own sense of loss and regret related to her heritage, she still had a hard time grappling with hijab-wearing Muslim women in France, as many believe that it is in opposition to French republicanism to embody one's religion in the public sphere.

When I asked about the new availability of hijabs in popular clothing stores in America and Europe, Ariane responded that the hijab is never about fashion. The implication was that no matter how much one may dress up their hijab, it is still a symbol of oppression. Despite French Muslim women's best efforts to style and make fashion statements with their hijabs, non-Muslim citizens often still understand the hijab as oppressive. Interestingly enough, although fashionable hijabs are seen as dressing up something that is oppressive, the contrary, such as women who are scantily clad, are rarely seen as a problem. Ariane argued about this with Christine, saying that it is different to wear something recognized by society as a sign of vanity, such as high heels, and wearing something to hide from someone else's gaze. This resonates with Joan Scott's (2007) point that Western feminists believe in the innate desire of women for emancipation in Western terms, meaning openness to sexuality and desirability or the freedom to have agency over one's sexuality. This also fits into a wider history of the racialization of Muslim populations who were initially of interest to France due to the inherent "sexual" and "exotic" nature of oriental societies (Scott 2007). Thus, culture becomes racialized and is subsequently tied to gender.

This idea that the hijab is inherently oppressive, as stated by Ariane, is based on its supposed purpose of hiding oneself from the gaze of a man and to not entice his desire. Subsequently, Muslim women who veil are often ostracized because they are seen as refusing to assimilate into French society. According to Al-Saji (2012), "what is at stake...is a form of cultural racism that hides itself under the guise of anti-sexist and even feminist liberatory discourse" (877). Therefore, Muslim women are seen as "backward" and "traditional" if they choose to veil. Both Ariane and Christine are coming from admittedly leftist backgrounds, but they understand the hijab as an object that is inherently oppressive in nature. In this case, it is difficult for these interlocutors to understand that the Muslim women in question could be in control of their decision to wear a hijab.

Other left-leaning and centrist interviewees also shared similar sentiments about the hijab being oppressive. When discussing the hijab with Jean, he mentioned that he never sees them on his campus unless someone is visiting from the outside. He explained that this is likely because the university is a military school so there is a lack of girls. The hijab would also be considered a violation of the uniform because it is not seen as compatible with the typical French military uniform. Although Jean did not disclose his political position to me, he highlighted his belief that even people in the center do not like hijabs because of their association with the oppression of women. He goes on to quickly clarify, "I wouldn't say, for most people it's not a racist thing. Yes, it's really associated with women's repression and in France we are really against women's oppression." Here, Jean is ignoring the intertwining of racism, white supremacy, and Muslim women's specific positionality within these histories (Scott 2007). This falls in line with dominant French discourse that promotes a "color-blind" ideology that does not recognize race. Thus, despite Jean's claim that it is not racist to oppose the veil, he ignores France's colonial history that has racialized Muslim women and the act of wearing the veil itself.

According to Joan Scott (2007), Muslims have been singled out as incapable of assimilation and have had various traits, including presumed sexual proclivities and the veil, seen as a representation of inherent Muslim inferiority. The attribution of racial traits to Muslim populations can be traced back to France's colonial "civilizing missions" in predominantly Muslim communities. The cultural information gained from these missions resulted in the dissemination of books

that detailed the innate "profound differences" between France and Muslim communities (Scott 2007). The foundations for a racial understanding of Muslims was subsequently solidified in the public imaginary.

To further understand Jean's colorblind reasoning, I asked him about the possibility of agency of Muslim women and if they ever truly have a choice to wear a hijab. Similar to other interviewees, Jean reassures me that while Muslim women in France are in a good environment to be able to choose, he is still not sure if this is the case, especially because he is not familiar with anyone in the Muslim community. This is similar to other interviewees who hold strong opinions about the French-Muslim community but lack much direct experience with them. Many of the interviewees have varied opinions, but none of them brought up personal opinions and experiences of Muslims.

Furthermore, Jean argues that in his school, which is mostly male and somewhat ethnically diverse (but not economically), there are no attitudes of xenophobia because everyone there is "educated and open-minded." This reflects ideas of a middle-class superiority, a group that is automatically deemed open-minded and widely seen in a positive light. Although his school and similar places are open-minded, he states that some women from lower classes may not necessarily get the choice to veil because there would be more pressure from their community. With this class distinction, Jean is constructing his argument within a wider French framework. Furthermore, thinking within the framework of class is a privilege that people of color are not necessarily afforded because their race cannot be separated from their economic situation. Jean's privilege allows him to dismiss the effects of structural racism because of the lack of Muslim students on campus.

In general, education is often associated with becoming more modern, liberal, and secular. Therefore, if a woman happens to be more religious and expresses this religiosity by wearing a hijab, she may automatically be considered less educated, less liberal, and less secular. Ultimately, there has been much variance in public opinion surrounding Muslim women, their agency, and the headscarf bans. While there was significant opposition to the headscarf ban, a majority of public actors, especially self-proclaimed feminists, were forcefully in favor of the law (Teeple Hopkins 2015). Despite divergent perspectives, rarely is the reality of Muslim women and the issues they face given any space in these discussions. As Nadia Fadil (2011) describes, many Muslim women recognize that obedience to religious rules should be a result of one's personal convictions. In this interpretation, Muslim women understand that the hijab is a matter of personal choice, despite what popular opinion says. Furthermore, many of the women in Fadil's article believe that wearing the hijab is a religious obligation, but there is also a sense of freedom in the act of personally choosing to wear it. Similarly, in Jeanette Jouili's (2015) work, she uses her ethnographic research with Muslim women in France and Germany to argue that, in actuality, many women struggle in choosing whether or not to veil. This kind of internal struggle was not mentioned by any of my interviewees because it is a particular narrative that is left out of popular discourse. Many of Jouili's interlocutors recognized the agency of other Muslim women and respected where other Muslim women were in their personal veiling journey. Despite this, my interviewees focus on whether or not the hijab itself is oppressive and if it can fit into the French public sphere at all.

Ultimately, in public discourse, Muslim women who veil are painted as both having no choice and as active agents of political resistance. This is done in fear of political Islam, which is seen as a rejection of the French political model because of a refusal to assimilate. These two popular portrayals of Muslim women are technically incompatible but are widespread in France. This understanding of Muslims as unwilling to integrate by wearing the hijab was also a common theme with some of my interviewees. Multiple interviewees brought up the wearing of a hijab as a form of protest. How can the hijab be both an instrument of oppression and a way to show one's resistance? Regarding the hijab as an agent of resistance, Jean stated, "It's also that it's associated with the fact that certain groups of people don't want to fit in. It's kind of a way

to say that they don't want to fit in the culture of France." Jean explains that it may be the case that some Muslim women do not want to fit in or assimilate into French society. By wearing a hijab, Muslim women are sometimes knowingly engaging in what other French citizens may consider a rejection of French ideals.

This issue was also brought up in the context of the *burkini* debate that arose during my group interview. The *burkini*, a modest bathing suit that Muslim women can wear, caused waves of controversy throughout France when it was first introduced. Because the burka, a misnomer of the face veil that few Muslim women in France actually wear, is not allowed in public spaces, the *burkini* was quickly banned on beaches by many small-town mayors during the summer of 2016, making Muslim women who wear the *burkini* seem "subversive and excessively religious" (Jung 2016). None of the interviewees commented on the viral photos of the women who were forced to unveil by male police officers on the beach. Instead, Ariane was quick to state her opinion on the issue of the *burkini*, saying how both the right and left-wing disliked the *burkini* but for different reasons. Specifically, she said,

> The *burkini* phase was quite interesting because the far-right started to yell about this burka on the beach and a part of the left-wing started to say, 'oh my god, we fought in '68 in order to liberate women.' So, I'm from the left-wing. I'm not particularly Islamophobic, but don't do it.

Ariane goes on to say,

> If I was saying no *burkini* on the beach, it was like 'oh my god you are so Islamophobic' and I am just like 'no I am just for equality of women in general' and they're like 'they can choose freely.'

While Ariane is against the hijab in public spaces in general, she emphasizes her personal feminist philosophy, which is shared by some of my other interviewees. According to this view, Muslim women can only become truly emancipated when they are able to rid themselves of the hijab or burka and fully assimilate into French society. Despite this, Ariane still shows that there is a divergent opinion that does see these forced unveilings

as problematic and the hijab ban as Islamophobic, but these opinions are often in the minority.

In her statement, Ariane interestingly mixes up the terms burka and *burkini*, implying that she views the *burkini* as essentially the same as the burka, despite the actual look of the *burkini*. During this discussion, Christine also mentioned that at first, she did not understand the purpose of the *burkini*, because all of the suits she saw were tight and form-fitting. This confused her as she believed the purpose of the *burkini* was to hide the woman's body. She goes on to say that these women could easily just wear a big t-shirt to cover-up, which would ultimately be easier because they would not be breaking any laws. In actuality, the woman who was forced to unveil during the 2016 controversy was not wearing a *burkini* but simply a blue tunic, black pants, and a headscarf. Ariane jumps in after Christine makes her point, emphasizing that the reason Muslim women want their bathing suits to look like a burka is so that they can make a political statement. When hearing the term *burkini*, the French imaginary sees it as a political statement as opposed to a modern-day fashion choice for Muslim women. It is also important to note that Ariane assumes that the *burkini* and burka look similar, whereas Christine perceives the *burkini* as very tight, which is unlike other traditional covers. Christine's understanding of the *burkini* is more in line with how the suit actually looked in the incident during the summer of 2016. It is clear that both Ariane and Christine are confused about the issue, and their arguments about the *burkini* and its place in modern, popular French fashion displays a general lack of knowledge around Muslim head coverings in France. Ultimately, both Ariane and Christine express their discontent with the *burkini* and how the situation has unraveled with Muslim women in France.

Paul also spoke up for the first time during the group interview in order to agree with Ariane. He brought up the fact that at the time of the 2011 burka ban, many people started to wear burkas in order to support the wider Muslim community. He also agreed with Ariane that this is the case for the Islamic scarf in general—people will wear it as a sign of

solidarity with the French Muslim community. In this understanding, it is clear that the hijab is simultaneously an instrument of oppression as well as an instrument of resistance. My interviewees from both left and right-leaning parties discussed the hijab as oppressive, non-feminist, and anti-assimilation.

While there is much divergence in opinion about the hijab across France (Teeple Hopkins 2015), much of the conversation does not seem to consider the actual opinions of Muslim women. Many of the interviewees in my study share the sentiment that the hijab is oppressive and that if you do in fact choose to wear it, you are actively excluding yourself from French society. This common thought process does not consider the actual lived experiences of Muslim women in France. The public discourse surrounding the hijab has ultimately presented Muslim women as a homogenous group. This affects Muslim women negatively because they are all painted in the same way, without acknowledgement of their differences. The general discourse surrounding the hijab, as seen in my and others' work, also clearly shows Muslim women as oppressed when they choose to veil. Although they are viewed without agency when they publicly display their religion, they are also argued to be active agents of resistance. This is seen when Muslim women chose to wear either the *burkini* or other modest clothes on the beach. Overall, it is interesting to note how the racialization of Muslim women has become an integral part of dominant French discourse, so much so that the veil is understood in racist terms—either denoting excessive sexuality or a lack thereof. It is clear that this is the framework in which my interlocutors try to make sense of Muslim women in the French public sphere.

Conclusion

Although the scope of my research is limited, notably by the small number of participants, my study provides valuable insight into French college students' opinions on *laïcité* and Muslims in France. At the beginning of my study, I had various preconceived notions about what French college students think about Islam and *laïcité* in France. Originally, I believed that these students would be more liberal and progressive, ideologies which are sometimes

seen as a given within younger generations and especially college students, at least in America. Throughout my stay in Paris and the time I spent with French college students, my understanding of them began to change. I started to think in terms of traditionalism, assuming that maybe French college students were more influenced by dominant French discourses than I originally thought. This change in thought occurred during my initial interviews, where interviewees held views consistent with dominant discourses founded in French republicanism. As time went on and I began to thoroughly analyze my data, I realized that the variance between students on different sides of the political spectrum was not drastic and fit within the wider frame of French republicanism.

As stated before, while one would assume that students have been raised in a time of de-facto racial and religious pluralism, especially in urban areas, some have little to no direct contact with Muslim populations, and they still express the commonplace belief that there is a "problem" that needs to be solved within the French-Muslim community. Overall, throughout my interviews it became clear that the racialization of Muslims has become such a large part of dominant French discourse that some of my interlocutors reiterate ideas that are founded in the historical processes of racializing Muslim populations. Many of these young students, who are even admittedly "leftist" and well-meaning, rationalize racist exclusions of Muslims in a typical French "color-blind" fashion. Again, even as leftists, it is hard for these young students to dismantle racial hierarchies and forms of domination; therefore, they used culturalist language to explain their beliefs, which ultimately attributes responsibility to individual Muslims for their fate. No matter how they understand issues facing the Muslim community, these students were still re-articulating broader French discursive trends and framing the discussion within French republicanism.

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Beyond Ethnic Enclave: Social Integration of Chinese Immigrants in Paris's "Little Asia"

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ABSTRACT

This paper studies the integration of Chinese immigrants in the Triangle de Choisy neighborhood in Paris, which is known for being an exotic hub of Chinese commercial and cultural activities. Based on Serge Paugam's model, we investigated the social integration of Chinese residents in the neighborhood. Our findings show that while dense social bonds allowed for better connection, our respondents are generally reluctant to address political engagement, which Paugam (2017) considers as one of the four key aspects of social integration. The apparent result seems to confirm the so-called Chinese ethics of diligent work and political indifference. However, after closer examination, we found diverse forms of participation that have not been captured by the conventional ethnic-centric understanding of political engagement. First, universalistic welfare policies reduced incentives for community-based mobilization. Second, a high level of internal heterogeneity within the community and exclusion of ethnic-particularistic experience in mainstream politics both led to individualized, subtle forms of participation. By situating individual political choice within their particular memories and life histories and reconceptualizing minorities' political engagement beyond ethnicity, more forms of political engagement can be understood and appreciated. Finally, we argue that the conventional ethnic-centred understanding of minority political participation needs to be challenged.

Keywords: social integration; Chinese diaspora; ethnic minorities; political engagement

Migration studies that focus on Asian minorities tend to have very diverse views about their levels of integration. Flanagan (2010) argued that general stereotypes tend to depict immigrants as an unskilled, uneducated, and minimally employable mass that is a burden on the state. Immigrants are alienated from the mainstream as "disguised foreigners" (Watanabe 2001), which means they are perceived as unalterably Asian, despite their citizenship. In contrast, Asian immigrants are often labeled as the "model minority" because their merits of diligence and hard work co-exist with viciousness, a known example of the latter being the fictitious villain Fu Manchu (Flanagan 2010, 117-161).[1] Moreover, sociological interest in Chinatowns in the United States has grown over the last 20 years (Fong 1994; Horton 1995; Kwong 1979; Zhou Min 1992). Academic research, based on extensive ethnographic works, provides an in-depth description of the multifaceted, albeit important, functions that Chinatowns play in the social, economic, and political life of Chinese Americans. However, Chinatowns in the European context have not received as much attention, and systematic analysis of social integration taking place within ethnic enclaves such as Chinatowns is still lacking. In order to address this gap in empirical research and knowledge, our research combines ethnographic methods with a critical adaption of Serge Paugam's analytical model of social bonds to investigate the level of social integration in a Paris Chinatown commonly known as the Triangle de Choisy neighborhood.

Serge Paugam's (2017) model of social bonds provides a powerful analytical tool that allows us to consider the broad range of factors affecting social integration within a structured framework. The model acknowledges the importance and complexity of quotidian interactions in the construction of a personal social network. In practice, this model measures social integration by the type and quantity of social ties that make up an individual's social network. Both the quantity and the diversity of social ties are positively indicative of better social integration. These ties can be broadly defined by four categories:

1. Lineal bond refers to ties within kinship such as the obligation to the family. This bond has socialization and identity-building functions. The familial position provides one with an initial sense of belonging. At the same time, lineal bond ensures physical care and emotional security of individuals from the point of birth.

2. Elective bond addresses the voluntary ties like friendships, religious groups, and local communities that are not obliged. These bonds are loosely institutionalized and not subject to strict regulation, and they can provide social support out of the principles of fraternity and selflessness.

3. Organic bond describes the ties that are formed through participation in the labor market, where different positions are complementary to each other and individuals form ties when they have to work together. Professional engagement provides access to basic welfare, income, and symbolic recognition of labor.

4. Citizenship bond is concerned with ties to political recognition and belonging within a society so that people are guaranteed certain rights and are under government protection. Citizenship ensures equal protection of civil and political rights, as well as participation in the public life.

In the context of resettlement, social ties are especially crucial for successful integration for two reasons. First, immigrants who experienced relocation to societies completely unknown to them are faced with two key tasks: they need to adapt to the socio-economic structure of the recipient society, while at the same time maintaining ties with their home community. The community we studied was established by political refugees from countries like Thailand, Vietnam, and Cambodia since the 1970s, who

often had to leave home suddenly due to the persistence of wars on the Indo-Chinese peninsular. This can only have exacerbated the challenges of their transition. Skeldon's (2002) research also provides evidence that migrants are particularly vulnerable to poverty when relocation is forced without sufficient preparation.

Second, racism remains a serious challenge to Chinese minorities in French society, which makes them particularly vulnerable to marginalization and downward social mobility (Charbit 1988, 483). Chinese minorities continue to face discrimination. A recent survey conducted by Mayer et al. (2018) still shows certain negative stereotypes attached to Chinese in France. For example, Chinese are considered to be hard-working but unclean. Despite a lack of social ties outside of the ethnic enclave, ties within the ethnic enclave are much easier for newcomers to access. By forging new ties, newcomers can enjoy social and market services and employment opportunities within a community they feel more comfortable dealing with, albeit long-term integration with the broader society remains challenging (Durkheim [1893] 2018, 55-64; Zhou Min 1992). A critical adaptation of Serge Paugam's (2017) model of social bonds not only allows us to assess the strengths and weaknesses of an integration pattern of Chinese ethnic minorities in the Triangle de Choisy, but also to situate apparent personal choice inside the broader social, economic, and political structure of the recipient society.

While a series of studies have been conducted over the history and cultural life of the Triangle de Choisy neighborhood, rigorous sociological analysis in recent years is still lacking (White, Winchester and Guillon 1987; Raulin 1988, 2000, 2008; Costa-Lascroux and Live 1995). Using semi-structured interviews and participant observation, our research assessed social integration of Chinese minorities in this community based on Serge Paugam's model of social bonds. We found social ties that connected local residents and institutions in a network characterized by dense intra-ethnic connections and fragmented inter-ethnic connecting points. We also conducted research to understand the lack of citizenship

bonds within our samples. Evidence does not support the conventional wisdom that the Chinese are politically indifferent because their culture encourages political submission and upward social mobility within the existing structure (Raulin 1988; Costa-Lascroux and Live 1995; Lem 2010). Our research shows that local socio-political context matters. We found, first, that France's welfare policies, which do not discriminate between legal residents and citizens, have reduced incentives for citizen rights mobilization. Second, a high level of internal heterogeneity within the community and exclusion of the political experience of ethnic minorities in mainstream politics have led to individualized, subtle forms of participation. By situating individual political choice within particular memories and life histories and by reconceptualizing minorities' political engagement beyond ethnicity, more forms of political engagement can be understood and appreciated. Ultimately, we argue that the conventional ethnic-centred understanding of minority political participation needs to be challenged. Individual interest in civic participation is not necessarily associated with ethnic membership and should not be expected to.

Literature Review: Social Integration of Chinatowns around the World

We situate our research within both migrant studies of Chinese migration and the socio-political context of France. In this section, we will begin with research findings and the current consensus in the study of the social integration of Chinese immigrants in host countries. Then we will consider studies that focus on French immigration history and policies, specifically the conditions that shaped the life of immigrants in the French context.

Existing sociological literature that studies Chinese immigrants usually use Chinatowns as their access point to the field. However, rather than simply focusing on the ethnic community itself, scholars also need to situate their observations in the socio-economic and political context of the host country (Horton 1995; Fong 1994), and sometimes even the global political economy (Kwong 1979; Lem 2010). For

example, Portes and Rumbaut's (2014) research on American migration history argues that the rise of Chinatowns is closely connected with racism in mainstream societies. Xenophobia and institutional segregation culminated in the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which effectively ended early Chinese labor flow and forced Chinese farm workers into refuge in tightly knit urban communities that became today's Chinatowns (Portes and Rumbaut 2014). These inner-city ethnic communities are marked by prosperous ethnic business entrepreneurship and dense ethnic bonds. However, inner-city ethnic enclaves are also associated with danger and seduction in the Western imagination (Hatziprokopiou and Montagna 2012). Orientalist myths such as Fu Manchu and the Triad persist, condemning those who are deemed as "unmeltable" aliens who refuse to be accultured vis-à-vis the U.S.'s melting pot model as an ideal form of assimilation (Portes and Rumbaut 2014).

Nonetheless, according to research conducted by Glazer and Moynihan (1970), the resilience of ethnic bonds, far from constituting a "social problem," not only represents an important source of emotional support and social solidarity for newcomers, but is also a consequence of the subordinate position of ethnic minorities in the mainstream labor market (Glazer and Moynihan 1970; Zhou Min 1992). Kwong (1979) also found that the isolation of Chinese Americans was not voluntary, but a product of discrimination and exclusion. He argues that the rise of the ethnic service industry in New York's Chinatown was the product of imposed labor segregation between the Chinese community and the wider society (Kwong 1979). Furthermore, the political economy of the Chinese ethnic enclave is highly reliant on the social capital flowing from social networks and ethnic solidarity, such as access to labor, capital, and market information. The Chinese enterprises are well known to offer jobs to their fellows and relatives for the benefits of both sides: for the newcomers, working for a Chinese business can resolve the problem of having to communicate in a foreign language and provides the possibility of social mobility; for Chinese entrepreneurs, recruiting through co-ethnic connections provides a workforce that is more reliable. For newcomers,

ethnic bonds also offer enhanced economic provision and a rooting point of entry (Simon 1993; Zhou Min 1992).

Later case studies obtained more comprehensive understandings of heterogeneity among Chinese immigrants and their interactions with the local community. Fong's (1994) and Horton's (1995) studies of Monterey Park, an American suburb with a high concentration of Chinese immigrants, both noticed that ethnic tension started to emerge between local residents and newcomers when flows of immigration increased. Nativism, referring to the idea that local interests should be prioritized over those of outsiders, sprawled as the mainstream community felt that the increasing influence of the Chinese language and culture began to challenge their dominant position. However, Fong (1994) pointed out that what seemed to be a racial conflict was, in fact, a class conflict. The new flow of Chinese immigrants to Monterey Park in the 1970s tended to be affluent and well-educated. Consequently, they easily fit into high-profile jobs in the service industry. In the context of global neoliberalization and surging property values, the arrival of these Chinese immigrants was politically weaponized by the nativists, who blamed them for the consequences of socio-economic restructuring, such as investors constructing high-rise, densely resided condominiums for quick profits, traffic congestion, and stress on municipal services.

Conflicts also burst out between the new wave of affluent Chinese immigrants and the resentful earlier Chinese migrants who arrived with few skills and took generations to assimilate into mainstream society. Horton (1995) focused on ethnic confrontation in the political field. He noticed that anti-Asian nativism was not triggered by the mere arrival of newcomers, but when the population of ethnic minorities became so significant as to invalidate the Anglo-American model of integration. The model is based on minorities adopting and assimilating into the dominant white culture and values. The Chinese minorities' development of their own political organizations, such as the Asian Democrats, rather than integrating into the groups and clubs established and dominated by the white population, was attacked as self-imposed

isolation. What was non-white was framed as non-American, reinforcing a pattern of Anglo-domination under the guise of fair play, non-discrimination, and national unity. However, Horton argues that Chinese minorities creating their own political organizations is actually a result of their belief that established all-ethnic organizations are Anglo-dominated and unresponsive to the realities of ethnic inequality.

While earlier studies are mainly based on empirical evidence in the American context, more recent studies of Chinese immigrants in the European context provided us with different stories of integration. Lem (2010) uses traditional Chinese ethics of diligent work and political obedience to explain the systematic absence of Chinese entrepreneurs from political protests in France's neoliberal transformation. She argues that the habitus of Chinese entrepreneur migrants produces an inclination towards political disengagement and refusal to forge an alliance with other classes. Other scholars point out that contemporary studies of ethnic enclaves can essentialize culture and ethnicity, and thus categorize conflicts by the native versus migrant dichotomy, overlooking intra-group divisions (Hatziprokopiou and Montagna 2012).

Scholars also commonly reduce the city into a mere container or backdrop, ignoring the power and the political-economic dynamics that shape it on both a local and global scale (Hatziprokopiou and Montagna 2012). It is important to situate the social integration of ethnic minorities within the political, economic, and social structures in which it takes place. For example, through a comparative study of the different protest strategies and outcomes in London and Milan's Chinatowns, Hatziprokopiou and Montagna (2012) found that political opportunities offered by Britain's multiculturalist policies allowed tension between Chinese residents and the metropolitan authority to be peacefully resolved through consultation. In contrast, the lack of political recognition and a hostile, anti-immigrant public discourse in Italy provoked a violent reaction from Chinese entrepreneurs. Hatziprokopiou and Montagna (2012) argue that while Chinatowns in North America began

as a result of forced segregation, discriminatory laws, and racism, they developed into successful economic enclaves providing alternative upward social mobility. In Europe, Chinatowns became multi-functional, serving as the first place of residence on the immigrant trajectory from inner-city settlements to suburban locations, and staying vibrant through constant streams of new migrants (Hatziprokopiou and Montagna 2012). Patrick Simon's (1993, 383) in-depth study of Belleville, a multi-ethnic neighborhood in Paris, reinforced the view that Chinatowns serve a positive role in enabling Chinese immigrants to settle down in a foreign country. He argues that after a period of restricted migration, the neighborhood turned from a mere first port of entry, where newcomers from a certain origin are greeted and resettled, to part of a prolonged process of assimilation by acting as a rooting point of ethnic groups (Simon 1993, 383). Together, these scholars show us that local socio-economic conditions, public policies, and cultural factors all contribute to the outcomes of resettlement.

Similar to American Chinatown studies, research in the European context also shows that Chinese immigrants have long been labelled as the "model minority" who work diligently for personal success and tend to be law-abiding, despite evidence of social exclusion and isolation of women and the elderly (Hatziprokopiou and Montagna 2012). Nevertheless, recent evidence from France shows that conflicts between newcomers and the state authority have started to rise. News featured illegal Chinese immigrants coming from Wenzhou with the promise of higher incomes and better living standards while usually ending up in small factories without legal protection or social security provision (Gillet 2007). The rising number of Northeastern Chinese prostitutes illegally working on the streets of Belleville and the 13th arrondissement (borough) of Paris also drew academic attention (Lévy and Lieber 2011, 16). More recently, Paris's Chinese residents became particularly active in demanding more police patrolling their neighborhoods and greater public attention to their rising concerns over racism and street security. This can be seen in a documented case of intense negotiations between a Wenzhou

businessman and Paris's police force (Trémon 2013, 19), and a street protest that was organized after a Chinese man was controversially killed by the police in his home because he was holding a kitchen knife in his hand (BBC News 2017).

Research Context: The Triangle de Choisy

In this section, we give an overview of the site of our fieldwork, the Triangle de Choisy neighborhood. Despite being reputed as Paris's "Quartier Asiatique," the neighborhood was historically built as part of a gentrification plan to replace heavy industry sites and working-class "ghetto" communities in the 1970s (Raulin 2008, 56). The high-rise apartment units met market indifference not only because the slow growth of the population in Paris reduced demand, but also because the indigenous Parisians thought of high towers as unfashionable and not worth the price. The turning point was in 1975 when, with the fall of Saigon in the war in Vietnam, France accepted 86,640 asylum seekers from the Indo-Chinese peninsula (White, Winchester, and Guillon 1987, 55). While the French government intended to send these people to refugee centers in the countryside, the asylum seekers who are ethnically Chinese predominately managed to move into the new tower blocks in Paris by using their kinship networks or the wealth they already possessed (Live 1991, 65; White, Winchester, and Guillon 1987, 55).

These newcomers established themselves in Paris with the assistance of the 13th arrondissement municipal government (the "mairie") and the Saint-Hippolyte Church, as well as a complicated "hui" financial system which enables the immediate lending and borrowing of money within family and clan ties for opening up businesses (Raulin 2008, 56; Hassoun and Tan 1986, 35; Costa-Lascoux and Live 1995, 108-131). According to Raulin (1988, 234), the newly-arrived Chinese took over commercial centers in the Olympiades area, more than half of which were vacant by the time of their arrival, later to form what is considered the Triangle de Choisy. This neighborhood now covers the area between the avenue de Choisy, d'Ivry, the Boulevard

Massena, and also the Olympiades area (Raulin 2008, 56). These commercial spaces were turned into ethnic infrastructures such as Chinese butcher shops, salons, restaurants, temples, and language schools. Gradually, Triangle de Choisy was transformed into what is considered an ethnic enclave. It is both an entry point of acceptance for Chinese immigrants and a commercial and cultural hub, offering Chinese specialties and diverse experiences to the broader Parisian community.

Many French scholars attribute the early success of Chinese immigrants to their ability to be acculturated, hard-working and able adaptors, combined with the generous and tolerable indigenous Parisian community (Costa-Lascoux and Live 1995, 108-131; Raulin 1988, 234). Nevertheless, these claims lacked large-scale empirical evidence. Critics also commented on the lack of attention to negative stereotypes that increased in mainstream culture since the time of the initial resettlement, which would have impacted the development of the neighborhood (Charbit 1988, 483). A recent report by Mayer et al. (2008, 79-81) revealed that racist stereotypes and insults like "Dirty Chink," the belief that Asians constitute "a group apart" in society, and the notion that Chinese are "very hardworking" still remain strong in the French society.

Another primary debate focuses on the relationship between social integration and engagement with ethnic businesses. In his research on the ethnic niche economy in the 13th arrondissement, Pina-Guerassimoff (2005) found that ethnic businesses in general exclusively used ethnic networks to recruit new employees. Positions ranged from food preparation to clothes manufacturing without requiring employees to communicate in a foreign language. Such an opportunity is popular among new immigrants not only because of its low skills and linguistic threshold, but also the fact that it is an entry point to local Chinese social and commercial networks. This gives newcomers the potential to open up their own business in the future (Pina-Guerassimoff 2005, 179; Beja and Wang 2003, 67). However, some scholars held a different view as they state that in the long term, working in an ethnic enclave results in negative impacts on personal

integration into the mainstream community, such as limited opportunities both to advance in one's career and to communicate with the wider society (Lee 2002; Duncan and Waldorf 2009, 17).

In summary, there is an ongoing debate within the literature about whether the Chinese community in Triangle de Choisy has successfully integrated into French society. Positive assumptions are increasingly challenged by recent findings, such as mainstream racism and exploitation of illegal migrants. Political engagement that emerged from recent conflicts between entrepreneurs and the police was not expected due to the taken-for-granted assumption of Chinese diligence and political obedience. Triangle de Choisy, under these conditions, emerged as an interesting case for sociological study. While it has been labeled as a successful case of Chinese-style integration, empirical evidence is not always telling the same story. Our research helps to fill this gap of knowledge by systematically investigating the degree of social integration of Chinese immigrants in the Triangle de Choisy neighborhood. In particular, we include political engagement, whose importance is often overlooked in the study of Chinese immigrants.

Methodology

We conducted semi-structured interviews and participant observation in a non-profit cultural association called the Art House, located on the eastern edge of the Triangle de Choisy (see Figure 1). Through a key informant, we gained
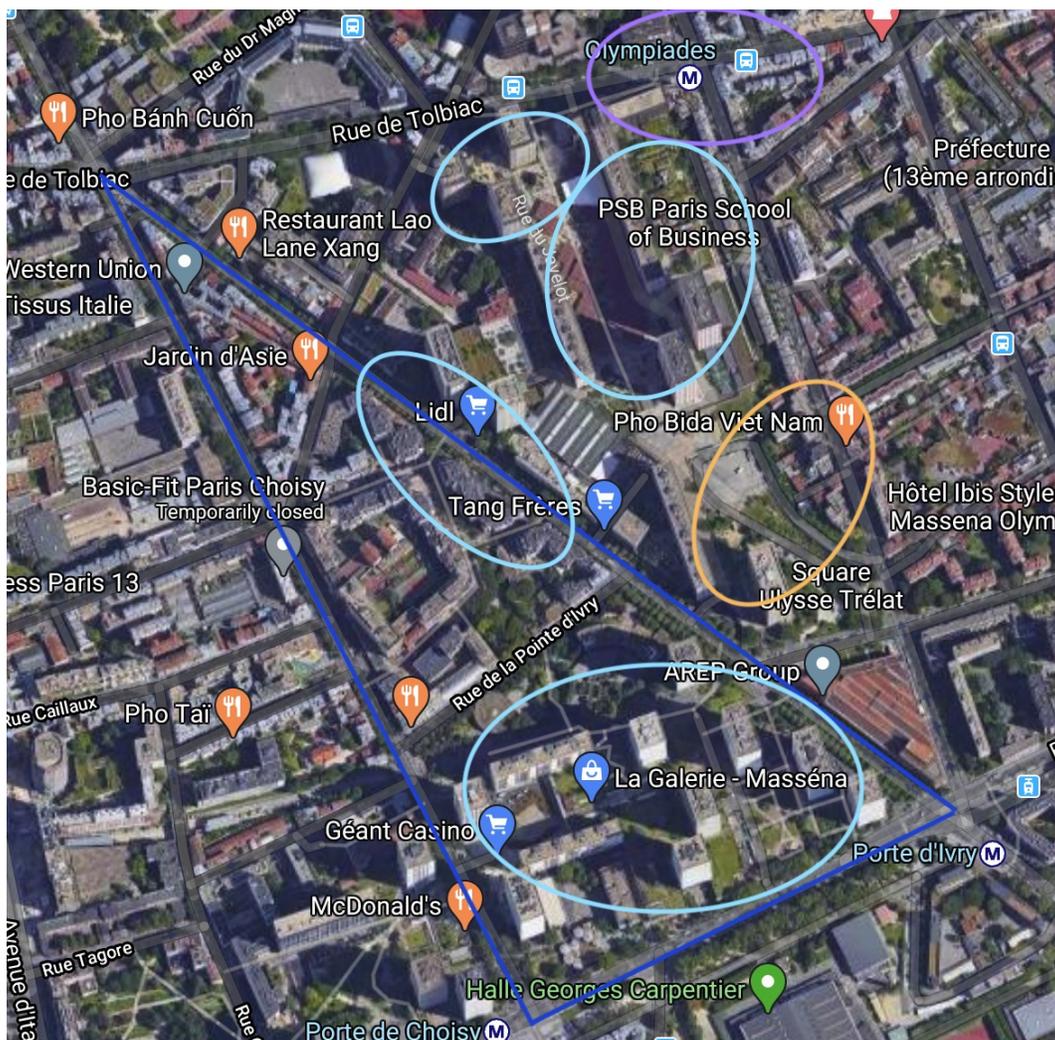
Figure 1. Google Maps perspective of Triangle de Choisy.
The Triangle, marked in deep blue and bounded by avenue de Choisy, d'Ivry, and the Boulevard Massena, is considered to be where ethnic businesses concentrate, while the Olympiades neighborhood (metro station circled in purple) is also considered to be a hub of Asian migrants, though more residential. Some of the high-rise towers are circled in light blue, and the Art House is located within the orange circle, which is on the edge of the Triangle de Choisy. (Source: Google Maps, 2018)

access to the association's cultural events and language lessons. We chose this association as our entry point for two reasons. First, it was founded in 2001 as a local center for cultural exchange, offering language classes (both Chinese and French), welfare application assistance, and museum tours. It was also the only Chinese-led association that was receiving municipal funding at the time of our fieldwork. The Art House's history and localized operation strategy made it attractive to both residents and newcomers seeking connections and support. Second, by offering cheap courses and workshops sponsored by the municipal government, the Art House provides an inclusive environment for local residents. This allowed our interviews to take place in a relaxing and informal manner. Since our interview topics covered life histories, economic status, and political engagement, this aspect becomes more important for opening up an in-depth conversation.

Our research was conducted between February and April 2018. Our team participated in weekend workshops and part-time French lessons organized by the association and conducted semi-structured interviews with eight respondents. Audio recordings of the interviews were made with the consent of respondents and deleted once the transcription was completed. In order to protect confidentiality, all names and key information were anonymized. Among our respondents, six live in the neighborhood while two commute from other areas of the Paris metropolis; three are students in the 18-25 age group while the rest are above 55; seven are ethnically Chinese while one is Laotian-Chinese; five are women and three are men. This pattern documents a diversity of age, ethnicity, and gender, contributing to a comprehensive observation. We are aware that our findings are not generalizable or representative of all Chinese residents in Triangle de Choisy due to our small sample size. Nevertheless, our research does not intend to reach an overarching description of Chinese integration in Paris in general. As our goal is to challenge the conventional wisdom that social integration of Chinese immigrants follows a particular pattern, representativeness is not necessary at this stage.

Findings and Analysis: Compensated Integration

Our research investigated the social integration of Chinese immigrants in the Triangle de Choisy neighborhood according to Serge Paugam's (2017) integration model. By analyzing the density and variety of social bonds as reported by our respondents, we found that all of our respondents are in what Paugam defined as compensated integration: while most of them are short of lineal bonds and citizenship bonds, by actively forging elective and organic bonds, our respondents integrated successfully in some fields but not others. To break the data down, three informants had no contacts in France before migration, while the rest only knew a few contacts. None obtained citizenship before migration, and only one has obtained citizenship since arrival, while another is in the process of applying.

In our study, compensated integration took two forms. First, protection and recognition usually provided by lineal bonds were compensated by a dense network of elective and organic bonds, which mostly consisted of Chinese friends, classmates, and colleagues in the workplace instead of familial linkages. Through the mediation of better-connected members of the Art House, members who were marginalized by the mainstream society due to their lack of social capital or linguistic capacity gained access to resources and information that were not available within their immediate neighborhood. This finding allows us to challenge the conventional wisdom that ethnic enclaves are isolated from the wider society. Second, while Paugam (2017) argued that citizenship bonds are crucial for obtaining welfare and state protection, all our respondents rejected political engagement in the French context. While the immediate result seems to reaffirm the "Chinese ethics" stereotype of diligence and political disengagement, closer examination of their reaction shows differently. We found that the inclusive welfare system in France combined with both the heterogeneity of individuals' life experience and the marginalizing effects of mainstream discourse all contributed to shaping this attitude towards political engagement.

1. Social integration: A compensated model

Paugam (2017, 18) defined protection as "all resources (family, community, professional, social) on which individuals can draw when facing difficulties in life." Based on the social network constructed through membership with the Art House, we found that elective and organic bonds are relatively dense and tend to echo within a Chinese-speaking community. Individuals within the network tend to be well-connected to many other members, instead of being loosely in touch with a few informants. As they use Mandarin Chinese as the lingua franca, it tends to include Mandarin-speaking members while deterring non-Mandarin speaking outsiders. While some respondents did not have a choice as their French skills are not sufficient for daily communication, others would still mostly befriend Chinese-speaking people due to cultural similarity and comfortability, even for the younger generation. Bobby, a Laotian-Chinese political refugee who arrived in Paris during the 1970s, said, "I really enjoy living in the Chinese neighborhood. There's a similar Chinese neighborhood in the 19th arrondissement, where I lived for 19 years. After coming here for so many years, I still like to be surrounded by so many Chinese people." When faced with racist comments, Lucy, a university exchange student from China, explained that, "I would talk to my Asian friends, because I think they can understand me better."

Despite the pattern of Chinese immigrants and residents forming elective bonds mainly amongst themselves, this did not result in a collectively marginalized position. The circuit of ties among members of the Art House brought members together while the association provided them with resources and information from outside of the Chinese social network. By talking to each other during events and daily interactions, these people pass around information they learned from people they encounter in everyday life. In the Art House, one channel includes cooperation with the mairie to provide services in Chinese. The Art House cooperates with the 13th arrondissement mairie to assist with accessing welfare and funding for their Paris day trips. They also have their volunteers trained by the post office to offer guidance in Chinese for how to use post office services:

> Sometimes they [the municipal officials] come to meet us and look for opportunities to cooperate. For example, now the post office is working with us, because many people don't know how to use their machines. It's a bit complicated; some people who cannot read French cannot understand…They became aware of this, and came to us to give us some support…our volunteers had to take lessons at their place, and come back to teach local residents how to use their machines. There are many foreigners living here but their machines are only available in French.

While being culturally Chinese, the Art House is by no means an exclusive club. During our interview, Louisa, the founder of the Art House, mentioned several times how other local residents are connected to and included in their social network:

> We have a full-time employee…the Brazilian lady…she has her own association, but it was not funded by the government…she is very kind to older people. She doesn't speak Chinese, so I invited Chinese students to translate, as I am not here every day. Because of her skin color (laugh), French people quite like her. So we are having more and more French members.

For Louisa, what marks out the "French" French and the Other does not just depend on citizenship, but on ethnic origin as well. The "French" members of the Art House that Louisa mentions are presumed to be the white French, while the "we" and the Brazilian lady are the minorities. Speaking with laughter, Louisa seemed very glad to attract members from other ethnic groups, especially from the white French. These intra-ethnic bonds expanded the Art House's social network to form an ethnic circuit that effectively transmits information and provides support for the internal members' mutual benefits. The particular convenience of the Art House's location, where they gather for daily leisure, contributes to this. Moreover, there are also non-Chinese members who gained access to the group by knowing someone who is already inside, such as the municipal officials who cooperated with Louisa

to install a consultation point for welfare applications. In another case, a North African member of the association delivered a couscous workshop. When members of the Art House exchange information, they also bring input to the group and penetrate the boundary between the co-ethnics and ethnic outsiders.

Sometimes, when a Chinese member is well-connected to the wider society, their role is also modified to become both a group member and a source of information for those who are less connected. For example, by knowing officials in the 13th arrondissement mairie, colleagues in other associations, and members of her own association, Louisa occupies a well-connected position. Using the space provided by the Art House, she is able to transmit news and information to members who are less connected and obtain government funding to organize cultural exchange events. In this way, although there exists a Chinese-based social group in Triangle de Choisy, it is not marginalized from the rest of society even at the point of the least connected, since information, resources, and support constantly flow in and out of the circuit.

This finding allows us to challenge the conventional wisdom that participation in an ethnic-based community will result in isolation from the wider society (Lee 2002; Duncan and Waldorf 2009, 17). Our finding provides strong evidence for Portes and Rumbaut's (2014) and Glazer and Moynihan's argument that the resilience of ethnic bonds in Chinatowns is not a social problem in itself. Instead, our respondents benefited from the information and support it offers, especially the less connected members who are not able to speak French and are therefore unable to access resources outside of their ethnic network.

2. Citizenship bonds: De-mystifying Chinese political disengagement

The availability of support does not always mean that individuals are incentivized to use the service. While our respondents from the Art House are engaged with civic institutions such as public health insurance and other forms of benefits, most of them immediately claimed they are not interested in political participation when we mentioned the term, which is key to forging what Paugam (2017) called citizenship

bonds in the process of social integration. Paugam argued that by acquiring citizenship of a democratic country, one gains access to equal political and civil rights, as well as fundamental welfare provisions. He described the formation of citizenship bonds as a mutual, interdependent process: "[the] nation-state makes efforts to ensure that all citizens are treated equally, and together form a body with a shared identity and values" (16). For an ethnic minority like the Parisian Chinese, Paugam's conventional way of defining and analyzing political engagement might do them injustice and thus needs to be problematized. As discussed in previous literature (see Kwong 1979; Lem 2010; Trémon 2013), researchers easily equate studying how Chinese inhabitants participate in local politics with looking for cases where Chinese participate in politics as a Chinese *collective* for an ethnic-related interest, be that against discrimination or demanding more rights. On the contrary, prioritizing the "Chinese" characteristic of identity politics downplays the multifarious histories, regional origins, genders, and sexualities associated with each Chinese member of that community, reducing these variations to an internal difference or neglecting them as a whole. It turns out that quite often our respondents are involved in some form of political activity, but not as a member or *representative* of the Chinese *per se*. We will come back to this discussion later in the article.

However, when we openly asked our respondents if they engage in French politics, all of them replied that they were not interested in politics in the first place. Indeed, previous literature has documented this apparent political disengagement and attributed it to the Chinese culture and their work ethics (Raulin 1988; Costa-Lascroux and Live 1995; Lem 2010). Nevertheless, we should not take an answer at face value. As Bourdieu (1977) has famously argued, what people say they do during an interview is not necessarily identical to what actually takes place. Further attention to the way they articulated their disinterestedness provides rich evidence of their awareness about what goes on around them and the shape of politics in everyday life. We identified two discourses that our respondents used to justify political disengagement.

First discourse: Universalistic welfare policy reduces incentives for naturalization

Many of our respondents consciously referred to easy access to state welfare provisions to justify their lack of interest in naturalization. The French policy provides equal health insurance and other forms of state protection to its citizens and legal immigrants. As all of our respondents claimed to have obtained legal residential status by the time of our interview, they did not see much pragmatic motivation in naturalization since welfare is not barred by citizenship, against what Paugam (2017) suggested. Helena, a migrant from Northeast China, explained to us that buying social insurance is a legal requirement and she thinks it is "fair, if you have money, you pay the tax; if you cannot afford it [medical bills], the government pays it for you." Exceptions are Louisa and Bobby, though they were both motivated by pragmatic necessity, not political rights: Bobby was seeking political asylum when he fled political chaos on the Indo-Chinese peninsula in the 1970s, while Louisa needed French citizenship to "bypass a lot of inconveniences foreigners will face if I want to open a school."

Thus, the local community is not politically mobilized because there was no strong incentive for collective action. Our case contrasts with the collective action of migrant labor in Saudi Arabia (Chalcraft 2011) and transnational activism of Filipina domestic workers (Constable 2009; Wui and Delias 2015), where these communities are closely tied by a shared identity and a set of common interests that can drive political action. Working as foreign domestic workers, Filipina nannies in Europe are collectively disadvantaged in the labor market due to local regulations that threatened their right to stay once they leave their employers. Often nannies are left with no choice but to tolerate arbitrary working hours and dehumanizing treatment (Parreñas 2015). On the whole, our evidence supports Hatziprokopiou and Montagna's (2012) argument that local policies influence the forms and opportunities of Chinese immigrants' political mobilization. The non-discriminatory principle in the French welfare system that provides state protection to all citizens and legal immigrants reduces incentives for Chinese immigrants to undergo naturalization. On the other hand, since our respondents are not in a situation of being denied welfare protections based on their immigrant status or ethnic identity, they simply did not find sufficient motivation for collective action framed around their ethnicity. However, political engagement on the level of ethnicity is not the only way of doing civic participation, as we see next.

Second discourse: Internal heterogeneity and external marginality hinder collective action

The lack of common interests is also associated with the heterogeneity of social groups within our respondents, who come from different classes, age groups, genders, regional origins, and historical contexts of arrival. It is common for existing literature to essentialize Chineseness as a convenient tool of analysis (Raulin 1988; Costa-Lascroux and Live 1995; Lem 2010). The socio-economic success of Chinese immigrants is explained away by this idea of distinctive Chineseness made up of diligence and ambition to climb up the social ladder rather than to challenge unfair structures of opportunity. However, this is not a valid argument since, first, it is based on a very weak culturalist explanation, referring to a culture of success that can trump broader racism and other structural disadvantages, and second and more importantly, it overlooks heterogeneity within the Chinese population. There is no reliable evidence of an obedient culture among the Chinese population on a large scale. Members of the Art House share an interest in Chinese culture, but it is hard to say if they share any common *political interest* that can mobilize them. This is the case in our study because our respondents include Taiwanese, mainland Chinese, and various Indo-Chinese diasporas. When asked if he identifies as Chinese, Bobby, who is Chinese-Laotian by heritage, explained: "When I first came here, there were not so many Chinese [nationals]. We were all Chinese [ethnic]... [I think I am] Chinese by ethnicity but not nationality. Because the Chinese nation is not the same as the Chinese ethnic. I was born in Laos and that I have the Laotian blood."[2]

Disproportional rejection to political participation could be partly explained by

shared traumatic memories of conflicts and censorship in mainland China's authoritarian societies from which some of our respondents migrated to Paris. Traumatized memories might, therefore, hold them away from imagining and utilizing an alternative form of political participation even when it is generally less violent and risky, as Louisa addresses: "My husband…he was an active student protester when he was studying aboard…which rendered him a political refugee because his photo was taken and published by journalists…he has become less radical since then and somehow agreeing with the government."

When hearing questions on politics, some other mainland respondents also replied, "politics is a sensitive issue…," or simply "I don't care," or asked us "are you still recording? You've turned off the microphone, haven't you?" In another case, Helena was afraid and refused to talk about politics. She said: "This is not my business. I definitely won't participate. Whatever you say, the government can monitor." Her rejection to political engagement here is more related to traumatic fear rather than cultural indifference, as much of the literature suggests (see Robben, 2005). Wendy, on the other hand, denied interest in politics during the recorded interview, but gradually started to deliver long and well-thought-out political critiques after we confirmed that the recording had been turned off.

The Many Faces of Political Participation Beyond Identity Politics

As Shih (2010) argued in Against Diaspora, the Chinese diaspora was considered both by itself and outsiders to be the margins of China and Chineseness, something that is always missing, always incomplete, and not the subject of itself. This tendency to subsume individual experiences and particularistic memories under the grand narrative of a nation overlooks the complexity and diversity among all individuals who are associated with Chineseness, or in Shih's conception, the Sinophone community, which they themselves create and define. The assertion that overseas Chinatowns tend to be politically passive is built on the assumption that the Chinese people are essentially one ethnic group, and by all means, researchers should assess their political engagement

according to the ethnic unit. Participation is only observed when collective action is organized in the name of "the local Chinese community." Our respondents' diverse individual histories affirm the complexity among Chinese residents in Triangle de Choisy. In this regard, at least three of our respondents revealed their interests in politics, if not active engagement. For example, while Wendy initially told us that she does not read about French politics as she does not understand French, as the interview went on, she mentioned how she made use of the internet freedom in France to access information banned in China:

> In my free time, I use a lot of WeChat. Oh… and I watch a lot of videos, many of them you can't see in China. I feel I broadened my eyesight after coming aboard, and China is too closed. Actually…people like me do not really feel bothered by politics, but…it is too unfree. People should have a bit more freedom, right? Here everything is more objective, they tell you what happens as they happened. It does not tell you whether it is good or bad and lets you judge by yourself. But, domestically [in China], what I don't like is that they want to impose something upon you, it wants to teach you something, as this. It seems you must think in one way or another. I feel people do need a freer, more relaxing environment, so that they can feel comfortable.

As mentioned, researchers need to understand political participation by situating individual behaviours within the person's own life history. Only accepting political opinions that are discussed out loud is a Western-centric practice that ignores mediated dissents embedded in lives under authoritarianism. For example, Wendy, who always stayed in China before she retired, first denied participation in French politics and stated that "people like me do not really feel bothered by politics." However, she not only made use of the internet freedom that France offers but also made a clear and well-articulated argument about the importance of freedom of speech. In another case, Louisa, originally from Taiwan, told us about her own experience of political engagement:

> I think we cannot live outside of their society, even though we are *foreigners* ourselves, we

will definitely go to vote. I also read political news and participate in petitions. The 13th arrondissement media chairs a "Foreigner confrontation group," which expresses their dissatisfaction against the society. They also asked me to attend when I was working for a different association, but I didn't go because I was about to be naturalized...I learn about strikes, but I don't get involved. Because *as Asians*, we disagree...I think striking brings more harm to the society; thus, it's not a very moral behaviour. I don't really sympathize them that much.

Here Louisa occupies a nuanced position in citizen identities. While she has earned the status and rights of a French citizen, her Asian identity remains and makes her forever a stranger in the political arena that belongs to the "French," who are *white*. She addressed herself as "we Asians" and her assistant as "the Brazilian" in contrast to "the French." She would consciously participate in important decision-making processes, but still consider herself as a "foreigner."

Furthermore, all of our respondents have a weak sense of national belonging to France. They see a very clear distinction between themselves as "Chinese people" and the "French people." This also includes Bobby, who still addressed himself and the Chinese community as "us," as the "Chinese," and used "those French" to refer to the white French, despite having French citizenship since the 1970s. Although the construction of French nationalism claims that it is sufficient for one to become French by *parler francais* (speaking French) (Hobsbawm, 1990), such a statement marginalizes those who are not fluent French speakers. At the same time, it cannot provide enough confidence to foreign French speakers to feel fully accepted in France if they feel that their legitimacy of participation is constantly challenged by the local-born white French. In Lucy's case, she demonstrated comprehensive understanding of and reflection on French and Chinese politics, yet was deterred by others' constant questioning of her entitlement to the discussion:

They have a lot of freedom in terms of political speech. You can scorn whoever you like, say whatever you want, no problem.

But...emm...I know the 94 province here [one of the *départements* in the Paris suburbs] they are left-wing, that means they are more acceptive to immigrants. But the right people they are right-leaning. In one family, the French family I used to live in, when they vote, the man and the woman supported different parties. They are...quite rational, they do not come into conflicts because of different political views.

Have I participated in political activities? Ah... no. *We don't have a say in this kind of thing*. They will say, oh, why do you only have one Communist Party in China? (laugh) They say this every time, why do you Chinese only have one Communist Party? You don't have other parties? (How did you respond?) I would say because we didn't find other parties to replace it. (laugh) On top of that, they are doing quite well at the time, so we would follow. Because they are actually curious [about] why we are so submissive, why we have no dissent opinions. And then I say dissent does exist but should not be identified [by the party] because whatever dissent you post online will soon be deleted. So, I think our patriotic education was done very well, once you go to school, they teach to you love the country, love the party and raise the national flag every Monday...not like them [the French people] who say everything.

In sum, internal heterogeneity among those loosely bounded by the Chinese culture means that the political participation of Chinese individuals should not be expected to happen under a united ethnic banner as one political entity. By freeing ourselves from this Western-centric assumption, we discovered various ways our respondents would make use of their political and civil rights allowed by the French state. Different forms of participation need to be understood under specific personal and historical contexts. Older generations from mainland China like Wendy showed reluctance to participate in explicit activism due to traumatic memories; however, these respondents remained engaged in subtler ways. Louisa engaged with state institutions as an integral part of her work at the Art House, collaborating with the local municipality. Lucy, a

young student, had more curiosity about French politics and was not fearful of expressing her opinions, but was deterred from further participation because her legitimacy to discuss politics was challenged by the French mainstream.

Our findings provide strong evidence to challenge the culturalist argument claiming that the "Chinese ethics" of diligent work and submissive attitudes are the most responsible for Chinese immigrants' political disengagement (Raulin 1988; Costa-Lascroux and Live 1995; Lem 2010). However, while Horton (1995) suggested that Asians in the United States would benefit from identity politics by mobilizing themselves as an ethnic interest group, such as the Democratic Asians, we argue that individualistic experiences, particularly traumatic memories, lead to diverse paths and degrees of civic engagement. Of equal importance is Horton's (1995) discussion of the marginalization of the Chinese experience by labeling it as "particularistic" while normalizing the white experience as "universalistic" in the political arena. The same phenomenon also exists in France and has a deterring effect on the political participation of Chinese immigrants and possibly other ethnic minorities. Our respondents felt that they are not accepted by the political community and that their voices are not entitled to equal concern as those of the white French. Both factors resulted in alternative political engagement that is less recognized by the mainstream community. One of the greatest challenges our participants faced on the way to gaining more social recognition was the language barrier. While mastering the French language was seen as a basic necessity for engaging in civic affairs, some respondents' inability to speak fluent French hindered them from being recognized as French citizens and participating in the public arena (for the connection between language and citizenship in French, see Fanon 2008; Brubaker 1992).

In addition, while our study gained insight into the daily lives of Chinese inhabitants in the Triangle de Choisy, our respondents are predominately young students and seniors, and therefore cannot claim representation of the Chinese population as a whole. As we mentioned, we expect the situation of residents without legal status to be hugely different, as they are not covered by state protections and tend to be extremely vulnerable to crime and violence (Lévy and Lieber 2011, 16). Their situation needs to be further assessed with a particular understanding of their circumstances and challenges.

Conclusion

Our paper used Serge Paugam's (2017) model of social bonds to investigate social integration of Chinese immigrants in the Triangle de Choisy neighborhood in Southeast Paris. We found that Paugam's *compensated integration* model, which states that friendships and connections in the workplace can functionally substitute for the shortage of support usually provided within the family. This applies to our case where Chinese immigrants moved to an unfamiliar French society, while their closest contacts were mainly co-ethnics, by allowing information, resources, and emotional support available in the wider society to flow into respondents' social networks, less integrated members are put in a better position to receive support. For example, the Art House organizes volunteers to translate key government documents related to welfare standards for immigrants. In another case, support is gained through regular gatherings to share information about how to overcome difficulties immigrants commonly face during their early stages of resettlement.

Our first finding reaffirms the positive role of ethnic bonds, as Glazer and Moynihan (1970) argued. Secondly, we noticed our respondents are not particularly interested in obtaining French citizenship and tend to shrink back from political engagement when interviewed. Both are part of what Paugam (2017) considered to be citizenship bonds, which are crucial for social integration. However, a closer examination of the discourse that our respondents used to justify their disengagement does not support the conventional wisdom that the Chinese are essentially submissive in political culture. We argue, on the one hand, that France's non-discriminative welfare policies between legal residents and citizens reduced incentives for the Chinese immigrant community to mobilize for citizen rights. On the other hand, the high internal heterogeneity within the Chinese community and the exclusion of ethnic-

particularistic experiences in mainstream French politics both led our participants to apparently remain silent over public affairs. Nonetheless, by situating individual political choice within their particular memories and life histories, we found that Chinese individuals are aware of and actively evaluate their political surroundings.

Our findings challenge the culturalist approach to Chinese political disengagement. We further argue that minorities' interest in civic participation is not necessarily associated with ethnic membership and should not be expected to. Our recommendation for future research is that studies of persons of an ethnic minority should regard them as individual social subjects rather than as agents representing their ethnic communities. Only by overcoming this Western-centric conception of the political unit can we better understand and analyze the structural obstacles and incentives under which individuals make their own choices.

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Endnotes

[1]Fu Manchu was first introduced by Sax Rohmer's novel series and became extensively featured in Northern American popular culture. Fu Manchu, described as a mysterious, vicious but powerful Chinaman, reflects the racist ideology of Yellow Peril in Northern American societies (Frayling 2014).

[2]The interview was conducted in Mandarin Chinese. In the Chinese language, Chinese as an ethnicity concept (huaren 华人) differs from Chinese as a nationality concept (zhongguoren 中国人). The first word, huaren, refers to a culturally Chinese person. The second word, zhongguoren, literally "China country person", implies belonging to the country of China.

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Stories of Transnationalism: nǐ kàn wǒ, wǒ kàn nǐ (你看我, 我看你)

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ABSTRACT

Transnationalism has been explored in scholarship within the scope of migration and globalisation. Often, related literature and theories conceptualise and deconstruct transnationalism within the framework of methodological nationalism. However, new scholarship suggests that the outdatedness of this framework results in its failure to adapt to, capture, and better understand the complexity and intersectionality of transnationalism in the contemporary context. Drawing on an autoethnographic account of my transnational relationship with my grandmother, this paper delves into the individual everyday perspective of transnationalism and the impacts it has had on facilitating the emergence of transmigrant identities, creating a sense of belonging, and transforming care networks that span the globe. It is a collection of short stories that offers a level of insight, meaning, understanding, *being there*, and co-presence (Baldassar, Nedelcu, Merla, and Wilding 2016) that exemplifies the contemporary transnational relationship and the ways in which it has been shaped by the digital space, rapid globalisation, and narratives of migration. By researching transnationalism from a qualitative and ethnographic methodology, this paper explores the embeddedness of a "here and there" dynamic (Duong 2015, 233) that has come to reflect a profoundly felt sense of interconnectivity between loved ones. Finally, this study prompts existing researchers and scholarship to critically engage with and adapt their ways of researching transnationalism in the global context.

Keywords: transnationalism; transnational identities; transnational narratives; ethnography; transnational families

星期天 (Sunday)

Our conversation takes place at the intersection of Mandarin, English, and Singlish. I tone down my Australian accent on the phone so that she can pick up the English words that I am unsure of how to translate. It is Sunday and our scheduled phone call is via WhatsApp. She answers the phone on the third ring, and I greet her, "hello Āmā (阿嬷)."[1]

"Xiǎomāo (小猫),"[2] she replies.

There I am a young child all over again, laughing as I descend the stairs of home, the old colonial bungalow, Āmā (阿嬷) is smiling and encouraging me to take the next step. This image of her is suspended in time, [this is the photo I carry with me,] this is the woman who raised me in my first year of life; this is the woman who healed my spirits when I fled home to Singapore as a heartbroken eighteen-year-old.

She is home to me *now* in the questions that open up tangents to family drama, inside jokes, how I'm doing in school, Grandpa's declining health, and her laughing at my attempts to fit Chinese words into an English sentence. It is as if she is sitting across from me, on the balcony of our new home, a high rise Singaporean apartment, in the cool morning breeze. There we are eating watermelon seeds and always laughing.

Instead, I am in my orange-painted room in Perth, alone. There are no watermelon seeds, no cool breeze on a balcony. She is 3912 kilometres away and it is another 76 days before I will see her again.

Our phone calls begin to bridge the distance, we share funny messages, photos, updates about our daily lives, we FaceTime, and because of this, we maintain a close relationship despite the overwhelming physical distance. I can feel her smiling through the phone; she is so proud that she is able to navigate her smartphone as a way of navigating this distance.

It makes missing us less difficult.

Focus of the Research

These are snapshot encounters that capture a day of the week in which a phone call took place between me and my grandmother. They explore topics of conversations, experiences, memories, and the context of our transnational relationship. They serve as a collection of short stories that offers a level of insight, meaning, understanding, and *being there* across distances that exemplifies the contemporary transnational relationship and how it has been shaped by the digital space, rapid globalisation, and our own narratives of migration. Stories that illuminate the transformative and symbolic aspects of phone calls between individuals who span across distances are often missed in more structuralist approaches to researching transnationalism (Bal 1990). These stories are a style of ethnography that draws heavily from narratology, both as an attempt to do justice to the social subject of the transmigrant and to understand better and beyond more traditional approaches of studying transnationalism. The implications of applying a narratology methodology to ethnographic inquiry can be seen in this paper; that is, these snapshot encounters between me and my grandmother illuminate the increasingly transnational nature of our everyday lives.

The approach of anthropology as storytelling is not a new one. Anthropology as a "discipline engaged in explaining, understanding, and interpreting cultural worlds" (McGranahan 2015) uses storytelling as a methodology to make sense of new cultural worlds. This way of organising writing and grounding theoretical approaches in ethnographic inquiry captures a more holistic element of subject and ethnographer that begins to constitute a greater understanding of anthropology. Pioneers of anthropology as storytelling include Clifford Geertz (1973) and his method of thick description, which prompted a new way of ethnographic inquiry that draws heavily on the recording aspect of ethnography. In writing thickly, scientific observations and the description of things as they are lay the groundwork for anthropological interpretation, and thus aid researchers in interpreting the meaning of things and making sense of a cultural world. Alongside this search for the symbolic and meaning in interactions, the narratology approach also further illustrates an understanding grasped in a *being there*. The concept of *being there* echoes the richness of similar terms in transnational literature like "co-presence" (Baldassar, Nedelcu, Merla, and Wilding 2016). In utilising the methodology of narratology, these snapshot encounters of Grandma and I's transnational relationship on WhatsApp readily allows us to *be there* with each other and experience "co-presence".

Narrative is thick and expressive; it fashions experiences so that they can be understood by others and, in doing so, also explains and allows for an interpretation that informs anthropologists and researchers in the field of transnationalism. These narratives transform to become more than stories of childhood, home, language, and family; they are thick descriptors that grow to signify the greater symbolic interaction of the phone call within a transnational field and examine the increasingly transnational nature of our lives.

The research is presented in a way that focuses on the individual and the self, informed by other styles of autoethnography similar to Dana Walrath (2011), Rebecca Raab (2018), Anne Harris (2016), and Jonathan Wyatt (2012), all of whose personal experiences and their introspective, inductive, reflective, and creative methodologies have been able to deepen their understanding of their subjects of inquiry. Their creative methodologies, which produced rich qualitative data, provide a real lived-in experience within their research and research subjects that I aimed to embody within my own research.

These transnational narratives are intertwined with theoretical sections that explore aspects of Grandma's and my shared transnational experience through our digital interactions in the polymedia environment, the phenomenon of global ageing, the emergence of transmigrant identities, the role of language, and ways of belonging within the transnational context. By interweaving these theories and theoretical frameworks within an overarching transnational narrative, I hope to reimagine and reframe the ways in which transnationalism as a concept is understood; moreover, I aim to move beyond the notion of a nation-state

society that often contains transnationalism. Furthermore, this research helps to transform the methodologies that are employed to understand transnational relationships by exploring the role of narratives in providing a nuanced richness to ethnographic research and the creative capacities of ethnography in the field of transnationalism.

Inspired by Miller's (2009) style of ethnography on the individual, which examines the relationship between studies of society and the individual, my research focuses on the individual subject and self. Often in ethnographic research, scholarship follows the direction of societal behaviours and cultures rather than focusing on the personal. Miller argues that there is a holistic nuance that arises from research focused on the individual, as the individual is the microcosm that reflects the macrocosm of society: "the individual as exemplifying the precise position he or she holds in society and reproducing at this scale the same sense of order and expectation we recognize as that of the society as a whole" (Miller 2009, 13). My own research follows this theoretical approach by examining how an individual's microcosmic transnational interactions are transformed to reproduce a transnational interaction that exists at a macrocosmic, global level. This reproduces a cultural code (Miller 2009) that exemplifies contemporary transnational interactions within the complexities and intersectionality of the transnational context. Miller argues that choosing the individual as a subject choice is often overlooked when an individual actor within society can provide a unique cultural experience that reflects and exemplifies a greater cultural nuance within that society.

In the context of my research, this paper discusses theories of transnationalism, Wilding and Baldassar's (2018) global ageing, Duany's (2011) transnational activities and transnationalism as practice, and the transformative force of the symbolic phone call, which takes place in a polymedia environment. These factors all facilitate the emergence of the transmigrant identity and one's navigation of human connection and belonging amidst the acceleration of interconnectivity in the globalised world.

Methods

During October of 2018, I conducted participant observation and a semi-formal interview via phone calls with my grandmother on the social media app WhatsApp. Each phone call was between fifteen to sixty minutes long and was conducted in my own home. The initial phone call was a semi-formal interview that followed a list of questions about the usage, interaction, and engagement with WhatsApp. All other conversations were informal and inductive, and they included a range of conversation topics: university, academic life, family drama, our holiday in December, my student exchange in 2019, Grandpa, my brother, Grandma's technology classes, yoga, catching up with friends, my love life, things that happened in my childhood, and my upcoming trip to Singapore. Notes were taken during the phone call followed by self-reflective journaling after the experience. Participant observation consisted predominantly of listening and engaging with the conversation; as a result, interesting stories, experiences, and personal histories emerged from the overall experience. The decision to focus the scope of my research on such a deeply personal aspect of my own life has allowed for a level of interaction, observation, and living in the experience that would otherwise be inaccessible to the public.

The initial interest at the beginning of this research project focused on the ways that two different families engaged and interacted, using WhatsApp as a means of communicating and maintaining transnational relationships. This research idea also fit within the scope of theories of transnationalism, transnational identities, transnational families, globalisation, and the digital space. However, after the first two weeks of research, with a majority of interviews completed, I came to realise that there was far too much data and research to surmise, analyse, and present in a word-constrained essay format. Thus the decision to transition to an individual research subject was made. The hope is for more creative methodological research on transnational families and transnational identities to be expanded in future research and publications on transnationalism by demonstrating the creative capacities of narratology in ethnographic research.

Stories have been a way for people to form human connections in a myriad of contexts, across cultures and across time. In writing about the transnational family relationship (Baldassar, Kilkey, Merla, and Wilding 2014) I share with my grandmother, it seemed fitting to tell a story: her story, my own—our story. A narrative of migration, family, human connection, and belonging. So, in the wisdom of McGranahan's (2015) words, I begin with the story "that can't be left out" (McGranahan 2015), starting with the earliest memory of Grandma and the first thing that comes to mind when I think of home. These short stories have now come to reflect our kind of transnational relationship—an entwined family history of migration and our navigation of belonging and connectivity—so that in each phone call, we are actively meaning-making and loving each other across temporalities and spatialities.

Why Transnationalism?

Transnationalism is not a new concept. Much like globalisation, it has "assumed a greater scale, intensity, diffusion, and velocity at the turn of the twenty-first century" (Duany 2011, 28). As such, transnationalism has become one of the most "promising potentials for social research for the twenty-first century" (Duany 2011, 29). It is an important area of scholarship that critically examines and engages with the interactions of individual actors and their participation in both their home societies and host societies such that they are able to develop multiple, overlapping identities, "lead bifocal lives, express loyalties to more than one nation state, and practice hybrid cultures" (Duany 2011, 24). While there are many dimensions to transnationalism, including emotional, physical, economic, and political, my research examines the concept within the framework of transnational care, family, and memory. This section of the paper will discuss the significance of studying and researching transnationalism. It will first outline more traditional approaches to transnational research by discussing the paradigm of methodological nationalism that has historically dominated migration studies. Building on this, it will be examining more contemporary theoretical approaches to migration and

transnational studies that frame this research project.

Transnationalism has been explored in a variety of ways in research, including politically within discourses of modern nation-states and the integration and assimilation of migrant populations into the dominant culture of their host societies. It has also been examined economically with the increased flow of trade, capital, and labour. Transnationalism has been considered, now more critically, within cultural and social dimensions, identity construction, belonging, and transnationalism as practice. Historically, the concept of transnationalism has been explored because it formed a counter to dominant models of assimilation in migrant discourses. These assimilationist models have been approached through methodological nationalism, which is a theoretical framework that dominates migration studies and transnational scholarship. Methodological nationalism has become increasingly outdated in examining the contemporary realities of transnationalism as it "confines the study of social processes to the political and geographical boundaries of a particular nation-state" (Levitt and Glick-Schiller 2004, 1007). Examples of this can be seen in classical migration studies and topics of cultural homogenisation through the assimilationist model.

Balogun (2011) uses the theoretical framework of the segmented assimilation paradigm to understand the processes of identity formation among second-generation Nigerians in the United States. Segmented assimilation "proposes congruence between economic, structural and identificational forms of incorporation in which identity is formed in part through the second generation's mobility prospects" (Balogun 2011, 459). The paper, based on twenty-five semi-structured interviews, delves into the lives of second-generation Nigerian immigrants in the Bay area of San Francisco. The author's analysis shows the heavy influence of methodological nationalism. Assimilation is posited in opposition to the maintenance of transnational ties, and the intersection of transnationalism and assimilation is only seen briefly as a possibility in the process of identity formation. The focus of segmented assimilation examines

the incorporation of migrants and the subsequent second generation into host societies and the impacts of the assimilation on identity formations. This incorporative approach is similarly seen in Asher's (2008) article on hyphenated Asian-American youth identities. Once again, the postcolonial perspective toward hybrid identities contributes to the traditional assimilationist frameworks that fall within methodological nationalism. The hybridity argument limits itself to this framework as it examines the experiences of second-generation migrants as a product of their parents' narratives of migration. In moving away from this framework of methodological nationalism and toward a more transnational perspective, second-generation migrants can be seen to be negotiating their ways of being and belonging and the challenges that come within the narrative of migration. Their identity formations, whether hyphenated, hybrid, or not, are not only informed by their own experiences, in this case in American society, but also by the experiences of their parents and the generations before them.

Furthermore, transnationalism is not strictly a first-generation phenomenon. The new paradigm of transnationalism moves away from power structures like hegemony, assimilation, and oppression that have long dominated the debate. Instead, it examines more deeply and broadly the human and lived-in experiences of belonging and interconnectedness between home and host, family and self that begins to encompass the complexity of "multi-layered, multi-sited transnational social fields" (Levitt and Glick-Schiller 2004, 1003) that illuminate the realities of transnationalism in the contemporary context. In moving toward this new paradigm, new methodologies that deepen our knowledge and understanding of multi-layered and multi-sited approaches are needed. The nature of our lives is becoming increasingly transnational, especially heightened by the use of digital technology. Ethnographic inquiry and the relevant theoretical frameworks must evolve alongside these rapid changes and complex processes at play.

Levitt and Glick-Schiller (2004) propose studying social processes beyond the theoretical framework of methodological nationalism, which "rejects the long-held notion that society and the nation-state are one and the same" (1003). In moving beyond the framework of methodological nationalism, studies of social processes can be deepened and broadened; more specifically, migrants and the impacts of their mobilities can be seen as "embedded in multi-layered, multi-sited transnational social fields, encompassing those who move and those who stay behind" (1003). Since Levitt and Glick-Schiller's (2004) paper, new transnational and migration research has emerged that pushes for this new paradigm of framing transnational studies. Early and late 2000s migration researchers who specialise in transnationalism and transnational families have also begun to further examine how transnationalism has been a transformative force that impacts transnational relationships, social interactions, caregiving, and transnational identities (see Baldassar 2016; Baldassar and Merla 2013; Merla 2015; Merla and Baldassar 2011; Nedelcu 2013).

Increasingly, contemporary research has looked into the role that information and communication technologies (ICTs) have played in shaping co-presence across distances (Baldassar, Nedelcu, Merla, and Wilding 2016) and how these communicative technologies have facilitated the *being there* and embedded "here and there" dynamic (Duong 2015, 233) that is so deeply felt in transnational relationships. Terms like *being there*, "co-presence" (Baldassar, Nedelcu, Merla, and Wilding 2016) and "here and there" (Duong 2015, 233) are able to capture the nuanced richness of transnational relationships, transnational care, and belonging that reflect a greater interconnectivity in the overall transnational framework. Research into transnationalism has also begun to help uncover global inequalities and rising power asymmetries by making them more visible. This can be examined from the perspective of transnationalism as resistance, which is described as "counter hegemony and embodying subaltern resistance to existing structures of domination" (Duany 2011, 31), whether it be political domination or cultural assimilation policies.

Researchers and scholars, although with competing claims about how transnationalism should be studied and examined, have come to

a consensus about the importance of transnationalism as a concept, an idea, a process, and a practice that has been incredibly influential in a myriad of research topics. Ethnography that examines transnationalism and its presence in the lives of individuals and society "now has the task of determining 'the nature of locality, as lived experience in a globalised, deterritorialized world'" (Appadurai 1991 as cited in Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc 1995, 49). How does our understanding of the locality of transnationalism that Appadurai conceptualises shape and influence our understanding of new and emerging interactions, engagements, and connections that increasingly occur in the digital space? This research aims to contribute to existing theories and literature on transnationalism and to rethink and reframe transnationalism within the intersection of global ageing, interconnectivity, migration, and belonging. Transnationalism is paramount in the twenty-first century; it is happening now, across the globe, as the "quiet revolution" (Wilding and Baldassar 2018, 227) that is taking place and transforming the ways in which we connect to one another. The emergence of the transmigrant identity is accelerating the sense of interconnectivity that has been a by-product of rapid globalisation. Symbolic interactions between individuals, families, and communities are now able to take place beyond the physical spaces that scholarship has grown accustomed to. These relations have shifted into the digital space; communication and the meanings that are gained from it are now occurring on social media apps, on phone calls, and through text messaging.

Transnational and Transmigrant Identities in a Social Field

The emergence of transnational identities amidst studies of migration and globalisation challenges long-held assertions and understandings about the modern nation-state and society, including the ways in which transnationalism has been studied within the container framework of the nation-state and the metaphor of borders. This section of the paper follows the previously discussed contemporary theoretical approaches to studying and researching transnationalism. It explores the new paradigm proposed by Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004) and Bourdieu's social field as a new transnational lens.

Emerging identities—such as Asian-American or Chinese-born Australian—increasingly challenge the rigidity of nation-state societies, as they are often perceived as threats to social cohesion, unity of the nation, and how these migrant groups are incorporated and assimilated into nation-state societies. Furthermore, the emergence of transnational identities also challenges the presupposition that incorporating migrants into host societies can only occur in binary and contradiction to the maintenance of transnational connections. Hyphenated and transnational identities have come to symbolise hybrid individuals who have ties to both their home and host society as well as loyalties and allegiances to more than one nation-state. Transnational identities in this sense are often studied from the perspective of globalisation and diaspora; their hybridity is explored as resistance to the dominant culture, with the retainment of ties to home societies seen as a way of resisting assimilation processes into the host society (Bhabha 1994).

In applying a transnational lens, migration can be studied outside of the framework of methodological nationalism. Rather than viewing new migrants or transnational identities as either assimilating, resistant, or hybrid, the transnational lens allows for the simultaneity of an incorporative attitude toward one's host society and the maintenance of ties with their home society. A migrant with strong ties to home and host society is no longer seen as one that has trouble with assimilation or letting go of their ties to home; rather, they can now be viewed as a transnational individual. Amidst accelerated globalisation in the twenty-first century, the methodological nationalism model of understanding transnational identities fails to grasp the complex interconnectedness of these identities with a person's home and loved ones. It retains and strongly asserts the binary view that the incorporation of individuals into a host society is a direct contradiction to the maintenance of transnational connections to home. The nation-state framework provides only a limited understanding of what transnational and migration scholarship can understand and capture of social ties and wider

society. How can we as anthropologists better understand what constitutes society and what its boundaries are, if there are any? And what are the implications to our ways of researching and studying transnationalism as a global phenomenon?

The increased movement of people from home to host society, both online and offline, has made the local more global. Transnational identities are emerging from spaces where the local and global intersect in a myriad of ways online and offline that involve complex social processes of being and belonging in all aspects of social life. Transnational actors are increasingly able to access and participate in these spaces, such that even individual actors without a narrative of migration can now be considered transnational individuals, simply because their daily lives see them interacting in the transnational sense.

In their paper, Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004) propose a "new paradigm" (1003) that considers the possibility of studying transnationalism and emergent transnational identities beyond the methodological nationalism framework. The paper critically examines the contemporary transnational lens from the theoretical framework of Bourdieu's social field and looks at how transnational actors are able to pivot between the intersections of their social lives. Levitt and Glick Schiller propose the concept of Bourdieu's social field as a framework by which transnationalism and emergent transnational identities can be better understood as "a single social field created by a network of networks" (1009). In this sense, the authors describe the social field

> as a set of multiple interlocking networks of social relationships through which ideas, practices and resources are unequally exchanged, organised, and transformed... social fields are multidimensional, encompassing structured interactions of differing forms, depth and breadth that are differentiated in social theory by the terms of organization, institution, and social movements. (1009)

Levitt and Glick Schiller argue that the framework of methodological nationalism has become rather outdated and fails to "capture, adequately or automatically, the complex interconnectedness of contemporary reality" (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004, 1006). Instead, transnationalism, which at its core examines a "profound [sense of] interconnectivity" (Duong 2015, 232), can no longer be "confined by nation-state boundaries" (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004, 1007).

Instead, this "new paradigm" (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004, 1003) of social fields engages with transnational interactions between individuals, institutions, religions, genders, politics, geography, and language in the global sense. The social field, as theorised by Bourdieu, allows for research on migration to be examined within the scope of ways of being and ways of belonging (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004) all within one social field. Thus, connections between individuals who are migrants themselves and between those who are left behind can be examined through the concept of social networks. Transnational communication typically occurs via social media or by networks like nostalgia, memory, and imagination. These networks can be critically engaged with either as ways of being, ways of belonging, or the simultaneity of both. By moving forward from the framework of methodological nationalism, nation-state society is understood as having significance to the social lives of transnational identities but is set aside in order to examine the space in which interconnectedness occurs as a global phenomenon. The global social field becomes the macrocosm of the nation-state society, with the interactions of transnational individuals serving as the stimulation of social networks that link actors all over the world. These networks span across and beyond the borders and boundaries of nation-states. This ties in with Miller's style of ethnography, which comes to exemplify and signify the macrocosmic social field when examining the individual interactions of social actors in transnational networks. Within this framework of Bourdieu's social field, coupled with Miller's style of ethnography on the individual, we can begin to see the emergence of transnational and transmigrant identities at the global level.

These symbolic interactions between individuals—a phone call, a text, or a plane ride—contribute to ways of being and

belonging to family, loved ones, and ideas of home that Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004) argue are how individuals participate in transnational ways of being, which are "the actual social relations and practices that individuals engage in" (1010). These types of interactions are also essential to transnational individuals' ways of belonging, which recognize that transnational activities and the acknowledgement and expression of belonging are "practices that signal or enact an identity which demonstrates a conscious connection to a particular group" (1010). Belonging is both an action, in the transnational activity, and the self-awareness required to acknowledge and express that sense of belonging in the transnational framework. By moving forward from methodological nationalism, the global macrocosm can now be understood as Bourdieu's social field; therefore, everyone who is practicing ways of being and ways of belonging in the transnational sense can thus be considered transnational individuals.

These networks of networks that facilitate the emergence of transnational identities can begin to be understood, studied, examined, and grasped beyond the spatialities of borders that have long dominated transnational discourse. Now, the "profound [sense of] interconnectivity" (Duong 2015, 232) that Duong writes of can be grasped as both immensely complex and paramount to further research on migration, transnationalism, and globalisation, especially within the socio-cultural sense that examines how belonging occurs. This new paradigm lens of ethnographic inquiry proposes that individual interactions with other social actors across and beyond nation-state borders have come to exemplify how ways of being are experienced within the transnational framework; the transnational activities of texting, calling, and sending mixed media through apps like WhatsApp are an accessible form of transnational being. Due to the social participation of transnational activities, the recognition, acknowledgement, and expression of them thus exemplify the wider social phenomenon of transnational belonging. What distinguishes transnational identities from transmigrant identities is the narrative of migration. Unlike transmigrant identities, transnational individuals are not distinguished

by a personal narrative of migration; they may simply be transnational because of their participation in transnational ways of being. These transnational actors may interact within the intersection of the global and local in their online and offline lives in ways that allow them to be and belong transnationally even without migration. Their everyday social lives see them participating in the transnational sense and leading transnational lives, even by simply FaceTiming friends who are abroad. Within my research, my grandmother's and my ways of being become inextricably entwined with our ways of belonging. By framing my own research within Levitt and Glick Schiller's (2004) new paradigm of the global transnational network, Bourdieu's social field, and Miller's style of ethnography, the interactions between the two of us can be examined more critically within the wider social implications of shifting theoretical paradigms in migration and transnational studies. The narratology approach to qualitative ethnographic inquiry illuminates the increasingly transnational nature of our lives. We are both transnational social actors in our online interactions; because of our participation in transnational ways of being, our everyday interactions with each other include sending messages and photos that bridge the distance and span across nation-state boundaries. Yet, we are also transmigrant individuals because, through our interactions, we have grown to acknowledge and express that sense of belonging to one another, to our places of being, and to our own narratives of migration.

Through this transformational process of participation in the online, individual social actors who use social media apps like WhatsApp are actively participating in ways of transnational being. In further recognizing, acknowledging, and expressing these ways of transnational being, individual actors begin to belong transnationally. Thus, they create, maintain, and retain ties to multiple spatialities, home and host, which exist beyond notions of nation-state society and must now be engaged with within the wider scope of a macrocosmic global field.

星期三 *(Wednesday)*

The family portraits are hung up on the walls of the new apartment. Picture frames that hold my mother, uncles, and grandparents in another time. There are photos of them as children, as teenagers, and later in their graduation gowns. These are followed by portraits that include my aunt and father and my uncle's fiancée at the time (who is now his wife). The last twenty years of photos include a new grandchild every five years. First my cousin and I in 1998 as babies, then my brother in 2000 and cousins in 2001, 2002, 2003, two in 2005, and the last one in 2010.

The family photo in December is a highly anticipated family reunion event that occurs every five years. It is a tradition that has been carried out for the last fifty years, and this year marks the fiftieth anniversary of my grandparents. We traverse through time zones and over distances on planes and cars to meet in one house to take the family portrait. 阿嬷 (Āmā) fears that this year will be the last family portrait with everyone in it. It is something that she repeats to me in every conversation.

For us, it is a way of remembering, capturing, and freezing in time a memory. The portraits are a portal through time, when the children were still children, and it was a race to be the tallest in the family. It captures the memory of the frantic energy of sixteen people trying to be still together for a moment in time.

The photo frames have evolved from small ones on the walls to larger dominating pictures, and now the family portraits are on our computer desktop screens and our phones. We carry them with us wherever we go. To say this is my family, this is where I come from.

星期四 *(Thursday)*

My grandparents grew up on the same street in Old Colonial Singapore during the late 1950s. They were friends as teenagers and were married in their early twenties despite disapproval from my Āmā's (阿嬤) family. There is a Singaporean documentary made in 1995 about my GōngGong (公公)[3] that depicts the unconventional path that has forged the life my grandparents share today. My GōngGong (公公) was thirty-eight years old when he attended Nanyang Technological University.[4] Āmā (阿嬤) was the breadwinner of the family of five, while he was the first in the family to receive a tertiary education. The whole arrangement was unheard of; this was especially noted on my GōngGong's (公公) first day of university when he received a standing ovation from his peers as he entered the room. They had mistaken him as their professor.

Nowadays my grandparents still share that same bond, unwavering in the face of societal expectations and attitudes. In our conversation, Āmā (阿嬤) speaks endearingly of GōngGong's (公公) struggle to write an email in Chinese to a relative in China. It is as if they are teenagers again, Āmā (阿嬤) crouched over a small writing desk in Little India tutoring my GōngGong (公公) in English; they are back in 1956 on Upper Dickinson Road. GōngGong (公公) doesn't know how to write in pinyin, which is the English Romanisation system used to sound out words into Chinese characters on many word processors and smartphones.

This isn't because of dementia or any other neurological conditions inhibiting his ability to process words, but rather that his everyday life requires him to communicate in English digitally, such that even GōngGong (公公) is losing touch with the Chinese language, relying on my Āmā (阿嬤) more and more to fill in the blanks of his drafted email. She is the link between him and the Chinese language. Even now they are supporting each other as they navigate the digital world together.

Findings

Symbolic Interactionism in the Transnational Context

Historically, transnational interactions and relationships have been supported by sending remittances and letters with interactions limited by geographical distances, air transportation, political stability, and economic security. The growing digital space via the conduit of social media apps like WhatsApp is transforming the ways in which individuals, families, and communities can engage, interact, and connect. Transnationalism facilitated by information and communication technologies (ICTs) is a relatively new phenomenon that has emerged in the last two decades or so. Its emergence presents interesting debates on our anthropological understandings of social interactions and how they have transformed through our online interactions. Herbert Blumer (1969) outlines three premises of symbolic interactionism that are useful for understanding this transformation of social interactions. These are, firstly, "that human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them" (2). Secondly, "the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one's fellows" (2). And thirdly, "that these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process" (2).

From the theoretical framework of symbolic interactionism, social and online interactions are studied and interpreted as meaningful and meaning making. This theoretical framework has been applied to the study of online and offline personas and Goffman's theory of performance of self (Hogan 2010; Bullingham and Vasconcelos 2013). Hogan, Bullingham and Vasconcelos, and others have explored in their research how social actors in their online engagements and symbolic interactions have constructed an online self which differs from their offline personas. This greatly influences individual social actors and their self-identification processes, as well as having huge potentials for the field of symbolic interactionism and its applicability to the online world and online interactions. These online interactions and individuals' engagement with online worlds have widened the scope of symbolic interactionism in ethnographic inquiry and have furthermore transformed the landscape in which the sociocultural processes of transnationalism can be studied.

The phone call in this sense becomes more than just the symbolic interaction between two or more people; it becomes what Duany (2011) calls a transnational activity and has overtaken previous practices of transnational activities. Participation in transnational activities like WhatsApp, which is digital, makes transnational practices and activities more expansive and accessible, transforming the landscape in which symbolic interactionism and understandings about existing transnational practices, identities, and relationships form and evolve. As phone calls are occurring in a digital space, this form of symbolic interaction is taking place at "[the] intersection of local and global" (Gajjala 2006, 179), such that individuals are increasingly able to partake in a multiplicity of cultures as a means of "selective acculturation" (Duany 2011, 25), thus rejecting the assimilationist framework that has long dominated migration discourses. It has led to the emergence of new evolving, transmigrant identities that maintain ties to ethnic, cultural, and home societies whilst simultaneously forging new cultural identities in their host societies. In my own interactions with Grandma, I am drawing from and remaining connections with my home society, Singapore, whilst simultaneously partaking in Australian society, which has led to the eventual self-identification of my own transmigrant, Asian-Australian identity. Through our phone calls, texts, and photos, we are remaining connected in our relationship through language, personal history, memories, storytelling, and participating in the everyday of each other's lives via our WhatsApp interactions.

Without the time to try and translate the last two words, I used a Chinese-English dictionary app to translate the whole sentence. Skimming over the dictionary meanings, my eyes settled on *travel lightly* and so I replied regarding my suitcase. It wasn't until later that day when we talked on the phone that I asked about the suitcase in question. Āmā (阿嬤) had no idea why I was telling her about my suitcase.

I had mistranslated the message, fumbled the English alphabet into a Chinese sentence. Mistaking lǚxíng (旅行) for xíngli (行李). Āmā (阿嬤) is laughing as she explains that lǚxíng (旅行) is a holiday, not a suitcase. The travel agent had called to confirm our trip to China.

In an echo of my mistake, Āmā (阿嬤) recounts the time she copy and pasted an entire research essay of mine into Google translate because she was struggling to understand some of the academic jargon. She said that Google made such a mess of my essay that none of it made sense. She resorted to translating the individual words so that the meaning of my essay would not be lost in translation.

We are always meeting at this intersection of language, an overlapping mixture of Chinese, Singlish, and English, trying to understand each other. Without the physical capability to communicate with our hands, bodies, and facial expressions, we are always having to explain more in depth, rather than having the words to say it for us. To say it is like this, or no, this is what I was trying to say—we are grasping to catch the meanings that are vulnerable to being lost in translation.

It is like when she says nǐ kàn wǒ, wǒ kàn nǐ (你看我，我看你); it means more than just the literal translation of *you see me, I see you*. It is as Geertz says: "a speck of behaviour, a fleck of culture, and voilà — a gesture!" (Geertz 1975, 312). Grandma is saying, "I see all of you and you see all of me." It is our kind of symbolic interaction.

Figure 1: Screenshot of conversation with Grandma

A Polymedia Environment

Within the contemporary context, a heightened engagement within Madianou and Miller's (2012) polymedia environment has taken precedence in research concerning migration, mobility, identities, globalisation, and intersectionality. The polymedia environment, a term utilised and coined by Madianou and Miller (2012), describes "an emerging environment of communicative opportunities" (170) that are set out by three preconditions: access and availability, affordability, and media literacy. The term polymedia environment is useful in examining human interactions in the new paradigm of transnationalism. Within the contemporary context, the uses of technological means of communication are accelerated and, in framing these interactions within the polymedia environment, the methodological implications toward studying transnationalism are epic. At its core, "the environment of polymedia becomes inextricably linked to the ways in which interpersonal relationships are enacted and experienced" (Madianou and Miller 2012, 170-171), especially within the transnational framework. Increased interactions between loved ones through media as a means to overcome distance and space challenges previous conceptions of remittance and connection.

Furthermore, the preconditions for a polymedia environment are becoming increasingly accessible. In conjunction with the understanding of transnational activities, the interactions of migrants with loved ones via various media technologies can be seen to be taking place in a polymedia environment, instantaneously. As a result, my grandmother and I are able to adapt our relationship to the diversity and complexity of navigating transnational care networks amidst ageing, migration, digital media, and other factors that impact our relationship: language, culture, history, and storytelling. Thus, in our phone calls, photos, and text messages, we are caring for one another, no matter the time zone or distance—Grandma's ability to navigate digital media allows her to connect to and care for all of us, no matter where we are in the world. In this, we are able to sustain the "complex multi-layered relationships of exchange and interaction over time [and distance]" (Wilding and Baldassar 2018, 230).

Research into and on transnationalism seeks to capture the lived-in experiences of individuals and families and the processes by which transnational practices are taking place as a means to navigate one's place in the world and their identity. In doing so, we can better understand the phenomenon of transnationalism and its wider social implications toward existing concepts and understandings of human connection and interaction.

Transnationalism becomes increasingly available to more and more people in the polymedia environment (Madianou and Miller 2012). As a result, transnationalism has begun to diminish the power of the nation-state to adapt to and keep up with the ever-evolving and increasing presence of overlapping migrant identities that transcend traditional nation-state borders. New sets of social relations develop and converge within a polymedia space. With the preconditions of access and availability, affordability, and media literacy (Madianou and Miller 2012), migrants and their left-behind loved ones are able to access polymedia technologies as a means of navigating their transnational relationships. This shift between the social and technological transforms the ways in which transmigrants are increasingly able to access technology as a means to connect with loved ones and practice transnationalism in their everyday lives. An increasing "need for transnational communication between migrants and their left-behind families is particularly acute" (170) with the rapid growth of polymedia networks. Through social networking apps like WhatsApp, the transnational space has expanded beyond the home, organisations, institutions, and nation-states and is now "experienced globally" (170). The transnational space is now able to take place in the online sphere, making it accessible and instantaneous. As such, transmigrants are able to combine their experiences of "origin and settlement [societies] to create a new kind of self-awareness" (Duany 2011, 25) within the everyday lived-in experience of transnationalism. Thus, transnationalism takes place beyond theoretical

notions of the nation-state and its physical bounded localities.

As seen in this research, transnationalism within the contemporary context can be explored in a myriad of ways. It can frame research on global ageing and the ways in which everyday transnational practices facilitate the emergence of transmigrant identities. In this sense, transnationalism in the polymedia environment embodies both the local and trans-local notions of culture, identity, and aid in the negotiation of "two competing claims, thereby redrawing the lines between home and host societies" (Duany 2011, 33). Applying the transnational lens to this research highlights the emergence of the transmigrant identity because of its accessibility and ability to exist in the everyday experiences of migrants. As a migrant herself, Grandma simultaneously forges her transmigrant identities in her interactions with her children and grandchildren who have also migrated elsewhere. By interacting in the polymedia environment and using a range of accessible and available multimedia, Grandma practices transnationalism every day, such that her children and grandchildren are also beginning to forge their own transmigrant identities in their replies, phone calls, and interactions with her. Migration is now intertwined with the family narrative of connection, belonging, origin, and history within the transnational context.

Global Ageing in the Transnational Context

Amidst the phenomenon of global ageing, scholarship has begun to engage with and delve into the intersectionality of ageing, migration, digital media, and the transformative processes that are occurring within this intersection. Wilding and Baldassar (2018) explore the emergence of new care networks and the ways in which new media are transforming, shaping, and providing "unprecedented opportunities to bring distant places and people together in new ways" (226), particularly the elderly and their connections with younger family members. This emerging and transformative care network has huge impacts on ageing and migrant identities; migration in this sense has become a paramount signifier in the familial narrative by

transforming the ways in which kin members are providing care for one another. With these new care networks, families and loved ones are challenging the commonly held assumption that care requires proximity, thus revolutionising conceptualisations of care in the transnational context.

This transformative process of caregiving and global ageing is characterised by Wilding and Baldassar (2018) as a "quiet revolution" (227) that exists at the intersection of care, migration, globalisation, and digital media, contributing to an expansive growth in the nature of care networks within the scope of global ageing. Traditionally, within discourses on migration and global ageing, the elderly are often identified as a vulnerable group. There are those who are migrants themselves (ageing migrants), those who migrate at a later stage in life (migrant elderly), and those who are "characterised by their own lack of migration" (228), the left-behind elderly. However, Wilding and Baldassar argue that the emergence of new care networks via new media transforms the need for proximity in maintaining formal and informal methods of care, such that "proximity is no longer necessary for the exchange of informal support within families" (229). Digital networks and new media are increasingly used to facilitate "co-presence" (230), which enables a here-there form of symbolic interaction in which family members and loved ones are able to stay connected and supported even across distances and time.

Symbolic interactionism is heavily evident in my research as the emergence of transnational care networks transform how my grandmother and I are able to communicate, interact, and connect through various forms of new media via WhatsApp. By using features like FaceTime, text, and sending photos, videos, and voice memos, we are participating in the "quiet revolution" (Wilding and Baldassar 2018, 227) and are actively practicing transnationalism. Thus, the communication between my grandmother and I challenge the presupposition that proximity is a necessity; we are simultaneously navigating the distance of our relationship and the emergence of our own left-behind and transmigrant identities. Our interaction in the "polymedia

environment" (Madianou and Miller 2012) mobilises the transnational relationship that we already have.

Transnational Activities

When the lens of transnationalism is applied to this research, what are normally understood to be everyday activities are transformed to be transnational activities that function within the bigger picture of transnationalism. The everyday phone calls and texts with loved ones "across multiple spatialities and temporalities" (Duong 2015, 233) have now transformed within the contemporary context to be transnational activities. Within this scope, contemporary activities in a highly digitised world with the use of mixed media messaging and calling are now considered alongside other transnational activities like trade, migration, sending remittances, and letter writing, thus transforming the scope in which transnationalism can be considered an activity and as a practice. It has made transnationalism even more expansive and accessible. With the click of a button, the sending of a photo, or an instant message, transmigrants all over the world who connect with their loved ones across spatialities and temporalities are practicing transnationalism in their everyday lives. How individual actors participate in these activities have had and will continue to have huge impacts on both the ways in which human interactions can be understood and the creation of a sense of "co-presence" (Wilding and Baldassar 2018, 230). This co-presence, a "here-there" (Duong 2015, 233), is a means to selectively acculturate and maintain a sense of elasticity in one's migrant identities and one's navigation of belonging.

Contemporary researchers have also begun to examine this aspect of transnationalism—belonging and transnational relationships—particularly by focusing on transnational families. Baldassar, Kilkey, Merla, and Wilding (2014) consider new concepts of care networks that aim to capture these rapidly evolving aspects of transnationalism. Information and communication technologies like WhatsApp contribute to shaping ways of belonging and to strengthening relationships across distances. However, relationships that are being transformed by communication technologies vary. In the same way that people interact differently in various physical settings, these differences also occur in the online sphere. What is undeniable, however, are the effects that these information and communication technologies (ICTs) have on individuals and how they manage and navigate "multiple belongings, [and] learn to live with a multiple sense of self" (Baldassar, Kilkey, Merla, and Wilding 2014, 137).

These new and emerging forms of transnationalism as practice and as activities are revolutionising the ways in which transnationalism can be studied. Now, individual actors, families, and communities are also able to participate in a form of contemporary everyday transnationalism. They are able to create their own "profound [sense of] interconnectivity" (Duong 2015, 232) and a here-there dynamic (Duong 2015) of co-presence (Wilding and Baldassar 2018, 230) as their means to navigate the distance and their own narrative of migration and belonging. This is illustrated by the ways that my grandmother and I navigate our own transnational relationship through our phone calls and texts.

星期天 (Sunday)

I am staring at the blinking cursor on the blank page of Microsoft Word. It has been opened for forty-five minutes now. I am wondering where to begin the story of the strong, beautiful, and wonderful woman that is my grandma and of what I have learnt in this research project. It is a story that is filled with so much history, meaning, context, experience, and memory.

In the wisdom of McGranahan's words, I begin with the story "that can't be left out," starting with the earliest memory of Grandma and the first thing that comes to mind when I think of home. This expands to stories of things that are yet to happen, of family, my grandparents, and meaning that is lost in translation at the intersection of language.

This project has intensified longings for home and to be in the company of my grandparents. During the course of this research project, I have changed my flight home such that I'm leaving five weeks earlier than anticipated. There is a countdown app on my phone and it says that it is 6 days, 20 hours and 31 minutes before my plane takes off from the tarmac of Perth International Airport.

Reframing Transnationalism

In the same way that two billion other WhatsApp users (Bucher 2020) communicate with their loved ones and share their love and care transnationally, my own engagement and interactions with a loved one has informed and allowed for a more nuanced understanding of transnational relationships, the emergence of transnational identities, global care networks, and ways of being and belonging. By living within my research and engaging with my grandmother in such a deeply personal dimension of my life, the entirety of this ethnographic experience has provided a more holistic perspective on the symbolic interaction that is a phone call and how our interactions on WhatsApp have been a part of the wider global phenomenon of transnationalism. The products of our everyday interactions have come to exemplify the greater experience of transnationality and its permeation into the daily experiences of transmigrants. The phone call becomes symbolic in the transnational context because of its transformative force and its impact on facilitating transnational relationships, interactions, practices, identities, global care networks, and ways of belonging.

This ethnography has explored the ways in which transnationalism has been conceptualised in existing scholarship: transnationalism has been understood to be the process, product, practice, identity construct, and embeddedness of a "here and there" dynamic (Duong 2015, 233) that exemplifies the wider social phenomenon of globalisation and profound interconnectivity. Transnationalism affects and permeates the lives of people who participate in cultures outside of their nation-state societies, regardless if they are migrants themselves or have a narrative of migration. Practising transnationalism in our increasingly digitised world can take place in both the offline and online spheres of interaction. These practices have huge consequences and wider socio-cultural impacts on how transnationalism can be further engaged with and studied in the twenty-first century. Furthermore, transnationalism as an economic, political, and socio-cultural phenomenon has the potential of epic proportions to contribute to how we understand what constitutes society, migrant identities, home, belonging, and rich and meaningful human connections. It is a phenomenon that is experienced rapidly and globally, and it is increasingly becoming widely accessible to social actors all over the globe. Transnationalism is transforming the ways in which we understand, connect, and interact with one another while also changing the landscape of what it means to belong.

This research paper aimed to capture a meaningful everyday experience of the transnational in order to contribute to existing theories and research on transnationalism and to reframe how we have grown to understand the scope of transnationalism. This study confronts the dominant model of the nation-state framework, its limitations, and the need for critical adaptation. This research paper examined the outdatedness of the methodological nationalism framework and turned its focus toward more contemporary theoretical approaches like the new paradigm proposed by Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004) and Bourdieu's social field. By utilising this new paradigm as a contemporary transnational lens, the research has engaged with ideas of simultaneity, ways of being and ways of belonging, and the emergence of transnational and transmigrant identities. Furthermore, this research project has explored the creative possibilities of narratology as a creative methodology. By providing snapshot encounters into Grandma and I's everyday lives, this paper has illuminated the increasingly transnational nature of our everyday lives. Using creative and experimental methodologies such as narratology enhances our understanding of transnationalism in the contemporary context. New and creative methods of research on transnationalism need to be engaged with and applied to research on migration and transnationalism. Furthermore, applying the transnational lens moves beyond the framework of methodological nationalism, which has long dominated the discussion, but how have researchers adapted to these theoretical frameworks in our ethnographic inquiry? As researchers, we need to evolve our research methodologies, subjects, modes of analysis, and theories alongside the rapidly changing landscape of globalisation, its role in wider social processes, and its implications for

anthropological studies. New methods that capture a more holistic and nuanced transnational dynamic are necessary. Ethnographic inquiry into evolving technologies, interactions, human connections, social relationships, and networks of care must evolve alongside our growing understanding of transnationalism and what it means to belong globally.

The core of this research has highlighted the transformative forces of transnationalism in all its forms, particularly in the emergence of transnational identities and transmigrants' efforts to navigate belonging within the transnational context. How do individuals who partake and hold allegiances to more than one nation-state or beyond mere nation-state boundaries recognise, acknowledge, and express their sense of belonging? How can we, as anthropologists, begin to study, understand, and write about this complex, interwoven, interconnectedness of the human experience? How will human connections as we understand them transform in the future? The entirety of this experience has provided a rich and meaningful way of engaging with transnationalism at an individual level. My study attempts to grasp and connect with the complex, interwoven individual interactions that exemplify the meaningfulness of wider global social phenomena in the transnational context. The implications of transnationalism are profound and paramount; it is transforming how we have grown to understand human interaction, connection, belonging, and care networks while simultaneously redrawing the boundaries of social life.

星期天 (Sunday)

It's now been ten months since the first phone call in this research project took place. It's July now, and today I am sitting on the balcony of our high rise apartment in Singapore. It's been seven months since I've been home in my orange painted room in Perth. I'm home from Hong Kong for the summer, and the morning sun is exactly how I remember it to be. It is still casting warm dappled light on the tiles, and the breeze is the perfect temperature that soothes the stifling humidity, which is beginning to stir.

In my mind, I take a photograph of my grandparents as a way of remembering them, as a way of remembering them like *this*. Soon, I will be back in Hong Kong and they will be 2585 kilometres away, and it will be another three months before I see them again.

But today, Āmā (阿嫲) is only half a metre away from me and GōngGong (公公) is reading the morning newspaper. There is no longer a countdown app on my phone because I am *seeing* them right *now*. Āmā (阿嫲) is smiling at me because she knows that I am writing about her and grandpa, about us, and telling the world a story of what it means to belong. Stories of being here *and* there, stories of home and how it is we love someone even if they are halfway across the world.

Perhaps, in telling and in writing these stories of us, I am trying to navigate where it is I belong in the world, where home is for me—only to realise that for a long time now, home is all over the world.

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Endnotes

[1] Translates to Grandmother.

[2] Translates to little cat, but the nickname sounds like Pui Pui, which does not exist as a Chinese or English word. I was nicknamed by my grand-parents when I was born, after a kitten my mother had as a child.

[3] Translates to Grandfather (maternal).

[4] Then known as Nanyang Institute of Technology.

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