Just as anthropologists challenge

the illusory desires that underpin technological and

state fixes to political and ecological crisis,

we are challenged to refuse a liberal settlement

as the *raison d'être* of sociocultural anthropology.

— Ryan Cecil Jobson (2020)
"The Case for Letting Anthropology Burn: Sociocultural Anthropology in 2019"
American Anthropologist 122 (2), 267.

ABOUT *CONTINGENT HORIZONS*

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CONTACT INFO:
contingenthorizons@yorku.ca
Attention: Contingent Horizons
Department of Anthropology, 2054 Vari Hall
4700 Keele St., Toronto, ON, Canada, M3J 1P3

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Food, Diversity, and Cultural Identity
How a Community Garden Supports New Immigrants and Refugees in Winnipeg, Canada

LAURA LUCAS
PHD STUDENT, ANTHROPOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA

The Rainbow Community Garden is a place for new immigrant and refugee families in Winnipeg to grow their own food. Using the Rainbow Community Garden as a case study, this paper contributes to ongoing discussions about community gardening by applying an anthropological lens to the multilayered meanings of agriculture in urban environments. This paper is focused on the benefits and challenges of community gardening in the context of new immigrant and refugee experiences. Through a literature review and interviews with gardeners, the role of food and community gardens as a means of facilitating cross cultural interactions, providing culturally appropriate food for new immigrants and refugees, and expressing cultural identity is brought into emphasis. I draw on Strunk and Richardson's (2019) concepts of the material, imagined, and community's garden, to reflect on the different ways in which the community garden is used and experienced by immigrant and refugee gardeners. The main conclusion of this research is that, in the context of new immigrant and refugee participation in community gardening, a garden is not only the physical soil, vegetables, and flowers, but also an important place for practicing one's culture and for engaging in meaningful cross cultural interaction that is beneficial in adjusting to a new life in Canada.

KEY WORDS food, community gardens, immigration, identity

On a Sunday morning in August 2018, people gathered at the Rainbow Community Garden in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Families who had recently immigrated to Canada were spending the day together outside in the sun. They were working in their plots, weeding, watering, and harvesting vegetables. A Nepali couple with two young children was digging in their garden looking for potatoes. The father tossed the small potatoes into a pile at the edge of the plot, while the children were having fun collecting potatoes from the soil and placing them in a baseball cap. The family spoke to each other intermittently in Nepali and English. As the summer was coming to a close, it was time to prepare the garden for the next growing season. Volunteers from Food Matters Manitoba and Foresters Financial had come to help out for the day. Some of the volunteers weeded, cleaned up litter, or mowed the grass. Large containers used for collecting rainwater were moved into better positions. Volunteers painted numbers on long, thin pieces of wood to

be put into the ground as markers for each plot. Each one of these plots would be assigned to a new immigrant or refugee family the following year.

Community gardens are spaces where people, individually or collectively, cultivate plots of land (Jermé and Wakefield 2013). These communal spaces have layers of meaning and are complex in their function and intent (Flachs 2010). This complexity is seen in the range of benefits that community gardens can give to participants. Community gardens can provide valuable resources for new immigrant and refugee families not only in terms of food, but also in their social transition into a new place. Community gardens integrate expressions of culture, social interaction, and environmental restoration (Krasny and Tidball 2009). Within the broader context of alternative food movements, such as the local food movement, the slow food movement, and food justice, community gardens are viewed as an important component, and have generally been understood as being beneficial since their popularization in the twentieth century (Classens 2015). From an anthropological perspective, community gardens and the food they produce can sometimes reflect key markers of cultural identity. Food has played a significant role in advancing anthropological theory and research methods, such as with Richard's (1939) landmark study *Land, Labour and Diet in Northern Rhodesia,* Kahn's (1986) examination of food, gender, and social values in Papua New Guinea, and Sutton's (2001) analysis of how the identities and social lives of Greeks living on the island of Kalymnos are informed and defined by culinary memories (Mintz and Du Bois 2002). Yet, there is a growing necessity for an anthropology of food that is grounded in ethnographic studies at multiple points in the supply chain (Macrae 2016).

This paper contributes to ongoing discussions about community gardening, applying an anthropological lens to the multilayered meanings of agriculture in urban environments, and using the Rainbow Community Garden as a case study. The Rainbow Community Garden is a garden for new immigrant and refugee families in Winnipeg that allows them to grow healthy, culturally appropriate food. The focus of this research is on the role that the Rainbow Community Garden plays in facilitating cross cultural exchange for new immigrants and refugees, and how these interactions are beneficial for their acclimation into Canadian society. A second component to the data analysis is a parallel drawn between the findings of this research and the results of a study by Strunk and Richardson (2019) on the ways in which community gardens are used and experienced by refugee gardeners. Strunk and Richardson (2019) identify three ways in which refugee gardeners use and experience gardens: the material, imagined, and community's garden. By situating this case study of the Rainbow Community Garden alongside Strunk and Richardon's (2019) analysis, I demonstrate the usefulness of their approach through a discussion of the dynamic and nuanced nature of community gardens. The paper begins with a description of my research methods, followed by an overview of the Rainbow Community Garden site and operations. Next, the benefits of urban agriculture as documented in the literature are discussed, including sociocultural, health, environmental, and economic factors. Informant interviews are then analyzed with particular reference to the challenges and benefits of community gardening experienced by new immigrants and refugees in Winnipeg. Finally, I consider Strunk and Richardson's (2019) findings relating to the material, imagined, and community's garden as they apply to the Rainbow Community Garden.

Methods

To conduct this research, I used qualitative methodologies including semi-structured interviews with 14 members of the Rainbow Community Garden, and three professionals with experience and knowledge about urban agriculture in Winnipeg. The purpose of this research was to learn about the benefits and challenges of community gardening in the context of a garden for immigrants and refugees. The interview questions were open ended, and gardeners were invited to share any general thoughts or perspectives they had about their experience at the garden. The intention was to allow the participants the space to tell their own stories while reflecting on their gardening experience. Ten out of the 14 interviews with gardeners were filmed on camera, while the other four were audio recorded. The purpose of filming the interviews was to create a video to document the research in a more widely accessible format, and to give something back to the Rainbow Garden community.[1] Interviews were transcribed and coded to identify key themes and concepts. Other methods used in the research were participant observation at the garden site and field notes in order to document and reflect on my own experiences at the garden. Academic studies and publicly available documents such as newspaper articles and promotional materials related to community gardens were also reviewed and analyzed. All participants of this research were given the option to remain anonymous.

The Rainbow Community Garden

In the words of garden coordinator Raymond Ngarboui, the Rainbow Community Garden is "a community place where newcomer — especially new immigrant and refugee — families come to meet, to interact, while growing their own foods." The project started in 2008 as a community initiative. In its first year, the garden started with 16 new immigrant and refugee families on one acre of land on the University campus, and grew to 212 families in the summer of 2018, on 3 acres of land, including approximately 50 raised beds. Today, a total of 318 families garden at multiple sites across the city of Winnipeg and its periphery, including the University of Manitoba, which was the site of this research. Due to garden members spreading the word to family, friends, and other immigrant families over time, the gardens are now receiving an overwhelming number of applications. The gardens receive more applications than there is space available—57 families were placed on the waitlist in the summer of 2018. Once families are allocated a plot at the garden, they can garden there free of charge for up to three years, after which their space will be opened up for families that have newly arrived in Winnipeg. The exception to this is single mothers with at least five children who are not required to give up their plots after three years. There may also be exceptions for seniors to retain their plots after the three-year period.

Rainbow Community Garden members are immigrants and refugees who have moved to Winnipeg from countries all over the world. Many come from African countries such as Burundi, Chad, Rwanda, and Democratic Republic of Congo. Approximately 60-65% of gardeners come from Asian countries including Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, China, Japan, Afghanistan, and Syria. According to Ngarboui the main goals of the garden are to provide a place for new immigrants and refugees to interact, build community, and to have

The Rainbow Community Garden Sign

access to nutritious food by growing it themselves. Protecting the environment is also a key focus at the garden. Compost supplied by the University of Manitoba is used in the garden, and one of the main rules to be followed by gardeners is to not use any chemical fertilizer or pesticides.

The Rainbow Community Garden receives various types of support from multiple organizations in Winnipeg. Volunteers frequently visit the site from numerous non-profit organizations including Winnipeg Harvest and United Way, and private entities such as Foresters Financial, a financial services provider located in Toronto. Food Matters Manitoba has also played a supportive role in the project by helping to secure some funding and assisting at the site through volunteer work. The University of Manitoba has been involved in supporting the project by allowing them to use the land, supplying compost, and implementing infrastructure projects, such as a rainwater collection shelter at the garden site that was built by students in the architecture program in 2016. Students worked closely with the gardeners during the design process to identify their priorities for the project, based on the social and infrastructural needs of the garden community (Nepali Cultural Society of Manitoba 2018). The University had also been supplying water to the gardens in the past, but this has not been an ongoing support. Other organizations that have contributed to the project in various capacities include Knox United Church, Central Neighbourhoods Winnipeg, Winnipeg Central Park Women's Resource Centre, Winnipeg Foundation, Evergreen Canada, and Community Education Development Association (CEDA). Since there is no salary for a garden coordinator, CEDA has been the main source for human resources as they allow Ngarboui to allocate a small portion of his work hours to help with the Rainbow Community Garden. All other human resources devoted to the project are on a volunteer basis.

Benefits of Urban Agriculture

The literature on urban agriculture reveals many perceived benefits of community gardening in cities, touching on a wide range of considerations, including sociocultural, health, environmental, and economic factors. When considering sociocultural impacts, urban agriculture can provide opportunities for community building, cross-cultural social interaction, skill development, and the expression of cultural heritage (Santo et al. 2016). Community gardens have been shown to promote local pride and citizen participation at the city and neighbourhood level (Macias 2008). The transfer of knowledge can also take place in urban gardens on multiple levels, including intercultural and intergenerational, providing a pathway for relationships across cultures and age groups (Hite et al. 2017). The interactions that take place in urban gardens can work to promote social cohesion and contribute to the production of social capital (Moquin et al. 2016), which has been described as the cultivation of resources, both tangible and intangible, enabled by trusting relationships between individuals and/or organizations (Bauermeister 2016).

In terms of health, urban agriculture has been shown to provide greater access to fresh, culturally appropriate food, and to increase gardening households' fruit and vegetable consumption (Santo et al. 2016). Gardening also provides opportunities for physical activity and spending time outdoors. This has been found to have positive effects on participants' mental health, including stress reduction and cognitive stimulation (Santo et al. 2016). Spending time outdoors can also help to foster a sense of connection to nature for both adults and youth; community gardening was recognized as a best practice at The National Forum on Children and Nature in 2008 (Krasny and Tidball 2009).

Reported benefits of urban agriculture to the environment include increased biodiversity, air particulate filtration and carbon sequestration by vegetation, and a potential reduction of greenhouse gas emissions associated with the transportation of food (Santo et al. 2016). There have also been reports of economic benefits for participants, such as the opportunity for employment training (Santo et al. 2016). Through participating in a community garden, gardeners have the potential to gain skills that increase their chances of securing employment in the Canadian workforce. By growing their own food, gardeners are also able to spend less money on groceries. These cost savings can be even more significant when gardeners harvest enough produce to freeze and eat throughout the winter months. Some gardeners may also sell their produce at local farmer's markets. Because of the potential cost savings, increased access to culturally appropriate foods, and increased fruit and vegetable consumption, urban agriculture projects have been promoted as one way to increase household food security (Santo et al. 2016). While these projects are usually not intended to lead to complete food self-sufficiency, they can contribute as one part of the myriad of initiatives working toward food system transformation (Santo et al. 2016).

Analysis

Unique Challenges Faced by New Immigrants and Refugees

The benefits of the Rainbow Community Garden to participants were found to be generally in line with the literature on urban agriculture in terms of sociocultural impact, access to fresh food, physical activity, mental health, and cost saving. The sentiments from the

interviews indicated that the most significant benefits of the Rainbow Community Garden to its participants were related to the unique experiences of people who are new to Canada. New immigrants and refugees often face a variety of challenges in their adjustment to an unfamiliar way of life in a new country. These social, cultural, and economic challenges can vary for different individuals who all come to a new country with their own personal history and experiences. Research has shown that in countries such as Canada, "rising ethnic diversity has been found to be coupled with ethnic inequities between foreign- and native-born populations in measurable health outcomes" (Wang and Hu 2013, 9). Ngarboui spoke about some of the challenges faced by new immigrants and refugees in Winnipeg relating to nutrition and physical health, and how the Rainbow Community Garden aims to address these issues:

> Some of the challenges were about the adjustment to the local food. How can they adjust themselves to the local food? Because the vegetables and some leaves that they used to eat [back home] are imported here frozen, and sold very expensive, which means they can't afford it. So, what to do is to find a place where they can grow their own food, their own vegetables with focus on some … crops that they [were] used to [back home]… And it helps with newcomer or immigrant access to nutritious food, because in many newcomer families we have been noticing development of diabetes, type 2 diabetes. Why? Because those people, when they come here, they don't know where to go in the summer, in the winter. They do remain inside their apartments … And then they start gaining weight, for example.

Ngarboui also made the connection between physical health and mental health. When new immigrants remain in their homes and are inactive, this can lead to social isolation, depression, and other mental health issues. Arriving in a new country without knowing many people can be a factor in the amount of time people spend inside their homes and can contribute to these issues. Many gardeners at the Rainbow Community Garden also came to Canada as refugees and are living with the aftermath of civil war and other hardships. Ngarboui said the garden creates a setting for healing and allows participants to make connections with others. Interpersonal communication has been a key focus at the garden related to helping new immigrants and refugees adjust to their new lives in Winnipeg by encouraging social interaction while spending time outside of the house. Ngarboui recounted:

> I know many families, family members who, when they start here, it's hard for them even to say hi to others. But in the middle of the growing season, or by the end, they become so open, laughing, interacting with other[s] from different religious backgrounds, sharing food together, and all this… And also, one of the goals is to bring together community members from the same countries who are here, and who cannot interact because of maybe some class considerations, some social, or some ethno-cultural consideration from their back homes. But when they get here, all become [the] same, and then they interact, and the barriers are broken.

This quote points to the ways identities can change as one moves to a different geographical location and interacts with new people. This is also reflected in research that has found ethnicity to be emergent, multifaceted, and negotiable (Nagel 1995), and shows that one's sense of identity is fluid and can be revised and reinvented as social, cultural, and class considerations change. Through interactions that take place while working in the garden, and at other community events such as potlucks and markets, participants have the opportunity to create social capital, gain interpersonal skills, and improve their English. The skills gained through being a member of the Rainbow Community Garden have helped some individuals gain employment, according to Ngarboui. Research has shown that the capacity for community gardens to strengthen relationships among local residents, foster communal support, and provide healthy food sources, can work to promote an overall greater quality of life (Shreve 2016). These things also lay the groundwork for successful social transition into Canadian society, "not simply as a resident, but as a citizen who can also give back and find their own ways to contribute to the greater whole of the community they are engrained in" (Shreve 2016).

Diversity, Community, and Cross-Cultural Exchange

The interviews showed that diversity is a recognizable factor at the Rainbow Community Garden, in regard to both people and the types of crops that are grown. Participants perceived this diversity as an essential part of the garden's identity. Gardeners showed a sense of pride in their diverse community. They spoke positively of the cross-cultural exchange that they have experienced at the garden. Joseph, who has been a garden member for two years, spoke about the international friendships he has made at the garden:

> I think gardening makes a big impact to the community because it brings us all together. I've made a few friends from different nationalities. Some from here, some from different parts of the world … So I think it brings us closer… it gives us that understanding. And while we're gardening, we share about, you know, the stuff that happens in different parts of the world. We get a better understanding.

While learning to cultivate crops in a new country with a different climate and growing season, gardeners bring with them gardening techniques and cultural practices from their home countries. Most participants have at least some past experience working on a farm or in a garden before moving to Canada, and for many, gardening was a major part of their lives. Participants are glad to have the opportunity to have a space to garden in Winnipeg. For some, it helps them feel connected to their home country. Agnes, a woman from Burundi who has been gardening at the Rainbow Community Garden for the past three years, spoke about her past experiences with gardening,

> I have been gardening since teenager age. My dad was a farmer. So, it's like culture. I'm practicing my culture…When you are here you are stress free. After you remember back home, culture, and we enjoy food, fresh food, and we enjoy company too.

Amos, a participant from the Democratic Republic of Congo, explained:

> In Africa, without our land we can't survive, yeah. That is our life … You know, in [a] new country you have to study new things, and sometimes when I am here, I think I am in my home country.

Joseph also recalled his past experiences with gardening:

> Back at home we had a small garden, so I used to do that, and I used to love it. Me and my family, my mum, doing that. So, when my friends told me about this project here, I was so glad because it brings us together and it gets us out of the house over the weekend. We can get out and do some gardening and it gives me those memories [of] when I was growing up.

With people from all over the world bringing their unique experiences to the Rainbow Community Garden there is great opportunity for cross-cultural exchange and learning. This often leads to people trying new foods or consuming a different part of the plant than they are used to eating, such as the leaves. This kind of exchange is common at the Rainbow Community Garden. Participants expressed the enjoyment of trying new vegetables, and of sharing vegetables from their countries with others at the garden who have not tried them before. Gardeners also sometimes make these new vegetables a part of their diet and start to grow them in their own plots. Garden participants begin to recognize certain vegetables and where they originate from. While walking through the many plots at the garden, one participant noted, "when you see mustard leaves like this, that means it's definitely a Nepalese family. And when you see beans, lot [of] beans and pumpkin, its Africa." The interaction and exchange amongst gardeners seems to be something that is celebrated at the garden. All participants spoke positively about their experiences interacting with other gardeners.

Along with cross-cultural learning, there is also the opportunity for intergenerational learning. Some participants spoke about bringing their children with them to the garden, and acknowledged the importance of their children knowing where their food comes from. A few gardeners expressed concern at their children's lack of knowledge about food. When parents bring their children with them to work in the garden, the children can see how vegetables are grown and the work that is required. Parents can also pass down cultural knowledge through gardening. It is a way for children to learn about their cultural heritage, even if they were not born in their parents' home country.

The Material, Imagined, and Community's Garden

In a study about urban agriculture and place-making in the midwestern United States of America (USA), Strunk and Richardson (2019) identify three ways in which refugee gardeners use and experience gardens: the material, imagined, and community's garden. First, the material garden includes the biophysical aspects that shape the possibilities of what crops can grow. This includes seeds, soil, and other resources necessary for growing plants. Refugees transform the material garden with agricultural practices from

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Two gardeners holding a bag of mustard seed

their home countries, while adapting these practices to the environmental and political circumstances of a new place. Second, the imagined garden refers to the different ways gardeners imagine the cultural interactions that take place at the garden. In the imagined garden, human interaction and the celebration of cultural exchange can mirror the importance of the material garden for the gardeners. Lastly, the community's garden is an embodiment of the challenges and opportunities faced by new immigrants and refugees in constructing spaces that are inclusive. In the community's garden, gardeners envision a place created as a product of the connections and interactions between individuals and organizations.

The data from the Rainbow Community Garden research reflects similar findings to Strunk and Richardson's (2019) research on place-making in urban refugee gardens, and the different ways in which a garden is experienced by gardeners. The distinction between the material and the imagined garden seemed to be present in all interviews with members of The Rainbow Community Garden. The material garden, which includes the physical landscape, soil, seeds, and produce, and depends on environmental and political elements, was not successful in the 2018 growing season because of barriers such as lack of adequate access to water and crop pests. All of the gardeners interviewed were somewhat disappointed with the quantity and quality of what they were able to harvest during the growing season. Some gardeners felt that they had wasted time on their plots because of this. In the material garden, produce is the main concern. Meanwhile, all of the gardeners interviewed spoke about the enjoyment of being able to meet and interact with others, learn about different cultures and foods, and to practise their own culture while being part of a diverse community. The garden members recognize and celebrate the fact that people from all over the world come together to work in the garden, build relationships, and exchange knowledge. Emilienne, a woman from Burundi who has been a member of

the Rainbow Community Garden for two years, was happy to meet and interact with other garden members:

> We are really chatting because you will see someone maybe from Asia, because they are not used to maybe our beans, type of beans, they will come and say: 'Oh what is it?' So, we [are] asking questions [to] one another to understand what type of plants they have here, and it has created really a good relationship. We meet in the buses, we meet downtown, and we meet during potlucks. And we are happy for that.

Agnes also shared an appreciation for the opportunity to socialize at the garden:

> We meet here, we socialize, we talk. We see other culture[s] because we are not from Burundi we are [from] all over the world. So, we try, some don't speak English yet, some don't speak French, but we try to understand each other. And sometime we create relationship[s] with other people…So many people will tell you, will be asking other tribe or other continent, how do you eat this? How do you cook this? And from there, you start to know what other people eat, and you go, you try too… You know how other culture[s] live and how you live. And we create friendship.

These expressions are what make up the imagined garden. While gardeners did not speak enthusiastically about aspects of the material garden, they celebrated and showed a sense of pride in the diversity of the community of the imagined garden. A successful growing season was not required for gardeners to feel that the garden has been fulfilling in other ways.

The notion of the community's garden from Strunk and Richardson's study was also recognized in some of the interviews. Emilienne spoke about the garden as a place for the community:

> I have seen so many people interested in this garden. I see the U of M, I have seen staff, teachers, and now I have seen students coming doing research here… So I can say really that it is amazing. It seems this garden has a lot of friends, and they are interested to bring their input so that we can do better and do more. People are very committed really to continue cleaning the environment, because sometimes we are invited by the chair of this organization to come and clean and everyone is coming, so I think that it is really something for the community, and we see that the community members really like it and are contributing to its growth.

The community's garden is envisioned as a place where connections between people have been created and fostered. These connections exist not only between members of the garden, but also among people at the University, and numerous sponsor and volunteer organizations in the city of Winnipeg. In the community's garden, everyone involved comes together to work toward making the material garden more successful, and also towards the broader social goals of the garden.

Conclusion

The cultural exchange that takes place in the garden fosters a sense of connection and has resulted in various types of benefits for gardeners, both in terms of social cohesion and in access to culturally appropriate food. In this way, the Rainbow Community Garden is much more than the physical soil, vegetables, and flowers. In the context of new immigrant and refugee gardeners, there are many layers to the benefits of community gardening, which include having access to healthy, culturally appropriate food, saving money, and opportunities for social interaction, which can help them in their adjustment into Canadian society. Most notably, the role of the Rainbow Community Garden in facilitating cross-cultural exchange among gardeners has made a great impact on the lives of participants. Looking at the garden through Strunk and Richardson's (2019) lens of the material, imagined, and community's garden is useful for examining the different layers of a community garden and understanding the dynamic and nuanced nature of the garden, including how it is used and experienced by gardeners. Moving forward, exploring how diverse groups of people interact with each other and the environment may provide insight to the potential of urban agriculture projects to contribute to more just and sustainable food systems. The unique experiences and challenges faced by new immigrants and refugees in their adjustment into a new country, particularly as it relates to acquiring culturally appropriate foods, hold relevance in the context of sustainable development and food policies, and is an area deserving of further academic attention.

Notes

1   The video can be viewed here: https://vimeo.com/294580029.

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Upsetting Constructions of Safety
An Auto-Ethnography of a Suburb

SYDNEY CHAPADOS
PHD STUDENT, SOCIOLOGY
CARLETON UNIVERSITY, OTTAWA, CANADA

This article examines how certain neighbourhoods and the populations that reside in them might be understood as safe and good by presenting observations from a walking, autoethnography through and around the suburb in which the author resides. The messages that societies receive and internalize about people who experience poverty are primarily constructed out of neoliberal institutions that uphold the idea that those who live in poverty are there by choice or incapacity and face the appropriate consequences of that choice. Neoliberal discourses devalue the lives of those experiencing poverty by suggesting that they are morally, physically, or mentally incapable of being responsible for themselves. While anyone could potentially experience poverty, the relational construct of the upper class/lower class creates a metaphorical divide that requires deep rethinking to transcend. When spaces are demarcated as unsafe or violent, other spaces are relationally marked as safe or secure. The article concludes that controlling outward appearances largely creates and reinforces constructions of suburban areas as safe in relation to the construction of other areas as unsafe and violent. However, the intensive focus on controlling appearances leads to a mistrust of others and the sacrificing of communities that once existed and thrived.

KEY WORDS Poverty, autoethnography, suburb, neighbourhood, safety, violence

At the very foundation of neoliberal theory resides the idea that everyone has a responsibility to ensure that they are contributing to the economy and generating wealth in order to achieve market stability (Harvey 2005). The survival of both individuals and the national economy is thus the responsibility of individuals themselves and their capacity for enterprise. Under this neoliberal logic, those who work hard will succeed and receive rewards appropriate to the level of the work that they conduct. These discourses devalue the lives of those experiencing poverty by suggesting that they are morally, physically, or mentally incapable of being responsible for themselves and their finances (Chapados 2020). The blame for poverty is placed on individuals and their choices instead of systemic factors. Consequently, those experiencing poverty are projected as doing a disservice to society by not contributing to the economy and possibly relying on social assistance, but also to their own life simply by experiencing the negative effects of poverty (Chapados 2020). Low and high income neighbourhoods can serve as a

field where the effects of these neoliberal discourses can be examined. Where high income neighbourhoods may appear to be flourishing because people are doing their part in contributing to the economy, low income neighbourhoods suffer. Images that construct people who are experiencing poverty as violent, dangerous, or careless serve to reinforce the conception that only those who *deserve* to experience poverty are in poverty. Simultaneously, those who reside in upper-class neighbourhoods appear to be receiving the wealth and safety that they have earned by being good citizens.

In this article, I examine the signs that signify a middle to upper-class suburb as a safe and flourishing neighbourhood by conducting a walking autoethnography through the suburb in which I grew up. The signs of wealth that correlate with safety serve to reinforce the idea that those who contribute to the economy through wealth generation are good and safe populations in contrast to their lower-class counterparts. I discover that controlling outward appearances largely contributes to the construction of suburbs as safe places and upper-class populations as safe and deserving of wealth. However, the intensive focus on controlling appearances leads to and is reinforced by a mistrust of others and the sacrificing of communities that once existed. I illuminate the familiar in order to shed light on how our everyday existences are shaped by constructed binaries of upper/lower class, safe/unsafe, deserving/undeserving and healthy/unhealthy, which are confounded in both physical and social locations.

Previous Scholarship

While any of us could potentially experience homelessness or poverty, the relational constructs of upper/lower class create a metaphorical divide that requires deep rethinking to transcend. When spaces are demarcated as unsafe or violent, other spaces are relationally marked as safe and secure in contrast (Wacquant 2007). However, violence can and does occur in upper-class homes and neighbourhoods, even if it presents differently (Statistics Canada 2007; 2008).

Neighbourhoods, like people and populations, influence and are influenced by discourse. Considering how locations can be socially constructed and have both a physical and social character, I point to Yi-Fu Tuan's (1977) distinctions between *space* and *place*. Common definitions of center around physical descriptions focusing on a district, region, or part of town. This conception refers to the actual physical environment: the buildings, the geographic location, the street makeup, and the physical boundaries. This conception is termed *space* and can be mapped on paper (Tuan 1977). However, physical mapping does not account for the ways in which humans and non-human animals experience, construct, and relate to these spaces. Spaces are also socially constructed through attributed meanings, relations that exist between social actors, history, memories, images, or general perceptions held by insiders and outsiders (Tuan 1977). This constructed understanding can be referred to as *place*. Considering the entrenchment of neoliberal theory and ideals throughout modern Western society, neighbourhoods are not immune to the effects of neoliberal discourse. Instead, I suggest that neighbourhoods serve as a field where neoliberal discourses and dichotomies can be examined in real time. I use autoethnography to pair my own constructed experience of my physical neighbourhood with a broader ecological framework that views humans as embedded

hierarchically within particular communities, institutions, and environments (Kearns and Parkinson 2001).

This article assumes that *neighbourhood* is more than a district or boundary, and refers to the manners in which a group of people relate to each other in a given space, connect to the built or constructed environment, and develop a sense of belonging. In this case, both the physical and constructed environments are necessarily interlocked as they work to constitute specific places as "violent," "unclean," or "deprived," while others are constructed as "safe," "healthy," and "wealthy." Factors like violence or substance use have historically been assumed to be a feature of lower-class neighbourhoods (Valverde 2008). This conflation is largely responsible for the introduction of interventions into the lives of the poor out of concern for their moral or physical health (Valverde 2008). These early interventions sought to reinforce the routines of capitalism in populations that were seen as unable or unwilling to contribute to the economy. These patterns continue to be seen today despite violence and substance use being diffuse throughout different populations (Chapados 2020).

Negative assumptions and stereotypes about low income neighbourhoods and populations can be attributed to a process called territorial stigmatization. Territorial stigmatization, as termed by Loïc Wacquant (2007), follows Erving Goffman's theoretical approach to stigma. Goffman (1963) determines that stigma is a process in which certain attributes possessed by individuals are discredited by a society, causing one's understanding of self to be degraded. This is a relational process where what is credited by a society is seen as right due to the discrediting of other traits. Wacquant (2007) expands upon Goffman's original research to theorize a stigma of place. In every urban city there is at least one area that is deemed dangerous, violent, or disparaged (Wacquant 2007). It does not matter what the actual condition of this place is, only that the image of it is tainted. This follows from an increasing segregation between poor/non-poor, racialized/non-racialized, immigrant/non-immigrant, and other constructed binaries (Wacquant 2007). People can be stigmatized for a variety of reasons, all of which are confounded with their physical and social locations. It is not simply a matter of being stigmatized for one's socio-economic status, location, gender, actions, or race. Rather, stigma arises from a combination of these factors interlocking in various ways. Alongside these dangerous or discredited neighbourhoods reside neighbourhoods that are therefore credited for being safe or correct. I argue that the construction of a neighbourhood as safe in relation to an unsafe neighbourhood serves to reinforce the neoliberal discourse that those who are upper class are good deserving citizens, and that lower-class populations are violent and undeserving of aid or any form of wealth.

Methodology

In order to explore what is behind the construction of my suburban neighbourhood as safe, I followed Yuha Jung's (2014) mindful walking technique. Before one begins to research, one conducts a metaphorical mental walk through what one already knows and wants to find out (Jung 2014). In my case, I was aware of the disparity between the upper and lower classes in my own community because of my previous work in social services. Despite working in these neighbourhoods that were always said to be violent or dirty, I have never feared for my own safety. I did, however, have an experience of violence in

my own neighbourhood that led me to become critical of how one determines what and who is safe. I grew uncomfortable with my ability to transcend the material line from one neighbourhood to the next without second thought. I could attend work in one stigmatized and disparaged area of the city, and then go back to my *safe* neighbourhood where I never have to see physical signs of poverty. On one hand, I was critical of the political economy that produces social and spatial inequality. On the other, I was critical of myself and my own comfortable existence.

Jung (2014) makes the case that physically moving through space can help to create an embodied, holistic understanding of material systems, organizations, people, and communities. Walking or moving in some way allows people to physically experience sensations and expand beyond media representations and preconceived ideas (Jung 2014). The mindful walking technique suggests noting one's physical observations alongside memories, sensations, and images that come to represent a space for those who live there (Jung 2014). Drawing upon conceptions in urban ethnography like the *flaneur* and *dérive* which are both commonly used to conduct street ethnography, the self becomes a surveyor or observer (Benjamin 1999; Ingold 2008; McLaren 1997; Powell 2010; Tonkiss 2005). Where the *flaneur* is detached from the space and purposeless in his stroll, the *dérive* is purposeful, hoping to understand the urban landscape, architecture, spaces, places, emotions, and behaviours (Jung 2014).

Autoethnography embraces the idea that all observers come to the field with preconceived notions, ideas, experiences, and thoughts (Ellis 2004). Researchers exist in their own life histories with their own traditions. Where traditional forms of ethnography may require the individual to act as a complete, objective, and neutral observer, autoethnography allows researchers to embrace their relation to the field they are studying through an embodied and embedded means (Ellis 2004). As a researcher, I was already embedded into the field I wished to study as a resident. My experiences and history in this particular location stem back over 10 years. As such, I aim to produce a narrative that uses my own personal life history to highlight broader cultural, material, and social trends about constructions of space, poverty, and violence.

Before beginning my ethnography, I conducted preliminary searches to examine what factors have been suggested to influence people's feelings of safety. On everyday media blogs, I briefly found lists that suggest that the presence of community, caring for one's yard, improved lighting, outdoor activity, security systems, and police presence make people feel safe in their own neighbourhoods (Smith 2020. These are assumptions popularized by theories of crime such as the broken windows theory or community perception theory, which assume that signs of physical disorder directly relate to crime recurrence and a lack of perceived safety (Said 2015). However, these theories have been widely debated as outward perception does not indicate or cause the level of crime, violence, or disorder that occurs in a place (Thatcher 2004). In fact, a study that specifically addressed people residing in low income and disparaged neighbourhoods suggested that social cohesion, access to services and amenities, and personal autonomy influenced their feelings of safety over the actual physical condition of their neighbourhood (Alik and Kearns 2017). With these ideas in mind, I walked and questioned the very presence of some of these features in my own neighbourhood.

As I walked, I jotted down notes about the physical infrastructure in place. I noted my own feelings and memories while passing certain locations. I noted both my own reaction to the space and other's reactions to me. When I finished my ethnography on my own front porch, I had a collection of stories about how I have moved through this space over time, but also in this specific instance. After my initial walk, I conducted a second walk to take photos. Photos, which were once seen as real representations of the field, are now seen to be constructed and interpreted by authors (Harper 1994). In my case, I took photos of areas that were notable for my research question. These photos, in conjunction with my notes, provide a sort of 'snapshot' into my world on this given day at this given time.

Reflections on Suburbia: Summary of Observations

I begin my walking ethnography in my own foyer. I have a bright, tan colored foyer and a front door with a large glass cut out that's been fogged over so that no one can see inside. We moved here when I was eleven years old, largely because my old house backed onto a forest. My family was concerned about raising children near a forest, as forests tend to embody myths about violence against women — such that violence occurs in dark, unknown, spaces perpetrated by someone unknown to the victim. As violence and safety are both constructed in relation to one another, the construction of violence as *unknown* also works to reinforce the idea that what is known is safe. I was protected from the unknown, never from the known.

In this city, it appears that concerns about safety largely surround the visibility of activities of vice: substance use, sexual service provision, homelessness, and mental health crises (Battagello 2018a,b; Bellacicco 2019). In my neighbourhood these are not immediately nor visibly present. In fact, it looks as though the street is empty of nearly everything. Standing on my front porch, my tan brick house protrudes out to the side preventing me from being able to see down my street. Above me, a brass lantern sits but it is off. We once kept it on all night, something everyone was encouraged to do in my old neighbourhood due to the absence of streetlights. Keeping houselights on was thought to deter crime while providing light for people on the street. Recent propositions brought forth to city council have debated this very suggestion. My current neighbourhood is quite well lit with a streetlight on every lawn, so we are generally the only house that leaves the lights on past midnight. Eventually, this light led to an unknown visitor in the middle of the night: a woman who would come to seek help after fighting with her husband. Regardless of whether or not lighting deters crime, it does influence people's feelings of safety as this woman believed our house to be a safe one.

Across the street, the house that is an exact mirror of mine has motion censored lighting. When I exit my home, the light flicks on to illuminate the street and show that there is movement outside. Two cars sit in my driveway, one in the driveway across the street, and another is parked on the road in front of my house. It is nearly impossible to live in this neighbourhood and not own a car. Public transit is nowhere to be found, nor are there stores within walking distance of the neighbourhood.

Walking down the driveway, each house looks familiar. Every house on the street is the same build, but the colours vary and repeat every few houses. If you were to enter any of these houses they would have the same layout: a foyer, stairs leading to an upstairs and

a downstairs, and a family room featuring three front windows. Behind the family room lies a bathroom and a kitchen, and behind those, bedrooms. Garages also protrude on the sides of the front doors.

Each house has a backyard that is fenced in. My own backyard has a pool and had play structures when I was young. It also has a large deck that is perfect for barbeques and socializing despite this being a rare occurrence. Many of the houses in this area have private pools due to a lack of public space for people to enjoy. The four houses that are in my view all have their windows either covered or fogged over. They all have a garden in front of their house and a driveway that stretches down from the garage. There is also a tree in each front yard that is kept trimmed because of the hazards posed by hanging branches.

As I continue down the sidewalk, I notice that each front door has a blue or red sticker in the window advertising a home security system. Some houses have small cameras outside of the garage. They are visible from the sidewalk, again probably to deter crime by suggesting that people are being watched. None of the houses have any sort of decor that says anything about or reflects the people who live there. No last names or specifiers are present on anything outside. In fact, houses in this neighbourhood do not even have mailboxes. Instead, there are community mailboxes, two on every street to which 27 houses have an assigned grey box that requires a key. The mailboxes have a drive up section, so people can collect their mail while sitting directly in their car. The mailboxes also have evidence of old posters and tape that is no longer there. People used to advertise services such as lawn cutting, snow shoveling, or babysitting. I myself once babysat local children in the neighbourhood. I don't know who takes the posters down.

From here, I can see that the school yard is empty. Yellow soccer nets are visible on both sides of the yard. We used to come here to play as children. However, there were always rumors about the elderly couple who lived on the other side of the yard. They had a large property with sprawling trees and old pieces of equipment that were left in various places of the yard rusting away. That side of the school was different from the side that I lived on, as no yard that unconventional could possibly survive without the neighbours reporting it to the city.

It is at this point on my journey that a car with blacked out windows drives by me. This is the first sign of a person I have witnessed on my walk. I can see them slow down as they approach, and then pull into a driveway a few houses behind me to turn around and trail me for a few minutes. They finally slow down by the edge of the road and park. In this moment I became acutely aware of my status as a young unprotected woman. Recalling popular discourse about violence against women, my heart started to beat rapidly and my pace quickened as I continued walking. This distracted me from my observation of the area as I was more focused on my actions and theirs. In order to not appear suspicious, I walked swiftly away, with my notebook down, to continue my path, passing more of the same houses and another mailbox of similar build.

Across the street there was a house with patio chairs out in the front area. This is one of the only houses that has a place to sit in view of the public, although, the chairs do not look like they belong due to the lack of space for them. Other areas of the city will have seats on porches and often people will sit there, sharing a drink, conversing, or smoking. In the summer, you can see families who spend time in their garage. In the winter, every garage door is closed.

In my line of sight is the park, which is made up of a parking lot, play structure, bike path, basketball court, and baseball field. Currently, there are no humans nor animals in sight. In the summer, children's T-Ball leagues will play at the park. Families bring chairs and drinks and set up along the field, while younger children play on the structure. The play structure is one that is thought to be stimulating for children. There is a giant game of Tic Tac Toe in red and yellow letters, a structure for older kids that has a zipline, a large slide, and a pole, and one for younger children that is just a slide and stairs. The sign in front of the play structure reads "Closed when ground frozen/ inspected and maintained by the city/ call 311 to report hazards and concerns/ adult supervision required."

One side of the bike path follows the fenced-off back end of the park. As I walk, I notice that some litter, coffee cups and plastic bags, has collected against the fence. In the summer, the park is cleaned regularly, and this would have been cleared. On the other side of the fence is a wall of trees. I can hear the noise of the road on the other side, and at night, see the lights from a car lot shining through the trees. From my current position, there is no visible sign of anything at all, only the sound of cars rushing by.

I continue to walk and reach a hole in the fence that looks to have been cut because of the jagged edges. I duck down to crawl through. Even though it is winter the other side is still lined with litter uncovered by snow as though people had been here recently. While I had never been on the other side of the hole, I had seen it before and always assumed that it was used by teenagers to have private space away from watchful eyes. I am surprised by the amount of space back here, as there is a small pathway that goes alongside of a railroad track with overgrown trees and bushes on either side. As I walk a little further, my arm gets cut by a thorn. This area is not maintained like the rest of the park. There are also beer cans and bottles strewn across the ground, some covered by dirt and branches, others just sitting. There are other types of litter here: old buckets, gloves, shirts, and coffee cups. Alongside these lies a bright pink child's sippy cup. When I emerge from the hole, there are still no people to be found. There is a house alongside this end of the park that has both a privacy fence and privacy hedges. Along the back, there is a noise barrier to prevent noise pollution from the train. As I exit the park, I still have not seen a single person.

Continuing down the road, the houses are duplexes, meaning that two houses are attached in the middle. These duplexes have front porches that could only fit one standing person. There is no ability for social interaction on these porches nor seating. As well, many of these homes have split their yards down the middle either with hedges or fencing suggesting that no one wants to share their lawns. Some of these houses are also built so that the garage protrudes from the middle of the house, so you could exit and never see your neighbour.

Discussion

Appearance and Safety as Two Sides of the Same Coin

When I examined the signs that signify this neighbourhood as a safe one, I largely discovered that concerns for appearance and aesthetics are conflated with conceptions of safety. Areas in the downtown core appear to be unkempt in comparison to this suburb. This idea comes to fruition when it is frequently and continuously suggested by news media and politicians that the populations who reside in the downtown are ruining business simply

Green and white sign on a fence stating the bylaw encouraging residents to pick up after and control their dogs

by virtue of their public existence and visibility. These statements deny the many factors that can influence the downfall of businesses within downtown cores. However, drawing on community perception theory (O'Brian et al. 2012), it is thought that signs of disorder keep outsiders away because those outsiders view that area as unsafe. While there is nothing that particularly marks the suburb as safe, there is an absence of public or visible disorder. This disparity contributes to the relational development of one neighbourhood as safe and another as unsafe.

Controlling the outward appearance of one's home is encouraged by both neighbours and the City, whether it be trimming lawns, grooming gardens, shoveling snow, cutting down dead trees, or keeping garbage contained. While each of these suggestions is marketed as an issue of controlling safety hazards, they also work to control the appearance of the subdivision and prevent signs of disorder. Uniformity is one of the largest features of this neighbourhood as almost all of the houses look the same, causing a certain sense of comfort for the residents due to feelings of predictability and familiarity.

Throughout the neighbourhood there are other signs and symbols that can lead the population to believe that it is a safe place. The usage of security cameras and home security systems that are advertised in nearly every window are thought to deter crime as others know very clearly that they are being watched (Welsh and Farrington 2009). The presence of an intense system of streetlights on every lawn serves a similar purpose by highlighting dark spaces and preventing people from lurking in the shadows. People are not afraid of what they can see.

While each of these aesthetic features throughout the neighbourhood appear to be there for safety reasons, they actually do not prevent unsafe things from happening either

in public or behind closed doors. The presence of lights or security cameras do not help to reduce crime but increase the opportunity for populations to be watched (Deukmedjian 2013). Thus, lighting and security cameras can actually make areas less safe for populations that are heavily policed and surveilled. Throughout my youth different experiences of violence occurred behind the doors of these homes. Domestic disputes and substance use hide their presence in the suburbs behind closed doors and in private space — a privilege awarded to home and private property owners. While there is a tendency to equate cleanliness, organization, and order with safety, this is a false equation (Valverde 2008). Using aesthetic value as a marker, it's clear that those with money to invest in their properties and security systems are the ones who benefit from these types of narratives. Controlling appearances only seeks to aid the construction of suburbs and their private populations as safe and good citizens, while those who reside in disordered neighbourhoods are seen as bad citizens.

Intensive presence of streetlights on every lawn

SYNDEY CHAPADOS

What Do We Sacrifice?

As dominant societal understandings of safe and unsafe are reliant upon a mutually exclusive, relationally constructed binary, safety and danger have a particular face. Namely, safety is what is familiar, and danger is what is unknown. The constructions of safety that hold that suburbs are safe due to their aesthetic appeal largely serve the class interests of the elite as they are constructed as good citizens when they are able to maintain curb appeal. When those who are unfamiliar, disordered, or *other* to the upper classes are constructed as dangerous, a sense of fear about those who do not belong is created and maintained. Low-income neighbourhoods are demarcated from the rest of the city and become the host for the unknown other that causes violence (Waquant 2007). While this is clear when considering the disparity between lower and upper-class neighbourhoods, it is also clear in the absence of community and others *within* upper-class neighbourhoods. This is particularly noticeable in constructions of violence against women. Many women are taught not to put themselves in unsafe situations, avoid unfamiliar places, and to be on guard any time that they are alone (Bartky 1997).

SYNDEY CHAPADOS

TOP   Cigarette butts litter the ground
BOTTOM   The hole in the fence
RIGHT   View from the front door

As I walked through the neighbourhood, I did not see any other people walking. This is a common experience as this community relies heavily on car use. After the car circled around me as I was walking, I began to reflect on how the construction of the stranger continues to penetrate my everyday actions, how I move through space, and how I relate to other people. Regardless of this person's intention my immediate thought was to get away from them quickly. Even in my own *safe* neighbourhood I was concerned for my safety because I did not know this car nor person. In retrospect, it is possible that they were following me because I also appear to be a stranger, walking with a notebook and observing the street.

As previously mentioned, the usage of lighting and security also serves to uncover the unknown and provide additional measures to protect against strangers. The relational construct of the other or the stranger is reinforced through this fear of, and protection from, an unknown criminal. Information about residents is absent from the outside of each house, as communal mailboxes are used to separate people from their names. Nearly all of the houses along the route were covered so that no one can see inside of them. People are taking intensive measures to protect themselves and their identity. Regardless of these security measures, harm continues to occur in private space.

Constructions of the unsafe *other* in this community rely heavily upon our understanding of substance use and crisis. While opioid use in the downtown core has recently been declared an "epidemic," the entrenchment of substance use in upper-class areas is largely ignored (Luthar and Ansary 2005; WEC Health Unit 2017). A lot of the violence that I have witnessed in this neighbourhood involves alcohol, as fights break out between couples, or intoxicated people wander into the street at various times during the day. Because alcohol is a legal substance and is largely supported by communities, alcohol misuse goes unquestioned for the most part (Rossow and Amundsen 1996).

Another example of these discourses and how they operate resides behind the hole in the fence at the park. My initial thought upon entering was that this was used by teens

and probably harmless. My most immediate thought reinforced the popular sentiment that substance use is only problematic if you are poor. Even though people in both the upper and lower class factions of the city use substances, substance use by those in poverty contributes to the overwhelming image of low income neighbourhoods as dangerous (Rossow and Amundsen 1996).

SYNDEY CHAPADOS

Our collective fear of the unknown has required us to entirely close off to our fellow human beings (Christopherson 1994). The built environment provides barriers to social interactions. This antisocial architecture where garages protrude far out and porches have no room to sit, prevents residents from interacting with their neighbours as people do in older neighbourhoods. The two houses that have seating available in the front of their homes are out of place from the rest of the private spaces because these houses are not built for socializing. The houses are built far back from the street, with a lawn and garden that separates the houses from public space. The duplexes on one of the streets were also built or arranged in a way so as to separate one's space from their neighbours. People are discouraged from seeing their neighbours and building connections with them simply by virtue of the architecture in this neighbourhood. This is particularly noteworthy as community cohesion is a facet of safety.

Social lives also suffer due to a lack of public space. While there is a park and a school yard within the area, there are no places indoors to which people can go to socialize. As a result, social activities in the winter are greatly decreased. In the summer, families can go to the park and there are activities for people of all ages. However, it is important to note that there is a sign recommending that children be watched at all times. Children are unable to have a social space away from adults. A lack of sidewalks on many of the streets also discourages children (and others) from being able to safely get around by themselves.

Due to the lack of public space, many of the backyards are fenced in with private pools and play structures. The absence of public space encourages residents to spend more time within the home, and consequently, more time away from others. While the absence of infrastructure and community space in low-income neighbourhoods is very commonly seen as the cause of poor health (Cohen et al. 2016), it is not seen as a problem here but rather as a protective factor. The impact of losing a collective bond with others can certainly be felt as most people are either alone or required to leave the neighbourhood in order to seek socialization (Christopherson 1994).

As a younger person, I would babysit local children and bring them to the park. I was able to gain money and create connections with other members of the neighbourhood. Many teens would advertise their services on the communal mailboxes. Now each mailbox is empty. There are old pieces of tape still there, however, any evidence of the informal

labour market has been torn off. The community that once was has now moved on. All members of a community suffer when the informal labour market can no longer survive. Members of the community are no longer to be trusted, removing the idea that there ever was a community at all.

Conclusion

With the creation of new suburbs away from the downtown core of communities there is the opportunity for the presence of ever increasing and new safety features to be built into these neighbourhoods. Security cameras, intensive lighting, and antisocial infrastructure that deters visitors all seek to create a secure space (Deukmedjian 2013). However, many of these features do not actually prevent crimes such as domestic violence or substance use, but simply create an image that these suburbs are safe and the populations that reside in them are also safe (Boomsma and Steg 2014). The idea that upper-class people are people who take care of their neighbourhood only serves the neoliberal thought that those who contribute to the economy, have wealth, and are good citizens will reap rewards. Those who allow or even foster disorder in their neighbourhoods are thought to be bad citizens who do not deserve aid beyond what they've been given. These ideas reinforce the status quo and elite class interests. By highlighting my own personal experiences through purposeful walking, I've demonstrated that constructions of safety in upper-class neighbourhoods rely very heavily on aesthetic value in place of actual safety.

As neoliberal ideologies become further entrenched in our society, individualism and privatization override collectivity (Deukmedjian 2013). The way that we understand safety has less to do with actual crime and more to do with restricting movement through public space and managing risk. Safety is not a binary of unsafe and safe, but a spectrum depending on multiply conflated factors. The use of fear to restrict movement discourages community well-being, resulting that well-being is traded for a false sense of safety and security. Women, children, and other key populations are especially discouraged from leaving the home through both the built infrastructure and institutional messages in order to ensure their safety. The question becomes: safety from whom?

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Biological Body, Social Body, Political Body?
Issues of Medicalization in North American Midwifery

MIKAYLA HJORNGAARD
BA STUDENT, ANTHROPOLOGY
YORK UNIVERSITY, TORONTO, CANADA

This paper covers various aspects of the contemporary issues faced by the midwifery profession in America with a focus on gendered issues of midwives and their clients. My analysis begins by considering the historically embedded practice of North American midwifery. The shift from birthing and maternity as a women's domain to the territory of the newly trained male medical practitioner is outlined. I then undertake an examination of how midwifery is perceived today, including what footing it has gained and lost since the nineteenth century, and how the proliferation of consumerism has impacted midwifery practice. The overarching theme of the piece is to demonstrate how midwifery has functioned historically and in the present as a means of empowering women and allowing them to retain control over their bodies through pregnancy and the birthing process. This approach is in competition with the dominant biomedical model, which portrays the (male) medical practitioner as an all-knowing presence and the woman as a machine to be handled. The core question considered is how North American midwifery has changed over time and how issues of gendered work and patriarchal domination in medicine have influenced these changes. Methodologically, this paper considers how various scholars conceptualized midwifery and the issue of the medicalization of women's bodies present within the dominant biomedical model. The desire for control, which is experienced by many women, is conceptualized as partially stemming from the negative experiences some women have encountered within obstetrics, and with male medical professionals specifically. I conclude with a discussion of how due to various factors, such as consumerism and neoliberal ideologies, midwifery is located within discourses regarding choice and women's reclamation of control over their bodies.

KEY WORDS American, birth, gender, midwifery

Midwifery was historically a traditional practice that took place in informal settings such as the home (Fraser 1995). Prior to the medicalization of birth in twentieth-century America, birth, as well as prepartum and postpartum care, were exclusively female domains watched over and executed by the mother along with female family members and a midwife who had often completed some form of apprenticeship (Fraser 1995). As MacDonald (2006) documents "[midwifery achieved] full legal and professional recognition in the 1990s" (237). Midwives acquired lay knowledge through observation,

and less frequently, through formal schooling (Wertz and Wertz 2001). This essay will primarily serve as a review of anthropological literature focused on gendered praxis as it relates to birthing and related activities. It will examine how the gendered sphere of birthing and related practices has changed over time with the move towards medical doctors dominating birthing practice as a medical procedure. These considerations will be centered around North American research, with this essay documenting the eventual take over by medical doctors and the shift towards birth as a medicalized process needing treatment by a physician. These changes will reflect the nuances of medical anthropological studies on the history of midwifery in North America. While reflecting a broad range of influences, most of the sources are situated within a critical approach to anthropology, which reflects power imbalances, and are primarily derived from feminist scholars within medical anthropology. This review will also consider how gender dynamics are present within these power shifts.

Birth has become a problem to be solved (O'Neil and Leyland-Kaufert 1995). During the process of birth women are frequently seen as objects to be manipulated to produce the desired result: a healthy baby, which, in turn, is viewed as the product of a medical process (O'Neil and Leyland-Kaufert 1995). The thorough medicalization of birth has led to an approach to pregnancy and childbirth that diminishes women's roles both as healers and as participants in their own labour (Wertz and Wertz 2001). Midwifery practice focuses on the authority and knowledge of the labouring woman and her ability to remain connected with her body's needs (Davis-Floyd and Davis 1996). Davis-Floyd and Davis (1996) posit "Western society gives authoritative status only to the highly linear modes of inductive and deductive reasoning…mechanistic metaphors for the earth, the universe, and the body have been gaining increasing cultural prominence since the time of Descartes" (240).

Descartes was a proponent of the dualistic separation of body and mind, which eventually became accepted throughout Western medicine. The woman's body was constructed as a machine performing a function, rather than viewing childbirth as a process being performed by a person deeply intertwined with their own experiences and expectations of giving birth (O'Neil and Leyland-Kaufert 1995). Midwives were most frequently family or community members and the space in which a woman gave birth was tight-knit and maintained by women (MacDonald 2006). In fact, prior to the nineteenth century, men were actively discouraged from attending births across North America (Fraser 1995). This meant that women had support networks associated with pregnancy and childbirth and that birth was an event that fostered respect in women's knowledge of their bodies. While some have argued that the actual takeover of birthing by male physicians was more nuanced than some histories suggest, a fundamental shift occurred from midwifery and home-based care, to care provided by the doctor (with more interventions as a result) beginning in more urban areas in the United States (Wertz and Wertz 2001). Gender has always played an important role in midwifery (MacDonald 2006). When midwifery was a traditional practice, women without official credentials cared for each other during labour (Fraser 1995). As doctors became more interested in the business of birth, key differences between men and women were a large part of how (male) doctors rationalized midwives' inability to effectively provide care (Wertz and Wertz 2001). These differences included the fact that a woman was presumed to provide worse care while menstruating, and that it

was surely beyond women to learn the complicated biological facts behind birth and still retain a lady-like status (Wertz and Wertz 2001).

The transition from woman-focused midwifery to highly regimented medical practice meant that labour and delivery moved out of the home where it had traditionally taken place and into the sterile and more easily controlled setting of the hospital. Hospitals were slowly becoming recognized as a place where doctors — and only doctors — could impose control over women, especially those who were categorized as deviant such as the poor (Wertz and Wertz 2001). The rationale for this is based on safety concerns, which are ostensibly mitigated if birth takes place in a hospital setting (Wertz and Wertz 2001). This view was taken despite the fact that obstetricians and hospital births were performed with little understanding of when interventions were necessary and were often made more dangerous by the doctor's overuse of basic tools such as forceps as well as overconfidence more generally (Wertz and Wertz 2001). Doctors often found themselves in situations where they were expected to do something to expedite birth, even if letting the birth progress without intervention would have resulted in a normal birth. The sentiment that doctors "should" be doing something led to increased use of forceps and various other procedures (Wertz and Wertz 2001). However, this shift in care stems from what Cheyney (2011) refers to as "a reflection of a larger patriarchal and technocratic society that constructs women's reproductive bodies as inherently faulty and in need of medical management…" (520). These practices and perspectives became dominant as midwifery was pushed into the margins of society and was gradually illegalized in the United States in the nineteenth century, and as childbirth became every bit as much the domain of medical practice as any illness or trauma (Wertz and Wertz 2001).

Despite the shift away from midwifery in the nineteenth century, by the 1990s public opinion began to shift somewhat towards increasing acceptance of midwifery in North American contexts (Davis-Floyd and Davis 1996). Midwives provide pregnant and labouring women control and power in the birthing process by presenting options that are not generally available within the highly regimented medical establishment (MacDonald 2006). With a midwife, women have the option to deliver their children at home with very little medical intervention in cases where this is deemed medically appropriate and desirable. This allows for control over details such as clothing, atmosphere, and personnel, which may seem ineffectual, but when all these decisions are made without the woman's input (as in the hospital setting), it is often experienced as disempowering (Cheyney 2011). These options also include having the mother be a part of the decision-making process and having one's voice and concerns heard and responded to consistently throughout the birthing process with the midwife (MacDonald 2006).

The birth process is otherwise under the control of the medical gaze, and predominantly male decision-making and ideas about what acceptable birth conditions should be (O'Neil and Leyland-Kaufert 1995). Foucault (2003) posits that "the gaze has produced a more scientific objectivity for us than instrumental arbitrations of quantity" (XIV). Foucault suggests here that that which can be observed by the trained gaze of the doctor has come to, in many respects, replace those other processes that were once given precedence. This also means that the authority of "the gaze" is attributed to those professionals trained within institutions. In the case of midwifery this implicitly discredits the knowledge and training of midwives (Wertz and Wertz 2001). This point is emphasized

by Cheyney and Everson (2009) who found that doctors tended to identify midwifery as an inferior profession and a risk filled choice for pregnant and labouring mothers. One doctor stated "when (doctors) hear that homebirth is relatively safe, they just don't believe it because they all know of cases where a mother or baby has [been] transported [sic] and they were in danger" (Cheyney and Everson 2009, 7). This culture of distrust among doctors towards midwives relates to the efforts of midwifery to assist women to have labours and deliveries that involve as little technology and unnecessary intervention as possible. As labour and delivery have been redefined as medical issues, the idea of letting birth proceed without immediate technological intervention has, for many medical professionals, begun to seem negligent (Cheyney 2011). For those working within the medical institution, constant monitoring and control are safeguards, which in the context of the medicalization of birth, should be used in all cases regardless of the likelihood of complications (Cheyney 2011).

Eventually medical professionals came to view attending labours as another possible way of making money and therefore asserted their professional dominance over midwives and made a pronounced effort to vilify them in the United States and across North America (Wertz and Wertz 2001). MacDonald (2006) emphasises that

> [gender was] (i)ntegral to the displacement of midwives [as] was the redefinition of childbirth as a medical event, fraught with danger and in need of intervention by obstetricians. Gender ideals of women as frail and dependent — and thus incapable of either giving or attending birth unaided by male experts — flourished during this time… (237).

Women were deemed unfit to give birth without medical intervention, due in part to ideas about their incompetence. This understanding could then be imposed upon midwives whose practices were understood more and more to be inadequate based on their gender and their lack of formal medical training. Due to the proliferation of these ideas, midwives were pushed underground and only remained common in isolated communities (MacDonald 2006). The narrative of women as fragile, dependent, and in need of male protection was used to push the expertise of traditional midwives out of focus and present them as antiquated when compared to doctors who had the newest forms of technology at their disposal (such as forceps and pain medications). Doctors not only portray the midwife as an inadequate birth attendant, but also render the birthing woman's body as incapable of delivering a baby without medical intervention. Through this process women's bodies are deemed inadequate and needing predominantly masculine oversight and intervention (Wertz and Wertz 2001). The issues of control relating to gender and birth are still present in how midwives are treated as professionals and how their expertise is valued or devalued. In North American birthing culture, midwifery is still seen as a less respected choice for a pregnant woman and as a less prestigious career path than medicine (Fraser 1995).

The ways that women and others advocate for midwifery has changed significantly and this is reflected in how scholars have begun to shift their discussion of issues surrounding midwifery and midwifery activism. As the neoliberal focus on consumerism has intensified, so too has the discourse surrounding the advocacy for midwifery access

(Craven 2007). Among upper class individuals in the North American context choice is a deciding factor in opting for midwifery care. This lines up with the neoliberal discourse around choice, which is prominent in Western society more generally (Craven 2007). A woman's right to choose her care provider, and therefore retain control, are central parts of midwifery activism (Craven 2007). As Craven (2007) states "midwifery advocates frequently drew attention to their legitimacy as consumers to make claims to the right to have a homebirth with the practitioner of one's choice" (705). This further connects with the ethos of women having options as a key tenant of midwifery, namely that midwifery provides women more control and choice, both of which are central aspects of neoliberalism (Craven 2007).

Even as the forms of advocacy have changed, gender remains a central issue within midwifery care. Indeed, midwifery is a profession dominated by women and this tends to follow the philosophy of women taking care of women without unnecessary medical intervention, which in a technocratic setting is frequently coded as male (MacDonald 2006). Since midwifery has become a licenced profession with varying degrees of acceptance throughout North America, it may seem that advocacy and activism related to midwifery are no longer relevant (Davis-Floyd and Davis 1996). However, this is not the case. Despite the ongoing devaluation of midwifery there is a growing interest in the patient focused approach that midwives take, which allows women to advocate for themselves and their babies without feeling pressure from a doctor (Cheyney 2011). Midwifery is generally seen as advocating for women to be their own decision makers, and recognizes and values the intuitive nature of their bodies (Davis-Floyd and Davis 1996). Midwifery is also frequently understood to champion women's health and comfort more generally, while mainstream medical institutions tend to consider a person as a collection of parts to be narrowly examined and repaired in isolation from the person that those body parts make up (Cheyney 2011). Often advocacy is recognized as going beyond having midwives be seen as valued professionals, it also includes having the values of midwifery more widely understood and disseminated throughout the medical community.

The literature presents midwifery as a profession that historically has had its validity as a career choice highly contested due to gendered praxis. The literature explores midwifery as it was first practiced among women, and also considers modern practices of midwifery as a licenced profession that has gained wider acceptance. Of particular interest are issues of gender inequality, which contributed to the illegality of midwives, and the mainstream acceptance of medical obstetrics care. This literature review focuses on North American perspectives and experiences and demonstrates how gender has been intertwined with midwives and their practice since day one. The literature demonstrates that midwives were an integral part of healthcare for many women historically, and that the resurgence of midwifery allowed it to regain some of its status as a respected profession. What remains at issue is the legitimacy given to midwives and their clients as midwifery challenges the over-medicalization found in some mainstream obstetrical practice. In this article, I discuss scholarship from the 1990s and early 2000s. As we move beyond the 2010s, scholarly engagement with midwives' roles should ideally seek to explore midwifery care as it relates to historically marginalized groups such as LGBTQ+ and Disabled populations, as well as how power dynamics continue to shift in our increasingly commodified society. The relationship of midwifery to technology, both as practice and discourse, also

merits further inquiry as midwifery reacts or tries to avoid becoming implicated in the increasingly technological medical environment.

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Cradles of Life
Anthropological Perspectives on Early Life, Loss, and the Infant Incubator

LUIZA RAVALLI

MA STUDENT, SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY

YORK UNIVERSITY, TORONTO, CANADA

Medical technologies have intervened on the critical post-natal time and space by augmenting and/or optimizing conditions intended to increase survival. As contested, contextual, and transformative spaces, incubators fulfill particular biological needs while also becoming sites where political realities, human emotion, ritual and symbolism converge upon vulnerability. I explore sociopolitical contexts of vulnerability and protection in global and cross-cultural context, while drawing on prior scholarship in anthropology of motherhood, material culture, as well as feminist and reproductive anthropology. Events in popular culture like the Danish Octo Project and Purple Butterfly Initiative provide insight into lived experience and everyday interactions with incubators and the neonatal intensive care environment. In response to popular assumptions of technological advancements in clinical medicine as apolitical apexes of innovation, we must complicate their technical utility with profoundly human experiences toward and around them. In doing so, we situate and implicate technology in political and discursive narratives and reflect on these objects as more than sums of their parts. This essay contributes to broader discussions about the materiality of medical technologies and their environments, and illuminates new possibilities to examine corollaries of grief, hope, maternalism, memory, and the resilience of human psyches and physiologies.

KEY WORDS Material culture, medical technology, grief, hope, cultural anthropology, motherhood, materiality

The infant incubator is a material representation of the fragility and precarity of early life and the innovations of biomedicine. In its role as a simulated womb, an incubator provides the potential for the medically complex newborn to survive the critical perinatal stage, a highly contextual time and space. This essay employs both theory and popular culture to locate the infant incubator at the nexus of biomedicine and anthropology. Beginning with a historical analysis, early iterations of medical incubation technology are examined as places of material-cultural transformation occurring through symbolic meaning and contextual realities. I argue that incubators undergo intentional spatial transfiguration by those who interact with them, and that these transformations are rooted in fundamentally human experiences like grief, bereavement, hope, and empathy. To accomplish this, I explore the incubator's clinical and cultural roles by examining the lived realities of people who use them in the Global North and South. Incubators as

transformative biomedical spaces challenge the dominant narrative of biomedicine as an apolitical enterprise wherein human health and life is manipulated and intervened upon with neutrality. Rather, I suggest that no technology meant to function as an extension of a human mother's body could ever be exempt from gendered and political discourses of human health, privilege, and vulnerability.

Drawing from biomedical and anthropological scholarship, the incubator can be understood in terms beyond its ostensible material function(s). Considering these functions, it is logical, then, to begin with contextualizing early forms and uses of the technology. I acknowledge that other methods of keeping medically fragile newborns safe and warm have been around in various forms since time immemorial. For instance, the work of James Chisholm (1978) examines the combined use of swaddling and cradleboards by Navajo peoples, an extension of Dr. Earle Lipton's earlier observations on swaddling (259-260). In *The Swaddling Hypothesis: Its Reception* (1954), anthropologist Margaret Mead suggests that the focus of anthropological perspectives on early infant care be on understanding cultural changes rather than origins, including how "peasant habits" become part of the "cultural character" (396).

Incubators in Euro-American History

In the wards of a late nineteenth century French maternity hospital, premature infants were dying of hypothermia at such a high rate that an obstetrician named Stéphane Tarnier found himself searching for solutions. Drawing inspiration from the chicken incubators at the Paris Zoo he fashioned an early prototype heated by hot water bottles and ventilated with convection fans (Baker 2000). Taking an empirical approach, Tarnier lauded his invention as an important life-saving technology by comparing survival statistics of over 500 infants before and after its integration on the wards. Indeed, his research concluded that the mortality of preterm infants was halved when the infants were warmed in an incubator (Baker 2000). A few years later, the technology was optimized by other French inventors to incorporate thermostats and forced ventilation systems. However, as the cost of production grew so did the need for funding (Baker 2000). Alexandre Lion, a French physician, inventor, and businessman, had the idea to raise money by charging admission fees to view babies in incubators in an exhibit at the Berlin Exposition in 1896 (Baker 2000). The spectacle garnered the attention of the American medical community and it was not long before similar exhibits appeared in American cities. Omaha, Buffalo, Chicago, and most infamously the Coney Island boardwalk, displayed newborn babies in functioning incubators every summer for 40 years (Pollack 2015). It is important to note that while the incubated babies were on display, they were actually receiving comprehensive care by physicians and nurses, including keeping the babies' mothers and wet nurses nearby for breastfeeding (Pollack 2015). During its run beginning in 1901, the Coney Island display incubated 8000 preterm babies, 6500 of whom survived (Pollack 2015). While the notion of human infants on display to the general public is rather unsettling, the spectacle served as an exhibition of a successful, if not revolutionary, technology. Incubators were, after all, developed by physicians who utilized their expertise to protest a medical system that was demonstrably failing premature and medically fragile infants. The babies on

display provided unprecedented visibility that thrust the technology into the public eye, and in this way, invited laypeople to passively participate in the empirical enterprise of proving the incubators efficacy. Dr. Martin Couney, the mastermind behind the boardwalk exhibition, addressed his critics with a promise to shutter the exhibits once hospitals embraced the technology and other specialized methods of caring for preterm/premature infants (Pollack 2015). True to his word, as the emerging biomedical field of neonatology proliferated in the 1940s, the exhibitions came to an end (Pollack 2015). This historical insight brings forth vivid imagery that puts vulnerability (that of the babies, the mothers, and of the credibility of experimental technology) on display. It seems that Dr. Couney understood the impact this imagery could have on lay people as spectators, propagating cultural perceptions of physicians as 'miracle workers,' the incubators as glass cases through which 'miracles' can be witnessed, and biomedicine as the system in which 'miraculous' technology is embedded.

Transforming the External Womb

The incubator itself is a receptacle of rather austere clinical aesthetics. Whirring sounds, neutral linens, clear tubing, and transparent panels with holes for outside hands to reach in, set the scene for imparting the medical/clinical gaze. The incubator serves as a pedestal for observation, occasional manual manipulation, and the display of vulnerable bodies. Objects such as blankets, soft toys, stickers, and symbols are sometimes placed in and around the incubator in order to imbue it with a more human-like quality, transforming its warm, plastic environment into something more closely related to a womb. Anthropologist Kyra Landzelius (2001) refers to the ritual of decorating and ornamenting the incubator with such objects as "teddy bear diplomacy" — a way in which mothers attempt to navigate the peculiarity of finding their premature infant(s) outside of their bodies. Adorning the incubator allows a mother to express agency by bridging the gap between her infant and herself with material artefacts like teddy bears, photographs, and other items believed to bring strength and luck to the fragile newborn (Landzelius 2001). Contemporary examples of such artefacts in Europe and North America include tiny, crocheted octopi, which are placed inside the incubator with the premature or medically fragile infant. American news source CNN reported on the phenomenon, relaying that the idea is to tap into the infant's muscle memory of clutching the umbilical cord in utero, and that the tentacles offer a familiar structure for occupying tiny hands so that they do not disturb tubes and monitoring equipment (Gatewood 2017). One organization, dubbed the Danish Octo Project, has distributed these octopi to Neonatal Intensive Care Units (NICU) all over Denmark and the movement has since gained some popularity. Another example of ornamenting the incubator for transformative purposes is the Purple Butterfly Initiative developed by Millie Smith, a bereaved English mother of twins who put a purple butterfly sticker on the incubator of one of her daughters who did not survive (Packham 2016). The sticker provided a symbolic way to keep the little one's brief life visible, transforming the incubator into a memorial space, even as the living sibling continued to occupy it. The woman who developed the initiative felt that preterm infants who did not survive vanished too quickly from the collective consciousness of the NICU staff and other parents

in the unit, so the butterfly served as a gentle reminder to approach the bereft parents with sensitivity and empathy for their loss (Packham 2016). In this case, grief and loss were the human experiences that underpinned the transfiguration from neutral clinical technology to adorned epitaph, conveying a profound message about the impact of loss. As the incubator undergoes transformation, so does the experience of hope: that there is no longer hope for that child's survival, but there is hope instead that the child will not be forgotten too quickly.

Medical technologies act as things that liberate us from the constraints of our own biology, acknowledging that when our anatomy or physiology 'fails' us, there are often technological surrogates available to compensate (Lock and Nguyen 2018). An incubator represents an attempt at replicating the ecology of a human womb. The technology thus functions as an extension of a mother's body. Incubators supply the regulated temperature that a preterm or sick infant is not able to provide itself, in some ways replicating a function of the hypothalamus in the human brain. Similarly, it is available to house and facilitate growth of a preterm infant with the help of oxygenation and provision of vital nutrients, acting as an external placenta and uterus when enteral feeding technologies are used. While mothers, family, and staff keep watch and occasionally engage with the incubator or the baby, this becomes a space where biology is intervened upon by technological mechanisms or helping hands. In her conception of cyborgs and chimeras, Donna Haraway (1994) acknowledges the opportunities for "coupling between organism and machine" (83) in modern medicine; the incubator presents a compelling example of a place where the boundaries between the "natural" and "crafted" worlds become ambiguous.

From the outside looking in, it is romantic and reasonably tempting to glorify biomedicine for advances in the innovation of external biological surrogates, however, by virtue of its inherent political magnitude a critique of biomedicine should not be avoided. Working from the notion that biomedicine is underpinned by a technocratic imagination of the human body — one where the physical body operates like a machine and is therefore prone to system error and breakdown — it follows that there is specific expertise and highly specialized "tools" required to "fix" it. The "One Two Punch" (Davis Floyd 1994, 1125-1126) of the technocratic approach involves first rendering a natural process dysfunctional, and then remediating that process with technology. In her book *Birth as an American Rite of Passage* (1992), anthropologist Robbie Davis-Floyd applies this phenomenon within the technocratic birth model, which necessarily renders the woman's body and reproductive system inferior, and therefore requiring technical interventions based on the paternalistic perspectives of biomedical practitioners. Medical technologies that attempt to reproduce human biology exist because of the reality that human biology sometimes yields unexpected or undesirable results. In accepting that biological processes (like birth or pregnancy) do not always progress as desired, biomedical models of ante- and post-natal care have historically and contemporarily capitalized on women's vulnerability during pregnancy, especially if they are from marginalized communities and relying on biomedicine for access to care (Davis-Floyd 1992). Experiences of, and reactions to, pregnancy and birth run the gamut of human emotions, and often these emotions are connected to their outcomes. Undesirable outcomes, variations in the birth experience, and coping with complex or atypical prognoses result in highly individualized and deeply contextual ways of coping with loss or uncertainty.

Incubators in the Global Margins

In peaceable and wealthy geopolitical regions, hospitals and their NICUs generally operate as well-oiled, technologically advanced machines with both staff and resources in generally good supply. In global areas where an overrepresentation of low birth weight or medically fragile outcomes occur due to barriers to healthcare, incubators may provide additional functions beyond warmth and accessibility to medical intervention(s). When low resources, poor infrastructure, and proximity to violent conflict threaten the safety and stability of the biomedical space, technologies like the incubator undergo yet another transformation — they become places of shelter, less concerned with a progression of health, and more urgently concerned with preservation of life. General Electric, an American conglomerate, has partnered with Wipro, a billion-dollar Indian tech corporation, to innovate an infant incubator that is resistant to electrical surges and built with Kevlar (Jensen and Page 2015). That these modifications exist indicates a clear difference of needs between preterm and medically fragile infants in the Global South and North. Wipro contends that their technology addresses a critical global need, presumably that hospitals in the Global South simply are not safe enough to protect the most delicate of patients (Jensen and Page 2015). Nevertheless, medical innovation in both the Global North and South comes together in its failure to meaningfully address the sociocultural realities of mothers experiencing precarity regarding access to safe biomedical spaces, and the broad spectrum of physiological conditions that can complicate pregnancy, birth, and the postpartum period. Indeed, these physiological conditions are not always endogenous in either global region, however acute. Preventable disease and injury are all too often a reality for those living and working in politically destabilized regions. Making it through the night is a different sort of success in British or Canadian NICUs than it is in places like Gaza, Haiti, or Papua New Guinea. In *Biomedicine in an Unstable Place* (2014), Alice Street discusses the role of medical technologies in the production of hope projected toward relief from both socio-political and physiological ailing. She refers specifically to x-ray technologies and the interpretive encounter between patient and physician, in the discussion and interpretation of results, as the mechanism by which hope is produced (Street 2014). Engaging with Street's thought process makes it difficult to imagine a more applicable example of technology producing hope than an infant in an incubator. Parents, family, and medical staff similarly interact with the infant in a dynamic production of hope and partnership as they collaborate and participate in the infant's care. After all, the best case scenario for an infant in an incubator is that they will eventually be healthy and/or strong enough to leave it.

In regions of the Global South it is unlikely that butterfly decals adorn incubators. In fact, extensive research into contextual examples of the teddy-bear diplomacy discussed earlier produced very few results. This is not to say that mothers in so-called 'developing' countries do not symbolically or ritually engage with the medical technologies around them, but there seems to be more readily available information (both in popular culture and in scholarly literature) on the politics of motherhood in areas where infant mortality is high due to political realities like abject poverty and war. Nancy Scheper-Hughes (1996) suggests that mothers in disrupted environments engage in a system of "maternal thinking" (354) by prioritizing letting go of sick or dying infants over holding on, simply because of the frequency with which they must face situations of grief, hardship, and loss. To this end,

Scheper-Hughes' work in rural Brazil contextualizes how early infant loss and bereavement is experienced in a region where there is little access to biomedical care (and the technologies associated therein) as well as starvation and poverty. The Brazilian women draw from their Catholic faith to reimagine the loss of their infant as a benevolence from God, who has taken their babies to ease the suffering that comes with another mouth to feed or another future soldier to lose in conflict (Scheper-Hughes 1996). In Puerto Rican culture, a religious figurine or medallion of a saint is sometimes placed inside the incubator with the infant to not only impart good intentions and protection, but to displace responsibility unto a higher power in the event that the infant does not survive (Crouch-Ruiz 1999). This is another example of incubator transfiguration, where it becomes an altar of offering. In some religions, the altar is a transactional space where an offering (like a medallion or other token of adoration) is offered in exchange for protection from evil or strife. As with rural Brazilians, Puerto Rican families who lose a medically fragile infant seem to frame the child's death as an event that is in accordance with God's will. In this way, the incubator-as-altar becomes the site at which a divine arbiter (i.e. God, in Abrahamic faiths) decides the child's fate and the decision is accepted in alignment with religious values of faith and sacrifice.

Conclusion

It is not enough to say that an incubator provides a blank, sterile space upon which to assign particular cultural, religious, and personal meaning, either to the receptacle itself or the child within. What makes this technology particularly compelling is its transformational potential through which deeply human experiences and emotions can be navigated and explored. Depending on the context, incubators can function like part(s) of a body, from the hypothalamic process of temperature control, to the warmth, nutrition, and oxygen that would otherwise come from full term gestation in the uterine/placental environment. Beyond physiological surrogacy, incubators become places like altars, epitaphs, bulletproof cocoons, and windows into medical innovation. People engaging with the complexities of grief, loss, hope, resilience, and other uniquely human emotional experiences transmute incubators into places and things that make sense when caring for a medically complex infant. These experiences are also conceived of in a highly gendered way within the technocratic model of birth discussed earlier: that the mother's body was less or not competent and that technology exists to complete the job of gestating a fetus to term. However, natural processes are not always fixable, and even the most advanced technologies are not always enough to ensure infant survival. When this occurs, mothers and families bear the burden of making sense and meaning of their loss, often doing so by employing ritual and symbolism.

Through objects, rituals, and symbolism, cultural and social attitudes toward life and death are made visible within and around the boundaries of the incubator's transparent panels. A long way from its humble beginnings, medical innovation continues to modify the role of incubators as critical pieces of neonatal technology. However, no technical or clinical gaze possesses the capacity to envision the full conception of pre- and post-partum lived experiences beyond institutionally accepted definitions of survival. To realize truly biopsychosocial health for the incubator-graduated infant is to come to terms with the

reality of life as it exists beyond the NICU. Medically trained interlocutors exist in an inherently political system of interactions between humans and technology. Since biomedicine and neonatology are not practiced or developed in a vacuum, objective medically sterile perspectives are insufficient, and the domain requires a global contextual approach to caring technologies and ways of knowing. Certainly, no object in the medical landscape that functions the way an incubator does should be viewed merely as a receptacle. The moment an extremely vulnerable life is placed within it, the potential for transformation to what the child and caregivers need is profound. Granted, as in biological processes, no technology is infallible and without the risk of failing to meet its intended outcome. Indeed, the reality is that not all babies placed in incubators for recovery or for shelter survive. What remains truly intriguing is how families navigate the liminal period of early fragile life within the structural and ideological boundaries of biomedicine. The NICU environment provides a rich and complex landscape for the continued exploration of cultural shifts in response to evolving technologies at the intersection of anthropology and biomedicine.

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Conservation in Colonial Context

Salazar Parreñas, Juno. Decolonizing Extinction: The Work of Care in Orangutan Rehabilitation. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. 2018. 267 pages.

reviewed by Hilary Hagar
MA, ANTHROPOLOGY
COLLABORATIVE SPECIALIZATION IN ENVIRONMENT & SUSTAINABILITY
WESTERN UNIVERSITY, LONDON, CANADA

The three species of orangutan that populate the islands of Borneo and Sumatra are the only non-human Great Ape species in Asia and represent some of the most threatened primates in the world. Although the establishment of rehabilitation centers and sanctuaries is nothing novel to primate conservation, the growing global consumption of palm oil in recent decades and the subsequent destruction of orangutan habitats, has increasingly put pressure on these slow-growing primates. Reflecting an interdisciplinary and novel approach to these familiar concerns is the work and care Dr. Juno Parreñas has put into reconceptualizing what it means to decolonize, and how to do so within the context of conservation and rapid extinction threat on both population and genus levels. An expert at crossing disciplines, Dr. Parreñas is currently an assistant professor of the core faculty in the Department of Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies at Ohio State University, where she continues to pursue research that bridges animal studies, conservation, gender, economics, and feminist science. *Decolonizing Extinction* is a composite of her own personal experiences and the stories others shared with her during the two years she spent conducting her doctoral research in Sarawak, a semi-independent state within Malaysia on the northwestern side of the island of Borneo.

With specific attention paid to the Bornean orangutans of Sarawak (*Pongo pygmaeus pygmaeus*) and the people who care for them, Parreñas argues for thinking outside the "traditional" aims of most current conservation initiatives, which have largely maintained inherent limitations and shortcomings typical of top-down approaches. These can be easily identified by the exclusionary protection of natural spaces through fences, signage, or even firearms in extreme cases. She questions this approach to conservation, which is largely defined by privileged and limited access to lands and resources at the cost of local economic sustainability. Parreñas suggests alternatively that cohabitation and shared vulnerability with the non-human other, as experienced by orangutan caregivers, is needed for longer term conservation success. Drawing influence from various scholars like Donna Haraway, Maria Lugones, Eve Tuck, and Wayne Yang, her feminist engagement with this topic aims to shift the ways in which we think about the conservation and preservation of endangered species by highlighting the levels of *othering* within these efforts. For Parreñas decolonizing extinction means "experimentally living together, feeling obliged to others, without a sense of safety or control that requires violent domination, and while being open

to the uncertain possibility of experiencing harm from contact with others, even when that potential harm may be fatal" (185).

Through stories gathered in semi-structured interviews and informal meetings with interlocutors, *Decolonizing Extinction* aims to present the reader with a deconstruction of how we think about the extinction and conservation of non-human others and how this can be enacted. This approach allows Parreñas to weave an informative and evocative narrative of the current bleak outlook for critically endangered orangutan populations. For Parreñas, decolonization takes on a broader meaning to encompass the non-human. Through this conceptual framework, which is influenced by her background in gender and feminist studies, she challenges many of the assumptions ingrained into conservation and ecosystem management. These often perpetuate a problematic and othering dichotomy between human and nature, in addition to sidelining or outright villainizing the interests of local communities. The decolonization of extinction "is about vigilance against domination, purity, and work toward new multiracial futures following contact. […It is] liberation constrained by social relations and not about liberation constrained by justice on the basis of humanity" (191-192). This extends into advancing new and more long-term solutions to human/ non-human conflicts over space and resources by questioning how exactly we are conceptualizing the *other* in conservation.

Parreñas argues that this expression of decolonization is currently being enacted in the *work of care*, likened to "tough love," provided by the local staff and volunteers at the Lundu and Batu Wildlife Centers who risk their lives to be orangutan caregivers. Parreñas focuses on these two sites where orangutan "rehabilitation" is dominated by a captive mating program which emphasises species-level survival rather than actual habitat re-immersion. The contradiction here is that orangutan habitats continue to shrink, so while the captive populations might increase, even in the short term most of the orangutans under care cannot be *rehabilitated* to the wild. Finally, Parreñas calls for a re-imagining of how we see ourselves living with the non-human other by accepting the risks of vulnerability, and to consider ways of interacting otherwise. In Parreñas' words: "[t]aking decolonization seriously […] entails questioning deep-seated assumptions about life and ecology: who is living, in what ways are we in relation with them, what constitutes selves in these relations, and to what obligations are we committed" (6-7).

Parreñas' ethnographic book fills a gap in current conservation literature for solutions to global crises by employing a feminist understanding of how the "other" is defined and disadvantaged, combining this into an interdisciplinary approach. These crises demand projects that step outside traditional exclusionary responses to habitat loss or fragmentation towards planning that is flexible enough to work in complicated contexts without risking broad generalizations that have in the past caused more harm than good, and which, unfortunately, continue to do so. Parreñas utilizes the applicable experiences and dialogues she has had with the orangutans and caregivers at both wildlife centers to illustrate her main points. Primarily, decolonizing extinction and how we treat endangered species is about being open to vulnerabilities. This includes an acceptance of the inevitability of death and the need for humankind at large to come to terms with surrendering control. She argues that by recognizing what the *affect* of those vulnerabilities are and what coexistence with *others* means, we can learn to live within this affective and embodied space together.

The first two chapters introduce the reader to the contexts in which the social relations that follow throughout the rest of the book are situated and develop. Parreñas starts with a brief history and political overview of Sarawak for the reader, as well as the origins of orangutan care and rehabilitation there. These sections provide examples of the embodied affective relations that occur, in direct and indirect ways, between orangutans and humans at different levels, including local caregivers, international volunteers, and visiting tourists. In doing so, she successfully demonstrates where control is illusionary or limited at best and that vulnerability is unavoidable.

In chapters three and four, Parreñas introduces relations with and between space and loss, both of which are shared experiences by orangutans and Sarawakians. With regard to space, Parreñas shows how the social behaviour of the normally highly solitary orangutan changes in the relatively small roaming areas of the rehabilitation centers, where females are forced to face and interact with often violently aggressive males more frequently than they would in the wild. In addition, the reader is presented with the contradiction of a breeding program, which condones coerced copulations between young female orangutans and adult males who are twice their size with the aim of raising the captive population numbers, while efforts to preserve the wild habitats they can one day return to are seemingly sidelined and forgotten. Both orangutans and Sarawakians share the loss of their traditional homelands as a result of state projects. This is made visible in part through the intentional capitalization of an endangered species and the simultaneous destruction of natural habitats for economic interests at different levels. These chapters illustrate three key arguments: 1) the underlying biases inherent to sexual inequality and privilege, 2) the delineation of which behaviours are considered *normal* or *natural*, and 3) the limitations of empathy when wage labour is so depended upon it replaces traditional beliefs and taboos that had previously intimately connected humans to non-human others like orangutans.

Parreñas then returns to the broader context of Sarawak in the last two chapters, where she draws connections between the shared limitations of both people and orangutans in becoming totally free. Readers bear witness to the analogous "arrested autonomy" (20) faced by Sarawakians and the "free but fearful" (29) lives of orangutans. This inheritance from colonial occupation forms similarly limiting constructs and socio-politico-historical constraints that remain as yet unchallenged, at least on any large scale. The chapter concludes with the notion that rehabilitation centers like the Lundu and Batu Wildlife Centers are more aptly described as wildlife *hospices*, where orangutan individuals are cared for, but ultimately their deaths are unavoidable, and there is no real reduction in the risk of this entire species going extinct.

In the conclusion, Parreñas presents the reader with an update on the different people and orangutans introduced throughout the book, which itself can be best described as an obituary. The somber nature and tone of the end of the book is clearly intentional, as one of the key points throughout is the inevitability of death and a recognition of the futility of our attempted struggle against extinction. To emphasize our interrelated interdependence on others, like us or unlike us, Parreñas writes, "[e]verybody we know will pass away. How well we die depends on others" (185), simultaneously emphasizing where we have control, or rather influence, and lack thereof.

While the overall flow of the book carefully weaves through each example, one section near the end stands out from the rest. The brief section on the bacterium *Burkholderia*

pseudomallei is the only non-human/orangutan example used. *B. pseudomallei* has been classified as a "bioterrorist agent" (184), and thereby does act as another example of where the human and non-human interact *vulnerably* in a shared environment. However, the juxtaposition between this section of the work and the rest of her book comes close to dampening the impact of her message. Parreñas attempts to connect this example with the main themes of the book by presenting it as the ultimate cause of death for one of her close friends and colleagues in Sarawak, who was infected during a wildlife rescue necessitated by the development of a large dam. Perhaps further elaboration or other non-human/orangutan examples would make the mention of *B. pseudomallei* more seamless within a book otherwise focused exclusively on orangutan–human and human–orangutan relations.

Nevertheless, *Decolonizing Extinction* is situated directly within the active and growing discourse of primate conservation and of ethnoprimatology, and critiques ongoing conservation practice in a realistic manner that refuses to gloss over harsh realities. It represents a novel approach to and engagement with this prominent field of research by providing a platform for which the marginalized experiences of "others" can be recognized. Parreñas expertly crosses disciplinary boundaries by highlighting the complexity of relations and contexts that situate all conservation efforts: the life conditions and livelihoods of individuals in communities targeted for conservation around the world, both human and otherwise.

Decolonizing Extinction is perfect for graduate or upper-year undergraduate students interested in the practice of conservation, biological or socio-cultural streams of anthropology, the global and local economics behind conservation planning and efforts, and critical studies in feminist science. Parreñas succeeds in engaging her readership and has structured this book to show the truth of the matter without shying away from its associated morbid themes. A robust notes section provides support for critical points and for those needing further clarification, and an in-depth bibliography corroborates Parreñas' arguments while providing additional material for interested readers. *Decolonizing Extinction* renders extinction, conservation, and rehabilitation open and vulnerable. It argues that while there may be little hope in reversing the current trajectory for orangutans, we must nevertheless change the ways in which we think about endangered species and non-human others. We must learn how to live *vulnerably* with them, if we intend to do so at all, even if only for a short while longer.

In conversation with Professor Zulfikar Hirji

ELLIE NEILSEN MA STUDENT, INTERDISCPLINARY STUDIES, YORK UNIVERSITY, ONTARIO CANADA
BRIAN LOFASO BA STUDENT, ANTHROPOLOGY, YORK UNIVERSITY, ONTARIO CANADA

This piece is a transcription of our conversation with Professor Zulfikar Hirji regarding his edited volume *Approaches to the Qur'an in sub-Saharan Africa,* published by Oxford University Press in 2019. Dr. Hirji is appointed as an Associate Professor in the Department of Social Anthropology at York University in Toronto, Canada. As an anthropologist and social historian, his research focuses on Muslim societies, art, and material culture from historical to contemporary periods. He teaches at both undergraduate and graduate levels, and some examples of his courses are "Anthropology, Islam and Muslim Societies," "Core Concepts in Anthropology," and "Anthropology, Art, Aesthetics and Material Culture."

In *Approaches to the Qur'an in sub-Saharan Africa,* Professor Hirji has compiled and edited a multidisciplinary volume that explores how Muslims engage with the Qur'an in sub-Saharan Africa. The choice to focus on sub-Saharan Africa is two-fold, first to emphasize the rich social context that has not received the scholarly recognition it deserves; and second, to open conversations about how different spaces and localities influence how people engage with Islam and the complex social happenings of being Muslim. Each chapter contributes to these goals by reflecting on ways that Muslims engage with Islam and the Qur'an, using different case studies to examine how the Qur'an is "understood, felt and imagined" (Hirji 2019).

Our goal for publishing this transcript is to introduce both the book and Professor Hirji's research, as well as to explore some of the more unfamiliar ways Muslims practice Islam. Thus, we encourage readers to consider some of the reasons why certain forms of Islamic practice have been considered less often than others and how scholars have contributed to this underdetermination. Throughout the conversation, we explore themes of colonialism and Eurocentrism in academia and Islamic Studies and introduce how Professor Hirji's work is challenging these normalized ways of thinking about Islam, Muslims, and practice in Islam.

Interview Transcript

ELLIE NEILSEN   Why it's important to reflect upon the different interpretations and translations of the Qur'an?

DR. ZULFIKAR HIRJI Engaging with the Qur'an is an act of the highest piety for Muslims. From the perspective of Muslims, the Qur'an is the Word of God—it is God's Revelation, the final message to humankind – revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (d. 632)[1] over a period of some twenty-three years. Historically, we know that the Prophet conveyed the Revelation to people around him. The Prophet is regarded by Muslims as the first interpreter of the Revelation, someone who could explain God's message and provide guidance to the community of believers. Subsequent to the Prophet's death, the Revelation, which may also have been written down during the Prophet's lifetime, was formally compiled into an official codex under the direction of the third Muslim caliph, Uthman ibn Affan (d. 656).[2] In some ways, this act of compilation may be regarded as an act of interpretation. For example, it appears to have been a choice to compile the Revelation from its longest to the shortest verses rather than in the order in which it was revealed. And this choice then informs the manner in which one now reads the Qur'an and interpret its meanings. It should also be recalled that the Qur'an is complex. It contains didactic stories of the past, guidance, and instruction on many aspects of human life on topics such laws, ethics, knowledge, and spiritual responsibilities, and its language is both direct and oblique, often containing allusions and metaphors. These aspects of its character seem to call upon readers to consider its many meanings.

As anthropologists, we can observe that since the seventh century, multiple interpretations of the Qur'an have emerged. Today there are many so-called 'communities of interpretation' that surround and engage with the Qur'an, and the interactions between Qur'anic texts and diverse communities are an interesting thing to explore. Moreover, as in the past, a central challenge for many Muslims today is to determine the 'true' or the 'best' understanding of the Qur'an. This question is also important to anthropologists because it involves questions of authority and are related to questions of power. Throughout Islamic history there have been many authorities who are regarded as superior interpreters of the Qur'an and we can ask many questions about their backgrounds, social status, role, networks, etc. By extension, in the context of political formations like empires or nation-states, where the Qur'an serves as a foundational point of reference or informs governance and laws, we can ask who in the state has the authority to interpret the Qur'an and how do these interpreters serve the interests of the state? Of course, Islam in not alone in this regard, this has also been true of Christianity. For example, under the Roman emperor Constantine the Great (d. 337) Christianity became part of the Roman state, which was previously pagan, and this marriage between state and religion had all sorts of repercussions for understanding Christianity. Similarly, when Islam and Muslims made the Qur'an a part of the state's legal apparatus, it has all sorts of interesting repercussions that are worthy of scholarly research. Today, the internet is providing a new platform for many more interpreters of the Qur'an to communicate their understandings to a world-wide audience, beyond the state and its particular communities. The internet has not only transformed the role and place of traditional interpreters, but possibly what authority means. In the digital age, authority seems increasingly to come from the number of online followers, which is again a new configuration that is worthy of anthropological research and exploration.

BRIAN LOFASO What does it mean to study the Qur'an through an anthropological lens?

ZN   As anthropologists, we are interested in groups, people, individuals, and what they think about the world, how they express themselves, impact the world, as well as how people's lives are shaped by the various socio-cultural forces around them. The Qur'an is effectively the foundational scripture for at least a quarter to a third of the world's population. This means millions of people have a relationship with the Qur'an and think about what it says about various aspects of human life. Studying Islam and Muslim societies invites us to consider questions such as: how do Muslims think about this scripture and what do they say about it? How do they engage with the Qur'an? How does it become part of their everyday life, vocabulary, culture, and religious expression? But there are also many other questions related to how various socio-cultural forces and issues in the contemporary world are shaping Muslim worldviews and how this impacts understandings and interpretations of the Qur'an, for example, climate change, science, gender, race, diversity, equity, Islamophobia, and political Islam, which are all issues that Muslims are grappling with.

An interesting thing for anthropologists is that for many people around the world, historically the Qur'an has been orally communicated and it continues to be. It has not been something people have always just read; from childhood, many Muslims are taught to memorize the text to engage with it over their lifetime. This sort of sonorous nature of the Qur'an is very exciting to me because, up until very recently, most people who have studied the Qur'an— including most academics and anthropologists— have focused on the Qur'an as text as something that is written down. Although the text is an integral part of the Qur'an, the vast majority of Muslims' first experience with the Qur'an is something that is heard and recited aloud as part of daily prayer and during other ritual and religious activities. For example, amongst some Muslims when a child is born, verses of the Qur'an are often whispered into their ears. Or when a couple is married, they read the opening verse of the Qur'an. Another example is when people start a task, they might recite a verse of the Qur'an. Such oral modalities and sonorous aspects are critical to Muslim expression and are being increasingly studied by anthropologists. This type of research connects up with an increasing interest in anthropology about the multiple ways humans experience and understand the world through the use of their diverse range of senses, material objects, and the physical world around them.

EN   Can you elaborate as to why there is a gap in the literature with regards to the forms and expressions of Islam in sub-Saharan Africa and how *Approaches* to the Qur'an in Sub-Saharan Africa is addressing this gap with the twelve case studies?

ZH   I think that *Approaches* was attempting to fill a gap in several ways. The first way was to think about the multiple ways in which Muslims engage with the Qur'an. The Qur'an can be engaged with textually, socially, politically, sensorially, and through the lens of gender. For example, in *Approaches* there is a case study that discusses how the Qur'an is printed on a cloak and is used as a talismanic protective device. In addition, there is a case study about a preacher using multiple languages and modes to explain verses of the Qur'an to a live audience. The aim of *Approaches* is not to think of Muslims in sub-Saharan Africa, or their approaches to the Qur'an, as somehow anomalous, but to show that Muslims in

this geographical region share many of the same traditions as Muslims in other parts of the world.

However, the issue we did need to address was that Islam and Muslims in sub-Saharan Africa have received a limited amount of research when compared with other parts of the world. This is very odd, because historically and today, there are a multitude of Muslims in sub-Saharan Africa. Unfortunately, what has happened in the academic study of Islam and Muslim societies, in a range of disciplines including anthropology, is that there has been an inordinate focus on Islam and Muslims in the Middle East. Of course, the Middle East, and the Arabian Peninsula in particular, is where Islam was revealed, but in numerical terms, the vast majority of Muslims do not live in the Middle East. They live in South Asia, Southeast Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa. However, the focus on the Middle East is partly due to scholarly concerns about origins and authenticity, which are ideas that were underwritten in the advent of European colonialism, a time when many Western academic disciplines were born. European colonialism also categorized people through statements such as, "these people did not have literacy; these people were primitive; these people cannot be true Muslims." It cannot escape us that these sentiments have racial undertones. The limited focus on Islam and Muslims in sub-Saharan Africa is likely the result of this thinking. Muslims in these regions were seen to be practicing derivative or unauthentic versions of Islam or versions that were imported from elsewhere. While such ideas can be attributed to European colonialism, it is also true that some Muslims have adopted comparable perspectives; for them the most authentic Islam is to be found in Arabia. Such views contribute, in part, to attitudes circulating in contemporary landscapes of Muslim life wherein there are ongoing tensions between valuing the diversity of Muslim expression and understanding, and a desire for a singular, uniform, homogeneous Islam.

Hence, *Approaches* is trying to show that, on the one hand, that Muslims in sub-Saharan Africa are no different than Muslims elsewhere, but on the other, it is also trying to show the ways in which Muslims in sub-Saharan Africa—as elsewhere, including Arabia—developed their understandings of Islam in particular cultural and historical contexts. *Approaches* aims to re-center the sub-Saharan African Muslim experience and speak about sub-Saharan Africa in a way that is respectful of the communities that for centuries have engaged with the Qur'an in diverse ways. As far as I'm aware, *Approaches* is the first edited volume that looks at the Qur'an in sub-Saharan Africa. And when you think about it, this is quite remarkable because we know from Muslim history that the first location that Muslims went to outside the Arabian Peninsula during the time of the Prophet was the Horn of Africa. Hence, I think *Approaches* breaks new scholarly ground and opens conversations about the Qur'an, Islam, and Muslims in sub-Saharan Africa, and the ways that these places and peoples are framed and marginalized in academia, as well as why this has been the case.

EN   In the introduction of *Approaches*, you write the aims of the book are: "to open up new discourses about Islam and Muslims in sub-Saharan Africa and their engagement with the Qur'an, as well as to open up new discourses about the Qur'an itself through an examination of how Muslims in sub-Saharan Africa engage with it." (Hirji 2019, 11). Could you

elaborate on the two aims for *Approaches* and explain how this has to do with the notion that there are 'authentic' and 'unauthentic' expressions of Islam?

ZH   During the colonial encounter, Islam was compartmentalized according to European models of what constituted 'correct' and 'incorrect' or perhaps, 'authentic' and 'hybrid' Islam. In sub-Saharan Africa, Europeans made determinations about communities in the area based on racialized characteristics. For example, according to the colonial Europeans, regardless of if you were of Arab background or of Yoruba background, those who were fairer skinned and more 'Arab-looking' were considered to be more 'authentic' Muslims, and others were 'less authentic.' Muslims in sub-Saharan Africa probably did not see themselves in these ways. That is not to say that there were no Indigenous conceptions of race or ethnicity, but European colonization hardened the contours of 'Arab-ness' and 'African-ness' in ways that were linked to access to resources and power. In coastal East Africa where I do my research, in the advent of European colonization, people began to name and identify themselves according to colonial categories to, for example, receive food rations or gain privileges. This is evident during the world wars, if you were identified as 'African,' you would get maize meal as your staple, whereas if you were identified as 'Arab' or 'Indian,' you got rice as your provision. But there were people who did not fit neatly into these categories. My introduction in *Approaches* touches upon the legal apparatus of the colonial state and how these governing models shaped discourses around Islam and Muslims and ultimately, the Western academic study of Islam and Muslims.

The study of the Qur'an in Western academia was likewise shaped by its European colonial inheritance. The Qur'an was often seen as a kind of static text and regarded as a law book, that "you do not need to read it because you know what it says," or that, "well, the Qur'an is the Qur'an and it is never changing, so why bother looking at that?" What has been missed is that Muslim engagements with the Qur'an are part of a living tradition that is constantly responding to real-world situations. Thus, whereas rituals, traditions, and practices have been the focus of anthropological and other academic attention, Muslim engagements with the Qur'an have not. I think a new generation of scholars are discovering that there is much to explore and investigate. In addition, if you study Qur'anic manuscripts—that is handwritten copies of the Qur'an—you can address other issues such as the materiality of the Qur'an and other aspects of manuscript production. In addition, such Qur'an manuscripts often have a para-text, or annotations, that are typically located in the margins or inter-linearly of the text that include different readings of the Qur'an, glossaries on words, and scholarly interpretations. All of this information can be studied to understand how people who produce and use these Qur'an manuscripts understand and interpreted the Revelation.

BL   In Chapter 13 about the Siyu Qur'anic manuscripts: "What do the aesthetic aspects, such as calligraphy and designs, add to the interpretation of the textual discourse of the Siyu Qur'anic manuscripts?"

ZH   It is important to know that the writing down and codification of the Qur'an in the seventh century also facilitated the development of Arabic calligraphy. While the written

form of Arabic existed in pre-Islamic times, it is only after the Qur'an began to be written down, and when Muslim empires grew and expanded, that Arabic writing and calligraphy really began to develop and flourish. During this time, people began to write the Qur'an in beautiful scripts and different styles as they sought to decorate and adorn God's Word.

For example, I am currently working on Qur'anic manuscripts that were produced between ca. 1750– ca. 1850[3] in two towns on Pate Island, Siyu and Faza, located on the northern coast of Kenya. This is a region that was historically part of the historic Swahili coast, a region that at one time stretched from southern Somalia to Mozambique. In studying these Qur'ans, I began to ask questions such as, "who would be producing these manuscripts in these towns?" and "what is their social history?" What I have learned is that during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries these were not marginal places but were located at the center of a maritime Indian Ocean trading network. Hence, the style and aesthetic of these Qur'an manuscripts reflect this prosperity and the multiple connections that these communities had to including Arabia, China, Europe, India, and Southeast Asia, but also reflect a local aesthetic that is found in other material culture from the region.

What also became evident to me is that scribes who produced these Qur'ans created a local style of Arabic calligraphy that echoed the idea that writing the Qur'an facilitated the creation of Arabic scripts. Moreover, the people who made these incredibly beautiful, illuminated manuscripts also used various kinds of colors including red, black, green, and yellow, which are probably mineral or vegetable dyes. Such details reveal that the Qur'anic manuscripts were seen as objects of beauty and reverence, but also show what tools the makers had at their disposal, their ingenuity, and aesthetic sensibility. This manuscript tradition, of which the Qur'an is a part, reflects the experience of those living at the center of a rich Muslim culture that was also part of an Indian Ocean trading network. This being said, there are many questions that remain unanswered. We know very little about who was producing the materials, who decorated the Qur'anic manuscripts, their training, communities, and how they were connected to the trade networks. These are all areas of possible research. Thus, we spoke earlier about how the Qur'an has been seen as a "kind of static, non-changing text," and for that reason, and due to the preconceptions that people have about the literacy, scholarly, and artistic capabilities of these coastal East African communities, these manuscripts have not been studied.

Another interesting thing about these Qur'an manuscripts is that their annotations are written in Arabic. But at the time of their making, we have examples of the local language of Swahili written in Arabic script. It was common for local languages as recipients of Islam, to write their local languages in Arabic script. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, you start to see a change in the way the local language is written. When Christian missionary schools started to appear alongside other kinds of Islamic education, everything started to change. It is only in the colonial period that Roman characters systematically replaced Arabic characters. Up until this point, people wrote Swahili in Arabic script. Thus, from the study of the Qur'an manuscripts, all sorts of new conversations about the formation of Islam in this region and the histories of these communities open up, many of which remain integral to the life-worlds of present-day communities in the region.

EN Can you talk about how the themes "interpretation, embodiment, gendered knowledge, and transmission" overlap and what they suggest for the study of Islam in this particular area?

ZH   I think these themes and others in the book are reflective of current scholarship. This book came out of a conference held in Toronto in 2009 with a truly amazing group of scholars. At that time, it became apparent to me that there were very few people working on the Qur'an in sub-Saharan Africa. Ten years on, I am seeing that there are more scholars looking at this subject, and due to an interest in decolonizing and deracializing the academy, there is more focus on the histories and cultures of Africa and on peoples of African origin outside of Africa.

In terms of embodiment, writing can be seen as an embodied act. There are some Muslims who suggest that writing the Qur'an is itself an act of piety and worship or that the written Qur'an or parts of it can be used as forms of spiritual protection. In *Approaches* there is an article on a cloak from Burkina Faso which is inscribed with Qur'anic verses. We know from other contexts, such as Turkey and India, such cloaks are thought to be protective. In addition, in article in *Approaches* on Zanzibar, the Qur'an was used in medicinal healing practices. This article is an ethnographic study of a woman who articulates her belief that the Qur'an can serve as a way of healing when ingested or spoken, as the words themselves become purifying. These are just two ways in which the Qur'an may be regarded as embodied.

The themes explored in the book—interpretation, embodiment, gendered knowledge, and transmission— are entry points to connect the different articles. Of course, they are not the only themes that can be investigated, as there is much more that can be said in the study of the Qur'an and sub-Saharan Africa and elsewhere. The themes are a useful way to think about the collections within this volume, but I would not want anyone to use these themes to predetermine inquiry in this field.

I should note that the choice of using the geographical boundary of sub-Saharan Africa is purposeful, but it has its problems. Often, there is difficulty with regionalisms and regional studies by putting localities into a fixed container. That was not the intention here and I hope that is conveyed in the introduction of the book where I talk about "lines in the sand." North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa should not be considered as two solitudes, but for the purposes of the volume we had to make certain choices. Similarly, East Africa was connected to the Horn of Africa, Arabi, and communities around the Indian Ocean littoral. However, I do think it is useful to draw some lines in order to begin to decolonize academic studies by focusing on parts of the world that have regularly been understudied and marginalized. Therefore, the focus of sub-Saharan Africa should be seen as a provisional container with many dotted lines around it; scholars and others should take up the themes and ideas in this volume as an invitation to consider new lines of inquiry and to cross new terrain.

Endnotes

1   Muhammad ibn 'Abdullāh b. 570 Mecca, Arabia, d. 632 Medina, Arabia.
2   A caliph, in Islamic history, would be the ruler or successor to the Muslim community.
3   ca. refers to "Circa," Latin for "around, about, roughly, approximately."

References

Hirji, Zulfikar. *Approaches to the Qur'an in Sub-Saharan Africa.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.

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