

Showing Theory to Know Theory

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Understanding social science concepts through illustrative vignettes

Volume 1



Edited by Patricia Ballamingie and David Szanto

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Introduction

In *The Elements of Style*, Strunk and White famously implore us to *show* rather than *tell* what we want to express. In contrast, theoretical work seems perpetually prone to the latter. Nonetheless, abstraction and disciplinary jargon remain useful, synthesizing and communicating complex ideas—at least, to those who are already familiar with the terminology. This book aims to demystify theoretical concepts, making abstract-yet-valuable ideas more accessible by *showing* rather than *telling* how they are meaningful and usable in day-to-day situations.

Bringing together a collection of “illustrative vignettes,” *Showing Theory to Know Theory* aims to help students understand complex ideas without dumbing them down. Each vignette takes form in a different way: concrete, illustrative examples; short, evocative stories; reflexive and intimate poems; illustration, described photographs, and other audio-visual materials. Along with our dozens of contributors, we hope that this volume will be of use across disciplines and community contexts, democratizing theory while linking it to practical, grounded experience.

As a user of this book, it is important to remember that each vignette is not intended to be encyclopedic or exhaustive. Instead, in combination with classroom discussion, they aim to ground learners’ understanding of the term or concept in a specific example. Further nuance and interpretation will come from responding to the questions included with each vignette, com-

pleting exercises or additional readings, and having an instructor situate terms within their conceptual lineage.

Ultimately, after reading/viewing and discussing an individual vignette, our hope is that students will be able to articulate, in their own words, the meaning of the term or concept. We also imagine that this book will help learners form and describe connections between theoretical abstractions and concrete examples of how that abstraction is meaningful to lived experience. Eventually, they may identify or create their own vignette, based on an existing understanding of a theoretical concept or term, and draw connections to lived experience and concrete examples. In the long term, and as discussed later on (see [Adopting this Book](#)), the community of users around this book may choose to expand it into a larger, more comprehensive collection, mapping the broader relationships among social science disciplines and areas of study.

Overall, we aspire to help learners in both university and community contexts to make the all-important connections between theory and practice, the abstract and the concrete, the world of knowing and the realm of doing. Along the way, may they also develop the critical reading and thinking skills—as well as innovative forms of expression and representation—that are so urgently needed in today’s complex, entangled, and fraught social and political ecologies.

With gratitude,
Patricia Ballamingie and David Szanto

How to use this book

Vignettes are organized alphabetically by the name of the concept or term that the author addresses. While we originally considered a more curatorial approach to the book—for example, creating conceptual, methodological, or epistemic sections—we ultimately chose this more straightforward ordering. As a digital resource, and one that we imagine being used very differently by its different readers, we didn't want to impose too much structure. That said, within given entries, we also link to other, related vignettes, where our editorial eye suggested such connection making.

Eventually, we hope to hear from our readers about different ways that they have organized the vignettes in their use of this book. We imagine that variable groupings will suggest themselves in ways that are relevant to their own learning needs. To this end, [the Zotero-based search and filtering application on our website](#) can help find the most pertinent entries. (Much thanks to University of Ottawa School of Information Studies master student, Swati Sood, for developing the [Zotero library](#).)

Each vignette starts with a one-sentence description of the term or concept that is presented. We interpret these not as 'definitions' (since to define a complex term in a single sentence is generally problematic), but as simpler renderings of what follows in the author's text. While the vignette provides a grounded illustration of the concept, the one-sentence description is more

generalized. (Later, discussion questions and exercises may also open the reader up to a more general understanding of the term.)

Similarly, we have foregrounded the authors' biographies, interests, and positionality to encourage critical reading of each vignette: knowing who (and sometimes why) a contributor has chosen a particular term and illustration is, we believe, important for readers to know in advance of reading the ensuing text. Theory is, after all, always interpreted! This is a key element of helping new learners understand how social science terminology is meaning in pluralistic ways.

Some vignettes involve visuals, some are entirely textual. Some offer abstract interpretations of the term or concept, some dive directly into a straightforward example. In some cases, conducting an exercise is part of 'reading' the vignette; often exercises or discussion questions, which follow the main body, will lead to further, hands-on learning about the term or concept.

Several vignettes include links to other entries, showing connectivity among themes and a relational genealogy of terms. Overall, we have attempted to keep references and citations to a minimum, both to encourage authors to maintain an accessible, generalized writing style and to help readers grasp key aspects of the text without extensive distraction. References and additional resources are nonetheless included with each vignette, to allow teachers and learners to explore the term further.

The Website

Our public-facing website, ShowingTheory.net, is one possible entry point into this book, although if you are reading this text, you have already started using the book!

The website offers a useful “filtering” tool based on the *Showing Theory* Zotero library. Searching for any keyword or term will return all entries in the book that may be relevant to your needs. It also provides a useful way of seeing which vignettes address similar themes, such as race, frameworks of knowledge, or methods in the social sciences.

The website also offers links to the PDF and EPUB versions of the book, which can be downloaded and used in an offline context. The web-based, HTML version of the book not only offers the most dynamic reading experience, but it also requires internet access, which we recognize is not universally available and accessible.

Showing Theory is also available as a print-on-demand textbook, and copies can be purchased from Ingram Spark. While there is a price associated with printed copies, it is solely to cover the Ingram Spark cost; no profit is returned to the publishers, editors, or authors. [Please contact us](#) for more details.

What to do if you find an issue/typo/problem

As is increasingly standard for high-quality, openly accessible educational resources (and as required by our funding agreement), *Showing Theory* is machine-readable and compliant with the [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act of 2005](#). All content is designed based on current Universal Design Standards, including alt-text for all graphics and proper text-to-background color ratio.

If, however, you find an issue related to accessibility, or other content that is either in error or problematic in your view, we encourage you to [get in touch with us](#) to report the problem. This can also include such minor issues as typos, formatting

problems, or broken links. While the book has been extensively reviewed and proofread, mistakes always happen!

How did the book come about?

Beginning with Trish’s initial emails soliciting interest from colleagues, the response to this concept has been overwhelmingly positive. People immediately grasped the urgency for such a collection as “something we needed decades ago,” and recognized its potential value as a teaching resource. David replied immediately, with genuine enthusiasm. He saw it as a concept that had potential and value for a huge community of folks. Within a day he had put together a vignette and started having ideas for broadening the scope. Trish immediately knew she had found a collaborator.

Stars aligned and we discovered eCampusOntario’s [Virtual Learning Strategy](#), through which we received the funding to make this project possible. A Government of Ontario–funded non-profit organization, eCampus works to develop and distribute online learning tools throughout the province. We also received administrative and instructional design support from Carleton University’s Teaching and Learning Services (TLS) team, who have been both expert guides and heartening cheerleaders. Sincere thanks to Valerie Critchley, Andrea Gorra, David Hornsby, Jaymie Koroluk, Patrick Lyons, Laura Ravelo Fuentes, Mathew Schatkowsky, and Dragana Polovina-Vukovic! We are also grateful to Nancy Snow (Associate Professor, Faculty of

Design, OCAD University) for joining us as a Project Consultant, providing pedagogical and design input in the initial stages.

The eCampusOntario funding came with stringent reporting requirements and clearly delineated project deliverables, including adherence to accessibility standards and the use of a [Creative Commons license](#). The latter is important to us as editors and contributors ourselves, because it will allow others to remix and repurpose the book's content while ensuring that the original creators of each vignette are credited for their work and recognized as its originators. This, along with the book's digital format(s) and free access, are key components of the open publishing ethos within which *Showing Theory* was conceived and created.

Publication of this open educational resource (OER), from conceptualization to scoping and team building, development, production, publication, and evaluation, took place over one calendar year, from start to finish, during a global pandemic. While it has not been a simple task, it is nonetheless testament to the power of collaboration and good will, to the flexibility and connectivity of digital tools, and to the promise that open-access publishing offers a new generation of learners.

Submissions and Review

How did we solicit submissions?

In June and July 2021, we distributed our Call for Proposals (with guidelines, a submission template, and sample vignettes) to about 25 different scholarly association newsletters, listservs, and Facebook groups. Disciplines included: anthropology, art and design, critical education, environmental studies, equity studies, food studies, geography, sociology, political economy and political science. Contributions emerged from a broad range of social scientists and practitioners, with the majority coming from across Canada, followed by the United States, and United Kingdom. We are grateful for those that reached us from farther afield, providing additional perspectives and world views. These included submissions from Mexico, Finland, Greece, the Philippines, and New Zealand.

How did we review submissions?

Our rigorous review process aimed at ensuring that the vignettes are as effective and accessible as possible, while also enabling authors to count them towards the narrow metric upon which academics are evaluated—peer-reviewed publications. An editorial review by both editors allowed us to move forward those submissions that fit within the critical social sciences, that were well developed, and that reflected the criteria we had established. Following an initial edit, each piece was sent to one schol-

arly reviewer with expertise around the given term or concept, and one community reader with similar perspectives but a less academic lens. This aimed at ensuring high-quality content that was also highly accessible to new learners. We are very grateful to our extended network of family, friends, and friends of friends, who served as community reviewers, both for accepting the challenge and offering their critical sensibilities!

In both review cases, reviewers remained anonymous, and their feedback was forwarded to the authors by the editors, often accompanied by additional comments and suggestions for revisions. The close-to-final drafts were then reviewed by one or both editors before moving on to copyediting and production. While it is common in some open publishing contexts to have both the authors and reviewers know each other's identities (as opposed to the common convention in much academic publishing of conducting "double-blind" peer review), we opted for a more anonymous process here.

Our sincere thanks go out to the large and generous community of reviewers, both scholarly and community: Peter Andrée, Joan Andrew, Samphe Ballamingie, Kelly Bronson, Deborah Caruthers, Michael Classens, Lilly Cleary, Deborah Conners, Aviva Coopersmith, Stephanie Couey, Judith Crawley, Maria Daboussy, Moe Garahan, Sherrill Johnson, Ali Kenefick, Meaghan Kenny, Irena Knezevic, Katalin Koller, Simon Laroche, Tess Macmillan, Florencia Marchetti, Nancy Marelli, Ajay Parasram, Namitha Rathinapillai, Tabitha Robin, Noah Schwartz, G Solorzano, Michelle Stewart, Kathy Stutchbury, George Szanto, Molly Touchie, Susan Tudin, Pamela Tudge, Annika Walsh, Bessa Whitmore, Amanda Wilson, Dana Zemel, and Trudi Zundel.

Additional thanks to our past and current students, who tested a wide sampling of vignettes and offered their opinions ([and testimonials!](#)) about what they read. This group of fearless learners includes: Brent Gauthier, Marie-Hélène Guay, Beatriz Lainez, Melissa Leam-Chen, Tony Horava, Matthew Montoni, Breena Johnson, Catherine Littlefield, and Iain Storosko.

Adopting this book

Our hope is that this book will be of use across multiple contexts, including but not limited to university classrooms and other post-secondary learning environments. Given the increasing cross-disciplinarity of many fields, many vignettes are applicable and address themes from sociology to history, human ecology to epistemology.

Whether or not you use every entry in the book in your classroom (which would be surprising and impressive!), we encourage you to formally register your use of the book using [our adoption form](#). This helps in several ways. First, it will allow us to stay in contact with you, if new or revised editions of *Showing Theory* are released. In the same way, [you can maintain contact with us](#), to provide feedback on how the book is working for you, or to identify errors or omissions that need to be corrected in future editions. And, of course, knowing how many people are using the book—and where and in what contexts—is important feedback for us. It will help us keep making changes that address real needs, while also supporting future efforts to expand or evolve the project more broadly.

The use of “Volume 1” in our title signals our desire for this project to live and grow beyond its initial conceptualization. The current collection serves as a proof of concept, and we hope others will use it as a springboard to create other similar volumes (focused on thematic, disciplinary, or community-driven cate-

gories). We can imagine targeted calls for new volumes themed around Indigenous methodologies, critical race theory, political ecology, and many others. Our contributors covered a wide range of terms—some that we solicited, and some that were proposed through their own interest and expertise. Many concepts, however, remain unaddressed. In this way, we hope to spawn (potentially multi-lingual) future editions, remixes, and/or sub-volumes within other disciplines, fields, or faculties.

To that end, please note that *Showing Theory* is published under a [Creative Commons CC BY-NC-SA license](#), the content in this book may be reused, remixed, repurposed, and maintained at will, provided that no commercial derivatives are created and that all future editions also carry the “share-alike” (SA) license. Any republication of the content, however, must follow Creative Commons terms.

Accessibility Statement

In accordance with [Carleton University](#), [University of Ottawa](#), [eCampusOntario](#), and the [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act](#) (AODA), we have aimed to make this textbook accessible and available to everyone. To that end, *Showing Theory to Know Theory* was audited for accessibility by a team from the Carleton University Teaching and Learning Services unit. Their report served as the basis for a number of refinements and corrections.

Accessibility features of the web version for this resource

The web version of *Showing Theory* is designed with accessibility in mind. It has been optimized for people who use screen-reader technology, and all content can be navigated using a keyboard. To the best of our ability, and within the parameters of the [Pressbooks publishing platform](#), links, headings, tables, and images have been designed to work with screen readers.

Other file formats available

In addition to the web version, this textbook is available in a number of file formats, including PDF, EPUB (for eReaders), HTML, and various editable files. You can also purchase print-on-demand copies from Ingram Spark. [Please contact us](#) for more details.

Let us know if you are having problems accessing this textbook

While we have tried to make sure that this textbook is as accessible and as usable as possible, there might still be some outstanding issues. If you are having problems accessing this resource, [please contact us](#) to let us know so we can fix the issue.

Please include the following information:

- The location of the problem by providing a web address or page description
- A description of the problem
- The computer, software, browser, and any assistive technology you are using that can help us diagnose and solve your issue (e.g., Windows 10, Google Chrome (Version 65.0.3325.181), NVDA screen reader)

About the Editors

[Patricia Ballamingie](#) is a Professor in the Department of Geography & Environmental Studies and the Institute of Political Economy at Carleton University in Ottawa, Ontario. She has 20 years of experience teaching in the areas of human geography, environmental studies, political ecology and economy, and food studies. Since 2006, she has received seven prestigious teaching awards from a variety of sources, including her faculty, institution, student association, and city. Her program of research focuses on food policy and food systems governance. She served as Project Lead and Co-Editor of *Showing Theory*.

[David Szanto](#) is a freelance academic working across a number of institutions and within several roles. He has 15 years of teaching experience across food studies and communications, touching on the social sciences, humanities, art, and design. A former book editor and marketing-communications professional, he also brings 15 years of experience in the corporate and non-profit sectors. In addition to teaching, David works as a project manager, writer, and editor, and has extensive online and digital development experience. He served as Project Manager and Co-Editor of *Showing Theory* and is also Co-Editor of [Food Studies: Matter, Meaning, Movement](#).

Abjection

PHILIP SCEPANSKI

***Philip Scepanski** studies American television history and cultural theory. He has presented widely and published numerous articles and book chapters on topics related to television studies, collective trauma, and humor. His book, *Tragedy Plus Time: National Trauma and Television Comedy*, examines the way television's most irreverent programming responds to our most serious moments.*

Abjection is the process of being “cast off,” and refers to bodily fluids that exit the body as well as people who are pushed aside by society.

Bodily and social abjection: How do people become “cast off?”

Substances that we expel from the body tend to disgust us. Blood, mucus, feces, and urine come out of the body and are cast aside. Society treats certain people and groups similarly, casting them aside from the “social body.” The 1990s television comedy program *In Living Color*, for example, displayed these concepts with a character named Anton Jackson, played by Damon Wayans. An unhoused black man with substance use issues, Anton demonstrates abjection through both his body and social

positioning. In one sketch from the show, he appears at an Army recruiting office, slurring his words and struggling to stand up straight. He picks his nose and wipes boogers on nearby objects. After his pants fall down and the recruiter complains about the smell, Anton refers to it as his “nerve gas.” While military service remains a path towards upward class mobility, he is too abject to follow this path into respectable society.

In most cases, scholars using the term *abjection* speak to two closely related aspects of the concept: bodily abjection and social abjection. Anton Jackson revels in the abjection of the things that would normally be cast off from the body: mucus, feces, urine, and so forth. These substances are bodily or physically abject. In the most significant essay on abjection, Julia Kristeva (1982) explains that abjection is important to our development as infants. Seeing matter move from being part of our body to being waste forces us to recognize that [aspects of our body can become non-living](#). This, she argues, is important to learning about death. At the same time, many of the fluids that come out of the body—especially feces, blood, and mucus—carry bacteria and viruses, reinforcing associations between abjection, disease, and death. The revulsion we feel towards the abject is the result of both its literal role as disease-carrier and its more symbolic associations with death developed in early childhood. These theoretical understandings highlight that abjection is not simply about the thing that is cast off, it is part of a complex *process* of removal, through which the status and meaning of the abject change.

The meaning of symbols can be slippery, however, and these associations can easily transfer to other objects, including human beings. Kristeva speaks to the ways groups like women and ethnic and religious minorities bear associations with the abject.

In part because of his bodily abjection, Anton is “cast off” by society. He is socially abject in part because of his inability or refusal to fully remove the physically abject from close proximity to his body. In other *In Living Color* sketches, he often keeps his “bathroom”—a mason jar full of urine and a single floating turd—on his person. The Army recruiter’s unwillingness to engage with Anton marks the extent to which he cannot be incorporated into society. However, Anton bears other marks of social abjection, as an African American who is unhoused and shows signs of substance use. In various ways and to varying extents, these factors mark him as abject. Again, bearing direct associations with physical abjection, his apparent substance use may partly explain his smell, considering the inability of some users to control their bodily functions. At the same time, certain drugs, especially those involving needles, bring with them implications of diseases. More subtly, Anton’s race marks him as outside the dominant racial power bloc, further expressing his social abjection. However tempting it may be to understand the character as totally abject based on these societal factors, abjection is still a process. Anton was never fully abject, but he is continually recast off in moments like his attempt to join the army.

While abjection is used to consider the differences between one’s self and those things that are not the self, the relationship between [self and other](#) is complex. Anton keeps his abjection close to himself, finding humor in his own abjection. Similarly, we may keep the abject close to us in various ways, from the exchanging of bodily fluids during sex to keeping the ashes of a dead loved one on the mantle. Maggie Hennefeld and Nicholas Sammond (2020) point out that Western societies are increasingly “incorporating” the abject. That is, groups and individuals are finding ways to draw themselves near, once again, to those things and people that were once cast off. In part, this is reflected

in media like *In Living Color*. Society has grown more comfortable with various gross-out strategies for entertainment in comedy, horror, and other genres. In other ways, efforts by various civil rights movements to gain acceptance within larger society are a sign that once-abject groups are in the process of more fully incorporating.

At the same time, members of dominant groups have attempted in recent years to portray themselves as abject, as evidenced by everything from mainstream conservative attacks on programs like affirmative action in the United States, to more marginal groups like proponents of “white replacement” conspiracy theorists. In this way, members of dominant cultures are incorporating abjection into their self-definition as a strategy to maintain power. Understanding the ways in which some groups are unjustly made abject while others unfairly claim abject status is thus a critical skill for understanding and changing the dynamics of power in contemporary society.

Discussion Questions

- How does our sense of disgust affect the way we interact with other people? How might we start to address these issues in seeking to build a more just and fair society?
- What other examples from mass media can you think of that play around with abjection to invoke disgust—perhaps from horror, comedy, or another genre? In what ways does your example speak to the sense of social abjection?
- Check out the Instagram feed, [curatedbygirls](#). Select a

post that highlights how young feminists are remaking abjection, and explain why.

Additional Resources

Creed, B. (1986). Horror and the monstrous-feminine: An imaginary abjection. *Screen* 27, no. 1: 44–71.

Scott, D. (2011). *Extravagant abjection: Blackness, power, and sexuality in the African American literary imagination*. New York: New York University Press.

YouTube, “Anton Joins the Army,” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FsyZiwlbXdo&ab_channel=LourenBates

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Affect

KATHRYN FEDCHUN

***Kathryn Fedchun** is a PhD student in communication at Carleton University. She is a certified women's counsellor and advocate who worked in the violence against women sector for a few years in Toronto, Ontario. She completed her master's degree at the University of Ottawa in sociology and gender studies. Her thesis was a feminist autoethnography on the videogame League of Legends. She is currently a fellow at the Research on Comics, Con Events, and Trans-media Laboratory (RoCCET Lab) and is working on her second comprehensive examination on affect theory.*

Affect is a term that refers to emotions and feelings, the way things affect and are affected, and the forces that connect people, objects, and ideas.

May the Force Be with You: Illustrating Affect Through the Force in Star Wars

The image on screen slowly pans across a lush, rocky island. The sounds of strange wildlife surround the audience. Luke Skywalker stands on the edge of a cliff. Persuaded by Rey to teach her the ways of the Force, Luke asks her to sit on a rock with her legs crossed. Luke explains, “the Force is not a power you

have. It's the energy between all things, a tension, a balance that binds the universe together" (Johnson, 2017, 48:10). He asks Rey to close her eyes and breathe. Small tendrils of Rey's hair sway in the wind as she closes her eyes and breathes in. Music begins as Luke takes her hand and places it firmly beside her on a rock.

Luke: Now, reach out. Breathe. Just breathe. Reach out with your feelings. What do you see?

Rey: The island. Life. Death and decay. That feeds new life. Warmth. Cold. Peace. Violence.

Luke: In between it all?

Rey: Balance. An energy. A Force.

Luke: And inside you?

Rey: Inside me... That same Force.

(Johnson, 2017, 48:25)

When Rey begins to describe what she sees, the audience is invited into her mind: wildflowers blow in the wind signifying life; fossils underground represent death and decay; new life grows in the form of small seedlings; the warmth of the sun shines on the cliff; the cold waves crash into the shore. A porg (a fictional bird featured in the series) shelters her newborn babies under her wing, symbolizing peace. Then we see violence: a porg nest with broken eggs gets washed away by a large wave. According to Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth, "affect more often transpires within and across... all the miniscule or molecular events of the unnoticed" (2010, p. 2). In this scene, seemingly insignificant events on the island are only noticed because Rey allows herself to feel them, to be affected by them, through the Force. Luke asks Rey what is between life and death, cold and warmth, peace and violence. Rey explains that between it all is a Force.

Like the Force in *Star Wars*, affect “arises in the midst of in-between-ness... [it] is in many ways synonymous with *force* or *forces of encounter*” (Seigworth and Gregg, 2010, p. 1–2). This powerful Force, or energy, exists inside of Rey. By reaching out with her feelings, Rey senses that all things are connected through the Force. Similarly, the power of affect exists inside of us: “a body’s *capacity* to affect and to be affected” (Seigworth and Gregg, 2010, p. 2).

Of course, affect exists beyond the fictional world of *Star Wars* and Jedi powers. It is often considered synonymous with emotion or feeling. For example, one could use affect theory to study the emotional impact of ending a romantic relationship. Yet affect is both more and less than emotion and feeling... it is an almost unnameable sense of bodily or visceral impact that arises without direct physical contact. Affect is all around us: between objects, between feelings, between ways of being.

Affect theory emphasizes the causes and impacts of affect, and everything in-between. There is no single definition that perfectly encompasses affect; as a mode of theorizing, affect is always in flux (Seigworth and Gregg, 2010, p. 3). Scholars are fascinated by affect and use affect theory to critically investigate depression (Cvetkovich, 2012), happiness (Ahmed, 2010), cruel optimism (Berlant, 2011), ugly feelings (Ngai, 2005), video games (Anable, 2018), ordinary affects (Steward, 2007), and touch (Sedgwick, 2002).

In *Star Wars*, the Force connects everything across the galaxy. Similarly, affect theory helps us explore our connection with the world around us. Evidently, *the force is with you*.

Discussion Questions

- In the example above, the Force in *Star Wars* was used to illustrate affect. When Luke asks Rey to close her eyes, she sees the island, life and death, peace and violence. If you were to close your eyes right now, what would you notice? Consider your senses: what can you smell, taste, hear, or touch?
- Every day, we affect and are affected by innumerable things. Think about the day you have had so far: Can you list five ways that you affected and five ways you were affected?
- The Force in *Star Wars* can be wielded in different ways and degrees of strength. What is an example of a person or institution in real life that wields the force of affect, and how do they wield it?

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Affordances

MIHO TRUDEAU

Affordance is a term that refers to the cues provided by an object or environment that suggest ways in which it can be used.

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Possibilities for play: Annotating affordances in a playground

The different ways that an environment, or an element within an environment, can be used are called affordances. For instance, if there is a declining flat surface in an environment, such as a ramp, that environment has a rolling affordance. What we are able to experience in an environment is dependent on both it and us, the user. For example, a bench of a certain height could be used to sit on or hide beneath; however, the ability to do these actions is also dependent on the individual. A very high bench may not allow a small child to sit on it, while a taller person may not be able to hide beneath it. Moreover, social and cultural contexts may affect how a person uses a bench. For exam-

ple, although a person may wish to jump and walk on a bench, social norms may deem this as unacceptable behaviour, which may inhibit the bench from being used in that way. In this way, affordances are dependent on the environment, the user, and other contextual socio-cultural factors.

Children's play environments, such as playgrounds, are often assessed for the different affordances that they offer children. Rather than looking at the different structures within a playground, sites can be analyzed for the different use functions, or affordances, present within the site. For example, a site can be analyzed for *physical affordances* (e.g., climbing, jumping), *social affordances* (e.g., cooperative play opportunities), creative and constructive *play affordances* (e.g., building with sand or other loose materials), and others—the list goes on and on. Below is an example of a playground that is annotated with diverse affordances offered to users. Note that these annotated affordances are dependent on a user's **subjectivity**; for example, if a playground has a climbing structure, climbing is only available as an affordance for those with that physical capability. When considering the affordances within a site such as a playground, it is important to consider who the users are and how contextual factors may also have an impact. For example, what are the affordances of a playground such as this if the primary users have physical disabilities or if the playground is situated within a community with high crime and vandalism rates?

Affordances in a Playground



Figure 1: Affordances in a playground.

Perception is also a significant factor within affordances. How a user perceives an affordance within an environment will affect the *actualization* of the affordance, that is whether the perceived use function is carried out by a user. For example, within the playground, the slide and the rope ladder are relatively easy to perceive by most users, meaning that they will likely become actualized affordances. Other structures, such as the rock boulders, are less evident in their potential use, and might be used for sitting or for more active play, such as jumping or climbing. Given their ambiguity, less structured affordances invite more diverse interpretations, enabling children to feel more comfortable playing on them than, for example, on a bench. Similarly, affordances that allow for diverse interpretations may lead caregivers to feel more comfortable than, for example, sitting inside a play space or on a clearly demarcated play structure such as a climber.

Discussion Questions

- What kinds of sociocultural constraints might have an impact on a site's affordances? Compare and contrast two public spaces in different geographical contexts and describe the possible sociocultural constraints that may impact the affordances of these two sites.
- Why is it important for designers to consider a diversity of users when reflecting on the affordances of a site? Think of some examples wherein diverse users are not considered within site design and how that affects site affordances.
- Can you think of some general ways that affordances can be maximized within a site?
- Choose an object in your home or everyday life (e.g. a specific kitchen or home appliance) and list the diverse affordances of that object. Is the use of the object easy to perceive? What are some of the ways that the design of the object makes it easy or difficult to use?

Exercise

Visit a nearby public space and take a photo. Try to ensure that your photo does not include identifiable people who may not want to be photographed. You can also blur people's faces afterwards to protect their anonymity. Observe and note the site's usage for a short period

of time. Later, annotate the photo with the observed and potential affordances of the site.

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Allyship

KATALIN DOIRON-KOLLER

Allyship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples refers to a lifelong commitment to self-education, holding space, dismantling colonial systems of oppression, and co-creating a balanced society.

***Katalin Doiron-Koller** is an Acadian-Hungarian woman, critical political ecologist, and non-profit professional living as a guest in unceded Wolastoqey territory. Her research on allyship is situated at the intersection of relationality, environmental justice, and the politics of reconciliation.*

**Discomfort, nay,
decolonization! Becoming
allies in and with
Esgenoopetitj**

Learning to centre Wabanaki peoples and their knowledges, languages, and lived experiences toward decolonizing education in New Brunswick has been the most rewarding journey of my life. As a non-Indigenous activist-scholar and a Project Manager working with and for Wabanaki communities, I have sometimes been referred to by Wabanaki friends and colleagues as an *ally*. While I am honoured by this title, I feel a significant duty and responsibility to model the values and behaviours necessary to

reciprocate the spirit of the Peace and Friendship Treaties, the original covenants between Wabanaki peoples and European colonists that committed all nations to living together peacefully in Wabanakek.¹ Everyone living and working in this place are beholden to the Treaties, whether descended from settlers, arriving as newcomers from other lands, or carrying the ancestral knowledge of Wabanaki nations. This means we all have a responsibility to one another, our ancestors, future generations, and this land, and to coexist in harmony and mutual respect. This way of being **in relationship** means living by an ethic of personal and collective relational accountability to each other and the land, in gratitude for the reciprocal friendship and support we enjoy (see Wilson, 2008).

On an individual level, I personally feel accountable to Wolastoqewi Kci-Sakom spasaqsit possesom (Wolastoq Grand Chief Ron Tremblay, morning star burning), who has taught me that as a non-Indigenous ally, it is my job to educate my own (non-Indigenous) people, and to model what it means in contemporary times to be a Peace and Friendship Treaty person. It is an arduous process to understand how best one can live this way, and even more so to model and share with others what is inherently an existential, inwardly reflective, personal process of decolonizing the way one thinks, acts, and interacts in the world. In truth, *becoming* an ally and living as a Treaty person can be an immensely uncomfortable journey, but it is positively life changing and deeply transformative (McGloin, 2015). As with many things that result in personal growth, if you don't experience discomfort, you're probably not doing it right!

In my research on allyship in Wabanakek, many non-Indigenous people have likewise confessed the discomfort they feel when confronting their own colonial ideologies and preconceived notions to allow for an anti-colonial perspective to propagate.

Indeed, learning to decolonize one's mind is a core element of learning to live in allyship with the first peoples of the land you inhabit. 'White guilt', a common feeling that non-Indigenous White people experience when learning the truth of the role their ancestors played in supporting the Residential and Day School System or other violently genocidal Canadian policies, such as the Sixties Scoop, malnutrition testing on undernourished Residential School students, and reproductive sterilization of Indigenous women without their consent, among others. Learning the truth of this dark history and ongoing neocolonialism on Turtle Island is a crucial first step toward becoming an ally and a necessary prerequisite to taking actions that decolonize social norms, discourses, and behaviours (Manuel & Derrickson 2015).

Non-Indigenous people can also experience the discomfort of decolonizing the mind when encountering Indigenous temporalities, referred to by Indigenous scholars as "relational time" (Pickering 2004). Relational time is not based on a western clock, nor is it defined by seconds, minutes, hours, days, weeks, or months. Rather, relational time is centred on building relationships, allowing the life cycles of the natural world to guide human activities, rather than a corporate clock buzzing us through a capitalist work-life balance (or lack thereof) (Pickering 2004). From the perspective of relational time, no minute is wasted on conversation or waiting or rest. All things happen when they are meant to happen, and the time it takes to get there is part of the journey. Yet, even after a decade of working as a Project Manager with Three Nations Education Group Inc. (TNEGI) and being aware of this myself, I am still learning to slow down and appreciate just being in relationship with others and the natural world, for this way of being is critical to *becoming* in allyship with the first peoples of the land.

As an example of this discomfort and allied *becoming* in practice, when TNEGI educators began requesting training from a non-Indigenous organization to help them harness their ancestral memory for land-based learning, I knew it was my responsibility to ensure the training was situated in relational accountability with Wabanakek. In other words, a decolonial, land-based education must be led by the first peoples of that land, be founded on their protocols and values, and be situated in the context of relationship to Mother Earth and all human and non-human beings within it. Given this, I approached our non-Indigenous partners and proposed we adopt a generative, relational [methodology](#) for the training that would hold space for and encourage an anti-colonial, Indigenous ethic to emerge and guide the learning process (Koller & Rasmussen, 2021).

Even though the goal was to let the training direction be generated by the participants, when the first day began, I found myself obsessed with schedules and timeframes and making sure everything followed a predesigned schedule. TNEGI had spent a lot of money on the initiative and, if successful, it could help decolonize the way training was conducted across Canada. So when the first day's agenda ran late because we had spent a lot of time getting to know one another and telling stories of the history of Esgenoopetitj, I began to feel an intense anxiety that we would fall behind and the value of the training would be reduced.

I was feeling the weight of the world on my shoulders, and when the day finally ended, I escaped to the ocean. The movement of the water always makes me feel better, reminding me with its immense energy that I am just a small part of a larger, dynamic world. It was a beach of rugged sands and whitecapped waves. I began to feel reinvigorated and walked along, my frustrations about the day spinning in my head.

Scanning the sand, I noticed the presence of smooth rocks with cylindrical holes. Being nearby fishing communities, I rationalized that these must be some element of a fishing apparatus, yet I had never seen anything like them. I sat down, cradling a dozen of these unique formations on my lap. As I stared out over the timeless, constant movement of the water—up and down, in and out—I was overcome by a feeling of finite presence on this planet and, surprisingly, a feeling of coming home that I had never felt in any place else.

I recalled the stories Mi'kmaq knowledge holder Bobby Sylliboy had shared with us that day, about how the Mi'kmaq people of the territory had sheltered Acadians that were being hunted by the British during the expulsion of 1755. Everyone had been in awe of Bobby's stories; the experience sparked a bond between us as we unpacked his teachings and reflected on how the past had shaped present-day society. I realized I had actually learned a great deal during our day on the land, not only about my Acadian ancestors and their unique relationship with the Mi'kmaq, but also about myself and where I came from, about the subjectivity of truth, and about the strategic alliances that made up our shared past and that could inform our shared future (Davis, O'Donnell & Shpuniarsky 2007).

Recognizing my privilege as an Acadian descendent in Mi'kmaq territory, I was able to reflect on my discomfort from the day's events and realize how unreasonable and rigid I was being. It became clear to me that the real value of learning *on* and *with* the land is the holding of space where teachings can arise by being in relationship with the land itself; moreover, building relationships takes time. In other words, my discomfort had been a reaction to experiencing relational time when I was so used to colonial time. Were I to let go of the expectation for a perfectly timed sequence of events, I might relax enough to

experience the value of the day—for creating the space to allow our relationships with one another and the land to grow.

The entire experience left me feeling better prepared to undertake my obligations as a Peace and Friendship Treaty person accountable to my Wabanaki and non-human relations. Decolonizing how we embody concepts of time is part of becoming an ally and living by the principle of relational [accountability](#) (Wilson 2008). To live relationally requires a presence of mind, body, and spirit that only exists outside of colonial time. Decolonizing how we embody time means slowing down and focusing on that which is most important for the betterment of the human and natural world—our relationship to one another and the land. It means being grounded in space and time, while allowing our respect and recognition of each other’s agency and our [non-human relations](#) to guide our behaviours in this shared place. This is a teaching I will never forget.

The next day, as I combed the shoreline with some teachers, I stumbled across another of the stones with a hole through it. I called Stacy Jones and Fran Dedam over and shared my discovery. They stared wide-eyed. “Pukulatmuj!” they said. They explained that Mi’kmaq stone spirits—known as Pukulatmuj—are tricksters that hide when they see humans. But when they are attracted to a person’s aura, they follow them, hiding behind rocks while peering out through a hole in the stone. Finding these special rocks is a sign Pukulatmuj have been following you because your spirit is shining bright. We had a laugh when I told them how many of these rocks I had encountered the night before! Not only did I feel specially chosen by Pukulatmuj, but in their telling me this story, I felt a genuine welcoming and belonging. As an ally, I knew I must honour this trust in [reciprocity](#), carrying the teachings I had received to bring

awareness to others in our mutual vision for a decolonized future.

Discussion Questions

- The author talks about relational accountability, mutual respect, responsibility, and reciprocity. How would you define these concepts and what do you think they have to do with Indigenous/non-Indigenous allyship?
- What does “being a Treaty person” mean to you, and what would you consider your obligations under the Treaties?
- Have you ever experienced relational time? How did it make you feel?
- How is the idea of “learning about the subjectivity of truth” related to allyship and reconciliation?

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Notes

1. Wabanakek is the homeland of Wabanaki peoples, including Mi'kmaq, Wolastoq (Maliseet), Peskotomuhkati, Penobscot, and Abenaki. Wabanakek encompasses Atlantic Canada, the Gaspe Peninsula in Quebec, and Northern Maine.

Alterity

Yael Cameron Klangwisan

Alterity is a term that refers to difference and otherness, specifically how the Other's difference plays a role in conceptualising one's own Self.

[Yael Cameron Klangwisan](#) is a senior lecturer in education at the Auckland University of Technology. Her research interests are interdisciplinary, spanning education, poetics, and religious studies, and connected by a focus on critical theory. She has published widely in these areas.

Oedipus and the Sphinx

The original epic of Oedipus and the Sphinx is a lost poem. This is itself a fascinating feature of the legend. We do not even have the entire telling of it. We only have what amounts to little pieces of a greater mosaic. In this telling, our scene takes place in the desert near Thebes, in Ancient Greece. There are two characters here, protagonist and antagonist, and at the moment of meeting the desert peels away until we are left with only these two, face to face.

In the first of the two figures, we have Oedipus. Raven-haired Oedipus is a young man of mysterious origins. He does not know where he comes from or who he is. This question of identity

hangs over his head and troubles him. He is a young man, a handsome one, and a hero. He is a man who yearns to prove himself. He is desperate to become someone. Thus, he has come into the desert to confront the Theban Sphinx and win or die in the attempt.

The other figure in the tale is the Sphinx, a monstrous creature with a woman's face. It is with some irony that we know, according to Apollodorus exactly, where she comes from and who she is. Sphinx is the daughter of two unnatural, serpentine creatures: Echidna and Typhon (or, according to Hesiod, Orthus, the three-headed dog). Sphinx has the face of a woman, but the body of a lion and the wings of an eagle. In this tale she is alone and dangerous in the desert, having wreaked havoc on Thebes, slaughtering its young men.



Figure 1: “Attic Kylix of the Painter of Oedipus” Vulci, 470 B.C. Painted red figure ceramic, conserved height 7.2 cm; diameter 26.3 cm. Cat. 16541. Vatican Museum, Rome.

On the Attic Kylix above, we see the moment of meeting captured by the Painter of Oedipus. Oedipus sits below, with the Sphinx on the pedestal above him. They are frozen in time. Face to face, their gazes lock onto each other. Oedipus’s gaze is on this creature. He is recognisably human, a man, one of us. The lonely Sphinx is Other. She is the product of a ghastly union between horrors. She is a terrifying amalgamation of human and animal parts. She is altogether strange. Oedipus becomes more man than ever before in this moment of locking gazes with the

Sphinx. Oedipus finally becomes a subject in the mirror of the Sphinx's gaze.

The Sphinx has a riddle that she learned from the muses. She sings to Oedipus, "What is that which has one voice and yet becomes four-footed and two-footed and three-footed?" This is a pertinent riddle for canny Oedipus, and he works it out immediately. "A man," he replies, because the riddle is the sum of his own life story. He is the one that has one voice, he once crawled on all fours, he now stands on two feet, and one day he will have to lean on his staff as an old man. This is who he is.

The Sphinx, defeated, dies on the spot. In one retelling she hurls herself from the citadel, and in another retelling, it is Oedipus who runs her through with his weapon. This tale is one way to explore the concept of Alterity. Alterity is, at its core, a relationship between Self and Other, where difference plays a defining role. What is understood as the Self crystallises in this moment.

Discussion Questions

- Imagine you are Oedipus in this pair? What or who do you see?
- If you were Oedipus, how might this meeting with a radically different Other make you feel more human, more a subject?
- Imagine you are the Sphinx in this pair? What might it feel like to be seen as so radically Other?
- How does gender operate in this vignette? How might this

vignette play out between pairs of different cultures, genders, sexualities, religions, or class?

Exercise

Watch the scene, [“The Council of Elrond”](#) from the film, *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring*. How do the author J.R.R. Tolkien and the filmmaker Peter Jackson present alterity in the encounters between races and peoples of Middle Earth? How does alterity figure as a feature of the Fellowship?

Additional Resources

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Anthropocene

CHELSEA RUSSELL

The **Anthropocene** is a term used to describe our current geological epoch—or geologic time—characterized and measured by powerful, widespread, and damaging human impacts on the Earth’s ecosystems.

Chelsea Russell is a PhD student at York University in the Communications and Culture Program. Her dissertation research analyzes female robots in videogames by focusing on feminist and affectual practices and questions of the posthuman. Currently, she is a SSHRC-funded research assistant on young people, digital capitalism, and the videogame platform Roblox.

(The) Anthropocene: Gaia's Epoch

The painting below illustrates a significant connection between the technological and the environmental. It shows the figure of Gaia (Mother Nature) stripped down to reveal an (almost) infectious technology within. The physical world of technology is depicted as solidly *within* Gaia. Notably, the figuration of Gaia is as a white woman, which follows from much of the [discourse](#) around the Anthropocene that portrays it as “undeniably *white*”

(Todd 2015, p. 246). This image therefore encapsulates that whiteness *in order to* highlight the political approach to understanding crises evoked within the Anthropocene.



Figure 1: Gaia

Another aspect of the painting is the technological intervention within her body. Gaia is subjected to the whims of technology,

while also being modeled after the goddess of love, Venus, in Sandro Botticelli's famous painting, [The Birth of Venus](#). The contrast between Gaia-as-Venus and 21st-century technology dramatizes the relationship humans have with both the past and the future. In bringing attention to both [Whiteness](#) and the technology within Gaia, this image is intended to evoke a sense of relationship to Earth but also to humanity's own conceptions of Earth. The anxiety of the Anthropocene is what is on display here. To understand the Anthropocene fully, however, it is important to consider the history of thinking that has led to its current conception and to the future of the ways we can understand it.

What is the Anthropocene?

The word Anthropocene can be broken down into its **etymological** parts: *anthropo*, which refers to “human,” and *-cene*, which relates to “**epoch**” or “geological time” (Ellis, 2013). The term thus invokes a moment in time in which human invention, enhancements, and actions have resulted in a massive shift in earth's **ecology**. Human intervention has affected the fundamental processes of nature and the natural order—especially those of non-humans. Despite the “abundance of evidence” that the Anthropocene has been established as an epoch, the concept continues to be rejected and considered controversial among politicians, scientists, and climatologists (Ellis, 2018, p. 25). This debate is largely couched in whether Earth has *left* the prior epoch—the Holocene. Nevertheless, human-based alterations to the Earth's ecology, biology, and climate are undeniable.

How did the Anthropocene begin?

Ecologist Eugene Stoermer and chemist Paul Crutzen **neologized** (created) the term *Anthropocene* in the 1980s. It was originally used to describe large-scale human activities that dominate earth's climate and biodiversity (Grusin, 2017, p. vii-viii). Although the term was coined only a few decades ago, it characterizes intense human impact upon ecological, geological, and biochemical processes. The history of conceptual Anthropocentrism emerged alongside the processes of capitalism, industrialisation, and the proliferation of nuclear power (Grusin, 2017, p. 1), bringing unprecedented **climate change**, ecological disruption, economic growth, and technological booms. These shifts in human activity imposed disproportionate human pressures on the Earth that would not have happened otherwise.

What is the impact of the Anthropocene?

The Anthropocene has found its way into popular discourse and culture. Public response to increasing ecosystem instability can be seen through the #FridaysforFuture hashtag, the Green New Deal, and, in 2021, an update to the [World Scientists' Warning to Humanity](#). Through these examples and others, we are coming to understand that negative environmental change affect both non-human and human beings.

The industrialization and technologizing of humanity can be understood as “a dominant factor shaping the Earth and its associated life-supporting systems” (Steffen, Crutzen & McNeill, 2007, p. 614). In other words, the impacts of the Anthropocene on both society and the Earth, are interrelated. Moreover, as the digital and industrial economies surge, the need for technological parts increases, and with it comes an increase in demand for efficiency. This cycle is contingent on the raw materials needed

for such practices, further accelerating the impact on Gaia as we continuously attempt to produce greater economic value.

Why the Anthropocene?

Human/non-human relationships have long been made into binaries: us versus them, self versus **other**. We see non-humans as being unlike us, and our approach to them is often in line with ideas of separation and difference. To understand the *whys* of the Anthropocene, we must grapple with new ways of thinking about old things. This includes concepts like **Cartesianism**, **corporeality**, **complexity**, **positivism**, and **epistemology**. Broadly, **decoloniality** encourages us to be aware of the hierarchical thinking that affects wider structures of culture, politics, and the environment.

By opening up our perspectives to modes of **deconstructing power**, we can share in responding to the ethical challenges threatening Earth. To move forward consciously, reshaping our understandings of power, capital, technology, and colonization are essential. The concept of the Anthropocene might seem bleak; however, forging paths forward with the Earth in mind can help cultivate new understandings and responsibilities of humans.

Discussion Questions

- How can we inspire dialogue and action about rethinking

environmental approaches for the Anthropocene? Where do we start? Where do we end?

- In what ways have our views failed to account for ways of understanding non-human, or even non-typical, languages? How have our dominant languages contributed to the Anthropocene? Who are we excluding and why is that important to understand?
- Pick an issue that is specific to humanity (e.g., economy) and one thing that we share with the non-human (e.g., water). Unpack both of these two things by trying to understand them, their importance, and the ways they contribute to the Anthropocene through the lens of a non-human creature. How does this help you understand them at a broader scale?

Exercise

Donna Haraway, inspired by Bruno Latour, invites her readers to see ourselves as part of a larger community of “compostists.” Compostists see themselves as symbiotic with all parts of the world and, as such, initiate “world caretaking” and “repairing damaged places.” To inhabit the mindset of a compostist requires trying to understand one’s impact.

For this exercise, pick an object in the room—it can be anything from a lightbulb to a tassel on a rug. Study the object and reflect on the various materials, mechanics, processes, and functions that brought it to where it is now. Having broken down the object into its

parts and processes, reflect on it from a compostist view. How would you remedy the processes of its creation/transport/usage? Or should you?

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Assemblage

N. BUCKY STANTON

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Tracing the Assemblage(s) of Archaeology

An **assemblage** is a combination of physical and abstract elements that, together, produce effects in the world while depending and being dependent on other assemblages for their existence and effects.

On a searing summer afternoon in southern Greece, a history is being constructed by an archaeological machine. I am part of this machine, acting as a **topographical** surveyor. Using metal rods with reflective mirrors and an electronic measuring device known as a Total Station, we record the site as a series of data points that are later processed into a simple map. From there, a digital **rendering** is created. This process takes place for every trench, every excavated layer, and every significant artifact

(pieces of metal, fragments of statues, large blocks of stone, etc.). After the topography team is done, the survey team takes measurements that they align with spatial and temporal models of the site. As we call in by radio to give my supervisor another data point, I wipe the sweat from my brow and scan the lower sanctuary of Mount Lykaion.

Before me is an array of things, people, and techniques, all working together to excavate, analyze, and produce an understanding of the site. This array includes: the survey data on the hard drive of the Total Station; plastic buckets loaded with newly excavated, muddy tiles; yesterday's trowels and shovels waiting to be sharpened; site directors and supervisors discussing their findings and how they align with the description of the site made by the ancient geographer, Pausanias; and LIDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) data. My supervisor radios back to confirm reception of my data and to tell me to hop in a trench while he starts up the drone to take aerial photographs.

I jump into the closest trench, ready to help. It is dense with material today, including partially exposed ceramics, animal bones, and other refuse requiring systematic, layer-by-layer, excavation. Helping one of the archaeologists, I pull out a fairly intact roof tile. We discuss its features. Using her scholarly expertise, the archaeologist identifies it as a vaguely Hellenistic tile, Type 1 or 2, noting the texture and color of its exposed center. She then tells me excitedly about an earlier find from another trench, a small piece of rare pottery. Soon, the work day ends, and we pack up. I carry back a weighty bucket of tiles, along with my survey equipment, back to the vans. We return to the laboratory in the village below the site.

Back at the lab, the organic and non-organic artifacts are gently cleaned, left to dry in the sun, and further processed. The lab

team ‘reads’ the artifacts and fits them into existent categorization models. Minor differences in the color, texture, and consistency of ceramic materials results in them being given different names, interpretations, and chronological assignments. Using microscopes, chemical analysis, and other methods, the lab team interprets the artifacts further, in order to make their ultimate interpretation. These interpretations are not unique to our archaeological site, but are also referenced to a meta-collection of materials that have been catalogued throughout the archaeological excavation. This means that they also are subject to the same assumptions, ambiguities, and mistakes that have previously been made in classifying other artifacts.

This whole excavation machine produces “artifactual data,” which is both influenced by and influences classifications across the field of archaeology. Yet the history it constructs is *multiple*, which means it can be organized and understood in different ways. For example, it could be aligned with a period in history (e.g., the “Early Helladic I”), a discipline (e.g., “Eastern Mediterranean Iron Age Archaeology”), or a publication (e.g., the book, *Wonders and Mysteries of Mount Lykaion*). Together, the excavation machine, the data, the way it is interpreted, and how it aligns with previous work creates an assemblage.

What makes it an assemblage is that, even as it can be put together in one way, it can also be continually undone and redone by other work. Over time, historical periods are questioned and redefined in the face of new evidence. Disciplines expand and contract as their frameworks are negotiated by practitioners and the institutions that maintain them. And books are researched, written, and published, but then face being dismantled as readers experience and interpret them. (In some cases, books are also dismantled by the humidity of the room they are kept in, by the transformation of the languages in which they are

written, and by other changes.) Assemblages are inherently able to live, grow, decay, and even die as the elements and relationships that make them change over time.

The archaeological assemblage I participated in on Mount Lykaion is further embedded in other structures and relationships, themselves assembled: foreign and regional universities that operate excavation sites; scholarly societies and funding institutions; the Greek national ministry of culture and its local branch; policies that govern artifact removal; storage and shipment practices that the Greek state and foreign nations negotiate. Even more broadly, the assemblage is also connected to the cultural heritage funding schemes of the European Union and institutions like UNESCO World Heritage. And, transecting all these bodies and processes are the effects they produce, from the production and value of artifacts to heritage management plans and even feelings of wonder and connection to the construction known as 'the Western tradition'.

At the level of theory, an assemblage *holds its many parts together*, forming a productive arrangement that is often enveloped by other assemblages. The example above is about archaeology, but the idea of assemblages can apply to all sorts of social situations. We humans are inextricably parts of assemblages ourselves, including other humans, but also the things we interact with and the relationships that guide that interaction. The past itself is not an assemblage, but the ways we represent it, give meaning to it, govern it, and make history from it are.

So why are assemblages important if they are without boundaries and continually changing? It is because the ways we understand them, our definitions and participation in them, also create limits that in turn can create, construct, destroy, and redefine other assemblages. By understanding that assemblages

are a conceptual representation of the constant ‘tuning process’ of both social and material forces, we can critically understand that neither the *social* nor *material* is pre-given. By extension, the fundamentally defined elements of experience—and the additive thing we call reality—are also not given, inherent, or obvious. Everything is made. Concepts are physical and matter is abstract.

Discussion Questions

- Recall a group of people and tools and techniques, like the archaeological machine described above, of which you have been a part. As a group, what did you produce? What happened to the things you produced?
 - Imagine where these things went, and what other machines or assemblages they might have come into contact with. Did the things change because of this contact?
 - Did the things you produced create other effects in the world? Might these effects have influenced other products, ideas, or assemblages? If so, how?
- Choose a particular object from your daily routine. Try to imagine this object as both *an* assemblage and *in other* assemblages. What is it made of? How is it made? What does it mean? To who does it mean what? What is its value? What kind of value does it represent?
- With these questions (inevitably incompletely) answered, make a sketch, a map, or another sort of representation with the object at the center. Then building off the object, connect it to other assemblages and explore them. For example, a can of shaving cream functions to spray foam,

but is also folded into, and enveloped by other assemblages: ideas about shaving, which are related to social and cultural ideas; spaces like the bathroom cabinet where it sits, and the house that is designed around it to contain a particular domestic assemblage; materials like aluminum, soap, and nitrogen.

- Try to encourage this ‘exploding connectivity’ from the first object, noting the folding of social, cultural, psychic, and material forces into assemblages of objects and ideas that hold relationships and processes together.
- Reflecting on your sketch or map, find examples of assemblages ‘holding together’ processes. What type of things seem to hold things together more—objects or ideas?

Additional Resources

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Cartesianism

ADA S. JAARMSA AND SUZE G. BERKHOUT

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Cartesianism refers to a way of thinking that accepts dualisms—supposedly oppositional pairs of concepts like mind/body, good/evil, and nature/culture—rather than a more integrated or fluid way of understanding the world.

medicine, and related to mental health, including treatment resistance in mental health, early psychosis, transplant medicine, and placebo/nocebo studies.

Descartes video animation: Eva-Marie Stern & Maya Morton Ninomiya

Overcoming the mind/body split by reflecting on the ethical stakes of dualisms

Cartesianism is the shorthand term used to categorize ideas that reflect the 17th-century philosophy of René Descartes. Precisely because Descartes’s approach to knowledge continues to shape ideas today, his last name has become a placeholder for particular knowledge claims. Whenever there are specific dualisms at play in an argument or method, they can be described as “Cartesian.” A dualism is a binary or a split; it works to keep separate two entities or dynamics, like subjectivity and objectivity. The most famous dualism that lines up with Cartesianism is the mind/body dualism.

Descartes upheld a ‘theory of mind’, in which the body is entirely separate from the mind. In many cases, it is tempting for researchers—and for members of the public—to assume that this Cartesian theory from long ago is still valid today. Contemporary theorists like [M. Remi Yergeau](#), who is a Disability Studies scholar, lay out a competing theory of mind in which bodies and minds are entirely entangled with each other.

The adjective, “Cartesian,” can be used as a neutral descriptor to point out ideas that align with Descartes’s, but more often, it is used as a criticism or a corrective. One reason for the negative association between Descartes’s ideas and contemporary research has to do with the impact of dualisms themselves.

Dualisms like the mind/body split can be so prevalent that they can be hard to recognize, and even harder to overturn and replace with methods that affirm dynamic connections between bodies and minds.

When researchers study things without interrogating their own Cartesian commitments, it can lead to faulty or even prejudicial research methods. Consider the case of the placebo effect, in which a placebo (like a sugar pill, a doctor's white coat, or a sham surgery) might prompt palpable healing in a patient. The Cartesian mind/body dualism can block a researcher's capacity to study these dynamics: they might refer, for example, to the 'mere' placebo, a phrase that locates placebos "only in the mind" of patients rather than in real-world interactions between patients, treatments, bodies, and minds.

Such phrases can pose risks to research methods because, as Bruno Latour explains, they set minds (or representation) in competition with bodies (or even reality itself). Latour offers an instructive way to make sense of this competition: he calls it a "zero-sum understanding" of minds and bodies (2004, p. 8). Whenever Cartesian dualisms are at play, there can only ever be competition between minds and reality. Thanks to decades of research in cognitive science, disability studies, science studies, and other disciplines, we now understand that our minds are not separate from our bodies, nor are they in competition with reality. Research methods are developing that take cues from this understanding. Margaret Price, for example, suggests that we use the word "bodymind" to overthrow the dualism all together (2014).

This suggestion is an ethical and methodological one. There can be both harmful and healing effects that arise from interactions between physicians and patients. When a patient is advised that

they might experience a negative side effect from a treatment, for example, even if that treatment happens to be a placebo, they may well develop the adverse (unpleasant or negative) symptom: this is called a *nocebo* effect. Similarly, when someone has experienced trauma in medical (or medicalized) settings, they might experience nocebo effects in medical situations in the future.

The ethical stakes of nocebos extend to the methods by which patients are told about potential side effects, as well as to the [affects](#) and relational dynamics between doctors and patients, and to the designs of spaces like doctors' offices and medical institutions. More broadly, the ethical stakes of Cartesian dualisms extend to the very assumption of who gets to count as human in the first place. If "human personhood" is tied closely to particular kinds of consciousness or cognitive capacity, then lines can get drawn around who is and who is not "conscious," ultimately informing who is (and is not) deserving of ethical consideration *as* human.

Exercise

Watch the three videos in the following order:

1. *Descartes' First Three Meditations*



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/showingtheory/?p=104>

2. Lessons from the Nocebo Effect



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/showingtheory/?p=104>

3. Unpacking “Lessons from the Nocebo Effect”: A conversation with the artists



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/showingtheory/?p=104>

To read the video transcripts, see below.

In the first video, we travel back to 1641, the year in which Descartes wrote his *Meditations*, where we discover two thought experiments Descartes would like us to undertake, from our own first-person perspectives. As a first thought experiment, notice how you might be deceived by your own senses. (Note that this experiment goes against the grain, almost completely, of **empirical** research methods, in which the senses are key for achieving reliable knowledge.) Can you think of an example in which one of your senses led you astray? As a second thought experiment, reflect on whether you have ever been deceived by a charismatic or ‘evil’ genius. Updating Descartes to our own era, can you think of someone, perhaps a famous influencer or expert, who convinced you of something that you later realized was false? Thinking through these two **hypotheses** from Descartes’s first three *Meditations* is a way to experience how or why Descartes’s ideas have proven compelling for centuries. Descartes’s enthusiasms about doubting are connected to **humanist** presumptions about freedom: if you can ‘think,’ then you can doubt and demonstrate your own essential freedom as a human.

In the second video, we move all the way into the present day, in which biomedical research into the placebo effect has led to additional research into the nocebo effect. Such research helps us to question and overturn Cartesian dualisms. This video was initially created for psychiatry residents at the University of Toronto, who needed to learn more about the ethical stakes of their own clinical work. What do you think is the key lesson for the psychiatry residents in this video? How would you explain the ethical significance of nocebos, in your own words?

In the third video, we hear from the artists who designed and drew the animation for the video, “Lessons from the Nocebo Effect,” Eva-Marie Stern and Maya Morton Ninomiya. They explain the various

choices that they made, as they worked together to try to visualize the nocebo effect in ways that illuminate rather than obscure body-mind connections. Did this conversation with the artists change your own initial impressions of the nocebo animation in any way? Which choice did you find the most effective, in terms of visualizing the bodymind connections? How is the **theory of mind**, visualized by these artists, different from the 17th-century theory of mind that you encountered in the Descartes video?

Discussion Questions

- One way to understand a philosophy like Descartes's is to think it through from your own first-person perspective. This way, you can *do* the very thing that Descartes is promising that you can do: namely, to doubt. It's challenging, though, to doubt every single thing in your mind, especially because some forms of knowledge *feel* or *seem* so convincing. What form of skepticism seems more important to you: questioning the knowledge that comes from your senses or questioning the knowledge that comes from external sources of authority?
- Had you ever heard of the nocebo effect, before reading this text? The term "nocebo" was coined in the 1960s, as a way to name something that had been puzzling biomedical researchers: some participants in clinical research trials who were part of placebo control groups were developing the very side effects that the 'real' treatment could produce in people. This phenomenon was like the opposite of the placebo effect, because an inert or non-pharmacological treatment was able to elicit real, embodied symptoms. Thanks to the emerging field of Nocebo Studies, we now

know a lot more about the many kinds of interactions and experiences that can lead to nocebo effects. Can you think of experiences in your own life in which the markers of authority (a white lab coat, or a medical brochure that describes potential side effects) might have translated into negative or adverse symptoms in your own bodymind?

- One of the challenges described by the artists who made the video, “Lessons from the Nocebo Effect” (see below), concerns the prevalence of Cartesian dualisms in contemporary neuroscience. After watching the video, what do you think about the artists’ strategies for depicting neuroactivity as **biocultural** and embodied, instead of entirely separate from the body? Did the artists’ reflections change your own mind about how you imagine or make sense of brain activity?
- At the end of the third video (see below), we hear the artist declare, “I love how *the way* you convey something is at least as important as *what* you convey.” Earlier, she makes a similar declaration: “The medium is the message.” These statements get to the heart of the problem of Cartesian dualisms. What are the ethical stakes of *how* the body-mind connection is depicted, visualized, or theorized? Put differently, what kinds of exclusions emerge from Cartesian assumptions about consciousness or other key aspects of cognitive phenomena?

Additional Resources

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Video Transcripts

Descartes's *Meditations* (1641)

Descartes' "Meditations" was written a long time ago, but in a lot of ways, it was written to you as a modern thinker. Descartes writes, "I marvel at how prone my mind is to errors." And what he'd really like to do is invite you to marvel at the very same thing: to marvel at the errors in your own mind.

As a student, you're likely already pretty good at this. Isn't it true, for example, that a lot of the opinions that you held on to when you were young are no longer all that convincing or even plausible? But here's the problem that Meditation One wants us to grapple with. It's the problem of being deceived by our own senses. "Surely," Descartes writes, "whatever I had admitted until now as most true, I received either from the senses or through the senses." How can we find a way to question those truths that seems so certain, precisely because they stem from our own perceptions and sensations? [00:01:00] Descartes gives us a pretty creative method, which is to hypothesize that we're dreaming. We're not even awake. Of course, potentially our taste buds are lying to us, if we think that a strawberry tastes delicious, if it's happening in a dream. This is a great way to prompt some doubt that wouldn't otherwise take place.

But notice that Descartes is relying on an idea of thinking that is not how we think about thinking. He's writing in 1641, almost 400 years ago. And he is envisioning our minds as containers. They are containers for one important thing: ideas. Everything we think is an idea, an idea in our mind. I might taste that strawberry, but, on Descartes' philosophy, what's really happening is that everything in the mind is having an idea. Including even the idea that came from a sensation.

We can simplify this by laying out his claims. He writes, "Nothing can exist in the mind of which the mind [00:02:00] is not conscious." This is centuries before Freud gave us a way to think about the unconscious" ideas we don't have access to. For Descartes, if something is in the mind, then it is an idea that is present to us, which means it's up to us to figure out which ideas represent reality and which do not.

Descartes wants us to find a way to question everything we hold in our minds, so that we can build up knowledge again, based on the certainties that we discover. And so here's the second problem: some ideas in our minds, they just seem so logical, like say basic math equations. But they are almost impossible to question. Descartes asks, "Since I judge that others sometimes make mistakes in matters that they believe they know most perfectly, may I not in like fashion be deceived, every time I add two and three?"

He knows that "two plus three" is very difficult to doubt. It just seems so correct that these numbers add [00:03:00] up to five! And so here he gives us another creative way to doubt: it's another hypothesis or thought experiment. "Maybe there's an evil genius. Maybe I have been deceived into thinking that 'two plus three equals five' by some kind of charismatic, brilliant deceiver." This leads Descartes to affirm a pretty amazing kind of freedom. He writes, "Even if it is not within my power to know anything is true, it's cer-

tainly is within my power to take care resolutely, to withhold my assent to what is false.” The one power no one can take away from me is the power of doubting: withholding assent to what is false.

In meditation Two, we find the claim that people tend to be referring to when they use the word “Cartesian,” which is just the adjective form of Descartes’ last name. Descartes writes, “This ‘I,’ that is, the soul by which I am what I am, is entirely distinct from the body [00:04:00] and would not fail to be what it is, even if the body did not exist.” Descartes is really famous for this claim: that there’s such a divide between the mind and the body that I would still be who I am, even if my body wasn’t there at all. A lot of people do not like this claim, that the mind and the body are completely separate, that only the mind is important, but it enables Descartes to make his key epistemological, meaning referring to knowledge, his key claim.

He writes, “I can make a judgment only about things that are known to me. I know that I exist.” The very fact that I am doubting means that I am demonstrating at last something certain, which is that I exist! I think, therefore I am! The Latin word he uses here is “cogito.” This is the discovery that I am a thinking thing. It’s the discovery of the cogito.

And this brings us to the third meditation. I exist, Descartes writes, and therefore God exists. Wait, how does this [00:05:00] logic go? He is busy taking an inventory of every idea in his mind, and he notices an idea that he could not have come up with himself. It’s the idea of perfection. Who is great enough to have caused such an idea? It must’ve been God, the only perfect being Descartes can imagine.

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Lessons from the Nocebo Effect

Have you ever noticed that sometimes, when you're starting someone on a medication, they seem to improve with just that first dose or even that their assessment and being handed the prescription starts to shift their mood in the right direction? "The placebo effect" is the term to describe this phenomenon.

"Placebo" comes from Latin, meaning, "it will please." The word is used to describe scenarios in which our bodies declare what we believe we know about what heals: we get better just by visiting the doctor's office, or even by ingesting a sugar pill. The doctor's white coat, the institutional setting, the [00:01:00] diplomas on the wall: these symbols communicate messages of help, health and healing.

They intersect with common sensical beliefs in what works. For example, that two pills are stronger than one, or that brand names are better than generic. These symbols also intersect with how the message is delivered. And we really do get better. The placebo effect sees those positive beliefs change and shift our physiology.

But there is a darker side to this story. Decades ago, medical practitioners also observed that adverse effects arose even when patients received inert treatments, such as the sugar pill that are commonly used in the control arm of a clinical trial. The control arm participants would get the very same side effects as the treatment. Just after [00:02:00] hearing about the possibilities of those adverse outcomes, the term "nocebo" was coined, a twist on the centuries-old placebo, sometimes called placebo's evil twin.

The nocebo effect is the embodiment of anxiety, pain and distress. These effects are generated through anticipation and expectation of a negative outcome, particularly in healthcare settings. For some groups of people, the diplomas on the wall, the clipboard, the examination table, or even the psychiatrist couch are symbols of trauma, suffering, powerlessness, and distress.

They do not demarcate help or healing or positive aspect. Nocebo effects are now studied in their own right and through a range of [00:03:00] experimental models. But we can draw on our own clinical experience to think about when we see them. In psychiatry, nocebo effects are prominently seen within the practice of informing patients about potential risks of treatments or interventions, through an informed consent process, which is meant to protect patients from harm. The explicit mention of side effects generates an expectation of harm that can produce the very harms being warned of. We often hear that patients who are nervous about starting a medication are more likely to have every side effect that you list.

So what do you do? Informed consent is a central tenet of ethical clinical practice. It is how we operationalize respect for persons, which is the foundation of the principle of autonomy. But with the [00:04:00] nocebo effect, we get a clash of principles. Informed consent as an instance of autonomy butts up against the principle of non-maleficence: the famous dictum from the Hippocratic oath that we first do no harm.

What the nocebo effect means for informed consent is a hot topic in contemporary bioethics. Physicians have obligations to convey truthful information to promote autonomy and not to cause undue harm. To understand the debate, it's worth taking a deeper look at what's happening in an embodied way. How the social context is also functioning below the surface, so to speak.

A wide range of studies have investigated how context worsens a symptom. At one level, external cues, instructions or information are thought to generate [00:05:00] negative expectancies. For example, in study protocols where a local anesthetic was injected, the words used determined the pain rating. Those who were told that the injection would feel like a bee sting and a burn had consistently greater pain score than those told in positive terms that the anesthetic would numb the area of skin to make the procedure more comfortable.

In other experimental settings, a negative expectation about a particular treatment can abolish the otherwise analgesic effects of strong agents, such as opioids and nitrous oxide. An individual's level of mistrust, apprehension, or negative expectations about a healthcare encounter are what drive the physiology of the nocebo effect.

[00:06:00] Nocebo induced pain has also been shown to be mediated by cholecystokinin signaling, a neuromodulator of pain and anxiety. When brain imaging techniques have been used to study the impact of negative verbal suggestions, it's been shown that the psychological findings correlate to signal changes in the anterior cingulate cortex, prefrontal cortex, and insula, and that these effects are in the opposite direction of positive expectations.

Furthermore, in studies involving deception, it didn't matter whether it was the participants receiving the drug or the physicians administering the drug who were informed that an opioid infusion would be interrupted. Just being told that the analgesic could stop was enough to lose the painkilling effect, [00:07:00] even though the drug was still being given. A loss of analgesia was associated with an increased activity in a participant's hippocampus. Expectations and drugs operate in concert.

What this tells us is that placebo and nocebo effects are really meaning responses, expressing highly specific beliefs in bodily terms of symptoms or symptom alleviation. These beliefs and these bodily experiences are culturally as well as biologically specific. Instead of our usual way of thinking about minds as separate from our bodies or culture as distinct from nature, what we understand from placebo and nocebo effects is that we're a complex system that is social the whole way up [00:08:00] and biological the whole way down.

The qualities of the setting, the interpersonal communication and the dynamics between physician and patient themselves produce health or healing. We have to shift toward a far more relational view of how cure and harm work in medicine. Social context shapes what happens within our bodies and how we respond to clinical care. This has implications for how we approach communication, rapport building, and ethical engagement with our patients.

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“Lessons from the Nocebo Effect”: A conversation with the artists

Eva-Marie Stern: I'm Eva Marie Stern. And I'm an art therapist and a medical educator at the University of Toronto.

Maya Morton Ninomiya: And I'm Maya Morton Ninomiya, and I am currently studying health studies at the University of Waterloo. Yeah, I think this was the first like video that I'd spent, like working with another artist on the, on the visual. I really enjoyed having someone else, especially someone like an experienced artist, like Eva Marie. After a little while, we got into a rhythm of kind of how to go back and forth effectively, and kind of work on it in chunks. And I

found Eva Marie drew up sort of a storyboard. We kind of take a section and then kind of draw it out and then have a call to talk over that, to discuss it and make sure we were on the same page. And then I would sort of do my drawings, send like a draft to [00:01:00] Eva Marie, and then she could give her initial thoughts. And it was just very helpful to get input and feedback and have someone to brainstorm the concepts and the ideas, someone else who is thoroughly in the animation as well.

Eva-Marie: At the beginning of the project, it felt like work. As we got going, it felt like play. And the images that we came up with, the ideas that turned into images, would suggest the next images. The illustrations made their own magic. They just brought the story forward.

Ada Jaarsma: So the first set of questions is about your aesthetic choices. The way that you together chose to render the brain, for instance, we found spot on and also really worth reflecting on.

Eva-Marie: Well, for my part, I wanted to de-emphasize the neuroanatomy, detailed science [00:02:00] aspect of the lecture. And I wanted to emphasize the human and relationship, uh, aspects of it, and Maya, so Maya and I had agreed that we would simplify the, the sketch of it, the image of it, but then Maya added these little feet on and had the brain just standing on the person's head, which I thought was brilliant because it created this extra relationship that I hadn't, I hadn't conceived of, but Maya came up with.

Maya: We were talking about maybe drawing brain scans or highlighting that specific section of the brain that was affected, but thought that that would just distract from the fact that the main point we were trying to get across was that it's expectations and drugs that are operating together.

Ada: Um, another really [00:03:00] lovely choice you made was shifting from placebos, which is a term I think most people are familiar with, to the term that is kind of my favorite, but a lot of people don't know it, nocebos. And you had a really wonderful visual way to make that flip.

Maya: So I know we wrote, like at the beginning in the book, like had thought on the one page, the placebos and then nocebos on the other and kind of did that like old vintage movie style kind of, um, filter when it went to nocebos, to kind of emphasize like the foreboding presence of nocebos.

Yeah. I remember just playing around with the, yeah, with the filters or wanting to keep the same image on the screen, but wanting to, yeah, to change moods. It's just a quick like switch. And then suddenly it's like, it's the same, the same setting, but it can just flip for someone, depending on what their expectancy is.

Eva-Marie: The common feature between the [00:04:00] nocebo effect and the work that Maya and I did was our approach to it. So being open to what happens and letting the dynamics guide us to our, um, successful completion.

Maya: For me, like I sort of went into it, I didn't know too much about placebos and nocebos going in. I think my understanding of it was the superficial, like the sugar pill and the randomized control trial and going, yeah, learning a lot more about the relational parts of it and the social parts and that there are biological impacts that you can study, but that they can originate from the social side of things as well. Not just the, what you're ingesting.

Eva-Marie: It got me thinking a lot about a concept that's very dear to my heart, which is how the medium is the message. [00:05:00] And I really loved, uh, Maya's style of illustration for this project, because Maya's style is very simple, straightforward, direct, unfussy, uh, not caught up in technicalities. And that's exactly the message that I think the concept of placebo and the nocebo we're trying to impart to practitioners, which is it's not all about having the perfect technique as a professional.

It's about being human and real and open, And, um, so I'm a big fan of Maya's style, as part of the message that we're trying to convey. I had a few priorities going, going into it, going into this project. One was that the, the [00:06:00] animation be, um, an instance of trauma informed education. And so that whole part where the patient is behind prison bars and gets smaller and smaller.

I was so thrilled with that part because to me it, it illustrates beautifully what it feels like to feel intimidated, scared, um, trapped and nobody else knowing it. But that's the feeling inside. And it happens all the time in doctor's offices, all the time, all the time. It's invisible. And so making the invisible, visible felt like a really an ethical punch.

Another thing was, um, I was really dead set on making the practitioner and the patient interchangeable, that they be, [00:07:00] um, visually interchangeable beneath their clothes, like beneath the cultural getup, beneath the roles that we're all, um, we're all, both: we can all be both. We can be patient, and we can be practitioner; at a moment's notice it can switch.

And so the whole idea that the placebo effect or the nocebo effect only happens to certain people who are particularly vulnerable to these things: throw that out, and make sure that we convey the message that we all, we all experience, uh, relationships and interactions

in these profoundly personal ways that are indubitably linked to our histories and our expectations.

That was really important. And I feel like we totally nailed it at the end, [00:08:00] right, Maya? When at the very end, where we have the social all the way up and biological all the way down. And it's the relationship that matters. That, when we had, when we'd figured that one out, I was happy with the whole thing.

Maya: yeah. I remember asking you and yes, discussing them looking as similar as possible and just the, the doctor's outfit and the patient's clothing looking different. And especially in this scene where they both are blindfolded. Yeah. Both the doctor and the patient, not knowing, um, What the treatment is, um, them looking so similar and being blindfolded by the same blindfold, um, being struck by the same lightning.

Eva-Marie: Yeah. We're all in this together. We're all the same, under our clothes, we're all the same. Under our degrees, we're all the same. I love how the way you convey something is at least as important as [00:09:00] the, what you convey.

Citizenship

SHERYL-ANN SIMPSON

Sheryl-Ann Simpson is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Geography and Environmental Studies at Carleton University. She studies citizenship because she is interested in how people can make change in their communities and how we can move together towards greater equity and social justice.

Who gets to belong?

When flying from Europe to North America, everyone lines up to pass through an exit check where all the folks with burgundy passports from European countries breeze through, while the blue, black or green passport holders from African, American, Asian, or Pacific countries get some extra attention. When they get off the plane in North America, the burgundy passport holders end up in the long line, while the folks with navy passports from Canada and the U.S. are quickly waved through.

Citizenship is a term that helps to identify and understand who gets to participate in decision making, who gets taken care of, who gets to feel like they belong, and who is excluded.

Passports prove *formal citizenship*, so they come with a set of formal **rights**. For example, having a Canadian passport means you can always travel back to Canada, to live and work there. That passport also gives you the right to vote in elections—one form of being involved in making decisions about what the country should be like in the future.

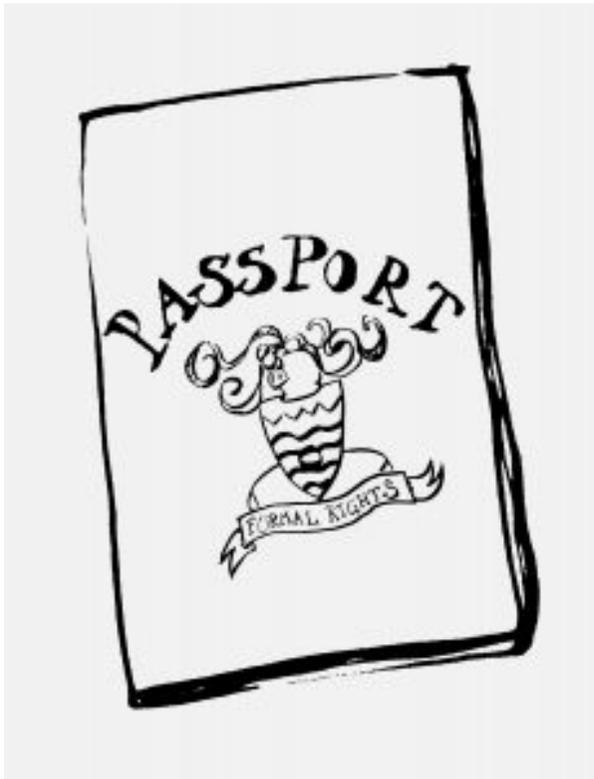


Figure 1: A passport, representing formal citizenship

People with different passports have different formal rights. Someone with a Brazilian passport is free to travel to Brazil at any time, to live, work and vote there. Someone with a Canadian passport needs a visa to enter Brazil—special permission if they

want to stay and work—and can't vote in elections. Passports are one way of showing who is a citizen: who belongs, who gets to move across a border, who gets to stay in a country, and who gets to be a part of decision making in the country.

Having the same passport is supposed to mean that you get the same formal rights, but that's not always the case. It was only in the 1980s, for example, that British women became able to pass on citizenship to their children born outside of the U.K.

Apartheid laws in South Africa officially created different tiers of citizenship based on race, as defined by the government. And all around the world, we see situations where people have more or less access to their rights, based on race, caste, class, gender and sexuality, age, ability, and disability.

In 1948, the United Nations published the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#), which was a response to the violence and harm of the Holocaust and World War II. The Declaration set out rights that everyone should have access to, regardless of what passport they carry, and even if they don't carry a passport. Importantly, various of these rights relate explicitly to care. For example, when facing persecution, individuals ought to have the right to seek asylum, the right to social security, and the right to rest and leisure.

As the COVID pandemic rolled across the globe, people organized to make sure that neighbours were taken care of, often dropping off groceries for those folks who couldn't go out themselves. Dropping off groceries can be part of an *active citizenship*, in which figuring out who belongs and who should get to make decisions relates to taking responsibility for the community. Checking in on a neighbour is one way you can do that; running a business like a grocery store that also supports the community could be another. Volunteering, getting involved in politics

beyond just voting, and taking care of the rest of the environment are other ways one can demonstrate responsibility.

Active citizenship also cuts across the lines of formal citizenship. Someone might carry a passport, but would never think to drop off groceries for a neighbour. Someone might live in a country where they don't have formal citizenship, but they might still look out for neighbours and always try to be responsible for the care of those around them.



Figure 2: Grocery shopping for others, representing active citizenship.

In nation states in the Global North, like Canada, the U.K., the U.S., and European countries, citizenship tends to focus more on formal status and rights than on actions and responsibilities. But there are other ways of deciding who belongs and who gets to make decisions. Action and responsibility are at the centre of ideas around kinship in, for example, Nêhiyaw¹, Métis², Anishinaabe³, and Mushkegowuk⁴ worldviews. In these contexts, kinship centres around responsibility and relationships. For

example, people are expected to take actions to be in good relations with kin and to regularly renew those relationships. Further, they are expected to act in ways that do not harm kin, but rather support the thriving of kin. Importantly, kinship also extends beyond human beings to plant, animal, elemental, and spirit beings. In this view, humans have responsibilities to those beings as well.



Figure 3: A garden, representing a citizenship community of members

Gardening means constantly deciding what belongs and what doesn't. A tomato plant growing in your tomato patch? Great. A tomato plant that's found its way into your rose bushes? Well, suddenly that's an unwelcome weed. Milkweed, a main food source for monarch butterflies, was classified as a noxious weed in the Province of Ontario until the mid-2010s, so it was illegal to grow and you had to remove it if you found some in your garden. Today there are campaigns trying to encourage people to grow milkweed to support the endangered monarch populations.

Choosing what belongs (or not) is a way of deciding what plants have membership in the garden. Membership describes who is a part of the *citizenship community*. Who is recognized as belonging by other citizens, who is cared for, and who is excluded (or to go back to our garden, *weeded out*)?

Nation state governments have largely taken on the role of gardener, setting up laws about who will be recognized as a member. A lot of these laws are focused on keeping people out, on limiting movement, for example, through all of those elaborate border checks where passports have to be shown. They focus on *weeding out*—on making sure specific people stay in their designated areas.

But there are other ways to think about membership. Proponents of the [No One Is Illegal movement](#), for example, argue that people should be able to move freely—to live, work, play, worship, and learn where they want, and where it is safest for them. They also argue that cities should provide sanctuary, where people would be taken care of without fear that they will be arrested or deported. For example, if you were living somewhere without formal status you could still go to the doctor, or send your kids to school, and the people who run those services wouldn't ask about or report your status to anyone else. Advocates of sanctuary cities envision a garden in which there really aren't any weeds. Instead, plants from all over can jumble up against one another, and all receive care. Taking the metaphor a step further, and following ideas from permaculture, in which gardeners try to learn from existing ecosystems, having a broad diversity of plants would be considered a strength.

Ideas around citizenship are one way to help answer questions about who belongs, who gets to make decisions, who receives care, and who is excluded. Depending on our theory of citizen-

ship, we will answer these questions differently. While a theory of formal citizenship is the least generous in terms of who counts, adding ideas about responsibilities and active citizenship let us focus on how we want to live together, while ideas about membership can help us think about citizenship's associated rights, responsibility, and care, as something that everyone deserves.

Discussion Questions

- In your own words, describe the different types of citizenship explained above.
- Think of a time when you felt like you belonged. What helped you to feel that way? Where were you, what were you doing, and who were you with? What effect did this feeling of belonging have on you? Then think of a time when you felt like you didn't belong, and answer the same questions.
- Consider the concept of active citizenship. What are some of the responsibilities you take on to care about your own community? How are these activities significant to you?
- There are different types of citizenship described above. Which do you think should be used to decide who belongs?

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Notes

1. McAdam, 2015.
2. Todd, 2019.
3. Craft, 2013.
4. Daigle, 2018.

Commodification

SAMPHE BALLAMINGIE

[Samphe Ballamingie](#) is a documentary filmmaker and writer, sharing stories of climate justice, community organizing, and sustainable urban design.

Instagram's Commodification of Identity

I used to be obsessed with Tumblr and Instagram star, Orion Carloto. She embodied the person I wanted to become: a proud [Queer](#) writer, photographer, and filmmaker. She was elegant and artistic. Scrolling through her Instagram feed, I would think: *I want to be her*. Or, more accurately, *I want to have what she has*. But upon closer examination, I realized that Carloto carefully orchestrated her lifestyle—the clothing she wore, the events she attended, and the photos she posted into an aesthetic that had the potential to be commodified (see Figure 1).

Commodification typically refers to the transformation and reduction of ecosystems and their components into natural resources sold on the open market (e.g., forests into trees into lumber or wood pulp).

Carloto's Instagram is not the only example of how a social media feed can be turned into a billboard. Corporate sponsorships often hide within the guise of online identities—expressed through art or fashion or sport. Growing up on/with/through the Internet, I felt my identity to be overwhelmingly tied to consumerism. As a teen, I expressed myself by purchasing clothing, jewelry, and makeup. If I saw an Instagram influencer sporting a new pair of earrings, I would look for similar earrings at H&M or Simons. Product placements woven into lifestyle posts commodify identity and spur an exchange of goods and services on the open market. This commodification of identity reflects the totalizing effect of capitalism.

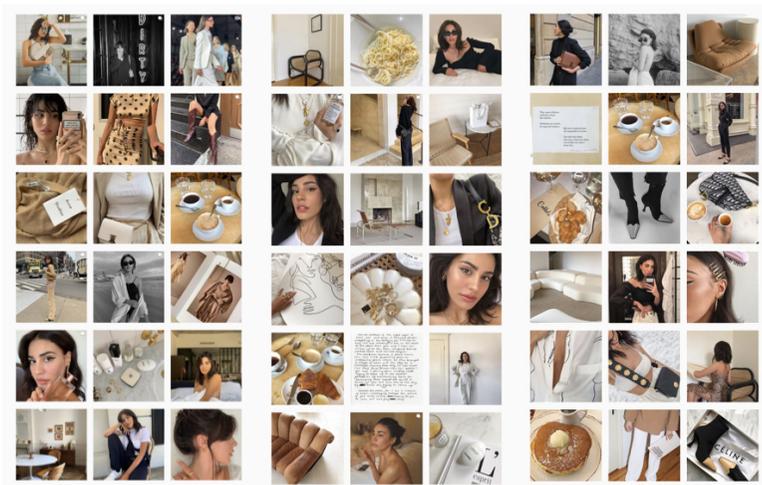


Figure 1: Three panels from Orion Carloto's Instagram feed (compiled from posts on @orionvanessa, 2019).

Corporations also reach beyond A-list influencers: even the artists and activists I follow are recruited by brands, and their posts regularly include paid product placements. Calvin Klein hired photographer and performance artist, MaryV Benoit, to

shoot an ad campaign portraying Queer people and their self-expressions (pictured in Figures 2 and 3, below). MaryV uses her online platform to advocate for better Queer and disabled representation in the media, and I was excited to see more diverse identities and bodies both in the online realm and on physical billboards. But behind this representation, I recognize how the commodification of Queer identity bolsters profit.

Instagram, owned by Meta, seeks to maximize its corporate profit, and as such, artists and activists engaging in this digital platform face serious limits in truth speaking and representation. I understand why MaryV would collaborate with Calvin Klein—it must have been lucrative to shoot a campaign with a popular clothing brand—but this speaks to Instagram’s limitations of representation: can Queer people only speak their truth as long as they generate corporate profit while doing so?



Figure 2: ChellaMan shot by MaryV for Calvin Klein (source: MaryV on Instagram, 2019).



Figure 3: Parker Hill shot by MaryV for Calvin Klein (source: MaryV on Instagram, 2019).

I felt particularly uneasy when Queer activist and model Rain Dove posted a photo with the caption:

Yessss I shot an amazing fashion campaign and can finally announce it! Zalando! For those of You who think the world isn't changing or going to change let me tell You – older companies that have systematically erased us [Queer people] from their marketing world are dying out. New brands are being born and are coming to us to help them grow. For instance this company I did the campaign with is pretty new to the world but they already are growing exponentially and doing it the right way. During this shoot it wasn't about pity porn. It was about handing over a microphone and collaborating with our communities. For instance they let me review and edit the script, choose my outfits, and write this blurb however I wanted

to. They made sure that they didn't just have a token queer person or a token person of color. [...] That's what the future of fashion should be about. Conscientious consumership. Conscientious marketing. [...] (Dove, 2019).

While Dove's experience seems to have been a positive one, at a broader scale, the transformation of personal identity is still being packaged into a polished image that other people—Queer or not—consume with ease. It does appear that marketers are working to include more diverse faces and voices than they did historically. However, like most everything that corporations do, the aim here is to make money—in this case, by selling an idea of progressiveness, based on a real person's reality. In the case described above, a Queer person's public persona has been commodified—incorporated into the mainstream, rather than acting in opposition or response to it. Queerness, rather than transforming capitalism, becomes transformed itself—into normativity, a normativity that is consumed like any other commodity.

Discussion Questions

- While commodification commonly refers to transforming natural resources into market goods, the same process can transform an individual's social identity (age, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, race, etc.) into the demand for goods and services. What other non-physical things can be transformed in this way?

- How do social media profiles construct identity as a marketing tool, and to what effect?
- What other identities (beyond those described above) have been commodified, and how do they link self-expression with consumerism?
- How does the commodification of Queer (or other) identity have an impact on liberation movements? How does the commodification of identity distract us from the social change that liberation movements target?

Exercise

Keep a daily journal over the course of a week. Pay close attention as you consume print, broadcast, and social media. Continuously pose these questions: What do I see that I want to reflect in my own identity? What do I see that I want to own? How are corporations using identity to market products or services to me? Which aspects of identity are being commodified, how, and to what effect?

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Complexity

ALICE MACGILLIVRAY

[Alice MacGillivray](#) is interested in the natural world, complex systems and leadership. She is an independent consultant and works with Royal Roads University graduate programs. Her PhD is in Human and Organizational Systems from Fielding Graduate University. In her personal life, she lives in a straw bale home on Gabriola Island, BC and spends time on sandstone beaches and forest trails on her Norwegian Fjordhorse or with her spunky Australian Terrier.

Complexity refers to the character of a system with parts that interact in many diverse ways, making the future behaviours of that system relatively unpredictable.

My friend is injured and the ferry's not running!

Increasingly, we see and hear the term *complexity*, but why is it important? Researchers in different disciplines became interested in complexity in the 1990s because of common challenges they faced at different scales. Many challenges cannot be explained or solved using familiar tools and processes. Complexity theory can help us work in new ways with important, messy problems such as poverty, equity, and sustainability.

What makes something complex? Perhaps the most important criterion is that complex systems exhibit **emergence**. As system components interact, they produce unexpected results. Complex systems are different from *complicated systems*, such as a vintage Volkswagen Beetle. If you were one of the 2,000,000+ people who picked up a copy of *How to Keep Your Volkswagen Alive* (Muir, 1969), you could follow the right repair steps and get the right result. (This is an example of **linearity**.) But what if your parents gave you a vintage Beetle, and you loved it so much that it became a stepping stone to an automotive design career? Or what if you got into an accident the first day you drive the car? Or if your father learned the Beetle was his own dream, not your dream, and your family dynamics shift. These outcomes are part of the realm of complexity.

In science communities, some scholars believe that the value of complexity comes from computer modelling, physics, and non-linear mathematics. Others see value in the principles of complexity applied for social progress. Richardson (2011) suggests complexity thinking as a fertile middle ground in which one tries to be true to the science but not in narrow or reductionist ways. In some ways, complexity thinking overlaps with **Indigenous ways of knowing**, in that there is a strong focus on *relationships* rather than on objects, facts, and definitions.

The following story comes from Gabriola Island, British Columbia, in Western Canada. It is based on personal knowledge and excerpts from *Our Clinic*, a book by Bruce Mason (2012) that tells an “informative, entertaining and eminently satisfying story of how 4,000 Island residents rallied to avert a life and death crisis by building their own, much-needed, multi-million dollar Gabriola Community Health Centre” (back cover).

The island is part of the ancestral lands of the Snuneymuxw First Nation, though their villages are now gone. Most residents are English-speaking and of European ancestry. There are people from all age groups, with a large percentage of people over the age of 65. Formal education levels are high; median income levels are lower than for the rest of the province. Some people are homeless. Many residents have an active interest in the arts, alternative medicine, and organic food production. Residents are known for being opinionated; Gabriola is sometimes referred to as *4,000 opinions surrounded by water*. Predictably, some residents thought their medical services were in crisis, some thought the status quo was fine, and some thought improvements should come from the government or wealthy doctors.

Initial starting conditions are important in complex systems. They can strongly influence ways in which change occurs and even tiny interventions can lead to big changes. A physician described the Gabriola starting conditions through stories. “I remember one winter night in 2005 when we managed to get a frightened, seriously ill, bleeding patient down a steep incline, into an ambulance to a private dock, and then into a small open boat. After hooking up an IV, we covered the patient with a sheet of plastic for protection while being transported over rough, frigid waters to Nanaimo. There was no room for the doctor onboard” (Mason 2012, pp. 2–3). Vivid memories of this event pushed a core group of people into action, despite unknowns about funds, land, government, zoning, and community support.

Relations with the government were also rocky. Culture is a huge element of social complexity; Gabriola’s reputation for advocacy repeatedly surfaced. For example, when the provincial government took over the ambulance service in the 1970s, it took as long

as a year for them to fulfill related financial obligations. They also insisted paramedics be paid, although the existing volunteers said they would quit before accepting money. When stipends eventually arrived, the paramedics donated them to the fundraising society and used them to fight the government on issues such as two-way radios and homecare nursing (p. 22).

Through hard work and an ongoing series of twists and turns, a permanent clinic seemed increasingly possible. Residents created *attractors*: a term used in social complexity to describe small probes (a complexity term for little experiments) that might galvanize progress. As one example, a group prepared an application for a large grant, which involved online voting with comments. Although the proposal wasn't quite successful, it became an attractor. People read inspirational quotes from around the world, and this galvanized community networks. Fundraising ranged from a massive garage sale to donation drives, collectively raising over one million dollars. Four acres of land were donated by a retired veterinarian, who envisioned a space required for future needs and insisted on an integrated, team approach to medical care (p. 117). Local tradespeople worked tirelessly. A nurse wanted to learn to use a palm-nailer (similar to a small, precise nail gun) and that became her specialty. People brought meals to the construction site. An auxiliary raised money for medical equipment. Volunteers in their 70s became increasingly fit. A new doctor moved to the island.

Diversity is an asset in complex systems. In ecology, think of healthy estuaries (where the tide meets the flow of a river). They are some of the most productive places on the planet, because of interrelationships between land/sea and salt/freshwater ecosystems. One success factor for the Gabriola clinic was the islanders' diverse talents. "They stepped forward with many technical and professional skills, magically just when that skill was needed" (p.

58). Newcomers to the island are frequently astonished by who has chosen to live there. People found meaning in unlikely roles: one new islander with a successful career in the software industry volunteered to serve cones at the ice cream stand. He found it a fabulous way to get to know community members.

There were a million reasons why the clinic couldn't happen, and a million relationships that allowed it to emerge. That's the magic of complex systems.



Figure 1: A valuable community clinic created through emergence and relationships. (photo: Dr. Don Butt. Used with permission.)

Discussion Questions

- Consider the statement, *People work well with complexity in their personal lives, but less so in their professional lives*. Do you agree or disagree? Why?
- Choose a key issue or opportunity for improvement in your school or home community. Imagine you want to spark change this week. How would you describe the initial starting conditions? What is one thing you might try to leverage improvements?

Additional Resources

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Corporeality

TYLER ANDERSON

Corporeality refers to our 'reality' of both *having* a body and *being* a body, meaning that we humans are both material things and producers of material consequences.

[Tyler Anderson](#) is a doctoral researcher and critical theorist at Queen's University. Their research areas include feminist science studies and body and affect studies. Their current project, 'Sanguine Figures in an Age of Extinction,' develops insight toward a radical humanism that is relational, embodied, and always historically saturated. The work invites readers to reconceptualize how we understand our bodies and selves, our worlds, and our powerful capacities to change them.

A Selfie for the Anthropocene: Figuring the body in an age of extinction

In one sense, the body is an object and something we *are*: It can be described through a variety of 'languages' such as biology, anthropology, medicine, and art. What we know of its components, functions, techniques, and capacities have developed and changed over time. In another sense, *to be* a body is subjective: It is the fleshy form through which we mediate, experience, and

enact our lives. In this way, our bodies connect us to the world. However, while we all exist as bodies, our experiences of embodiment are not all the same. A selfie is one way to illustrate this.

The below photo is of me and speaks to the co-play of both having and being a body. Fundamentally, my body does not exist on its own—it is *always* connected to the world and its environments. It breathes air, it converts plant and animal matter into energy, and it is sustained (and challenged) by billions of microbes I will never see. At any given moment, my body is working hard in imperceptible ways to keep me alive, and throughout the COVID pandemic, my *corporeality* reminds me that staying alive cannot be taken for granted.



Figure 1: An [Anthropocenic](#) selfie of the author in their apartment.

In the photo I am wearing a mask to protect myself and others from the virus. I am wearing a heavy jacket and windbreaker because my body requires cover from the increasingly powerful winds and storms where I live. At the same time, these fabrics—and the phone I used to take the picture—are made from the same exploitative supply chains of globalized capitalism that

have created the consequences, effects, and horrors from which my body requires protection. (This is not to mention the human and non-human bodies harmed in allowing me to have these technologies in the first place.) As much as this body is my own, it is deeply implicated in the history of the world and where it lives, which has a significant effect on the actions it carries out.

In this light, the body is not so much a singular thing as it is a series of complex relationships. What would we include if tasked to create an ‘accurate’ illustration of the body? Would we draw the torso, flesh, head, legs, nervous system, and skeleton? What about the community of bacteria, fungi, and viruses on our eyebrows and skin—and in our guts—that all play some part in keeping us alive? By extension, what about the many other things that assist our bodies in their ongoing existence, such as insulin pumps, contact lenses, plates and screws keeping bones in place, mobility devices, prosthetics, and more? What about medications, drugs, and alcohol? The microplastics in our blood that place us precisely in the current historical moment might also be included. All these related elements show us that the body is not an isolable organism that hangs together all by itself and that its boundaries are permeable.

At the same time, we express ourselves through and with our body: It is the place where our lives happen. Our unique physical and emotional experiences play a large part in how we understand our own body, as well as how we think about other bodies more generally. However, what happens to you or me might not happen to others, so we must never rely on our own subjective experiences to describe all experiences of embodiment. This is especially important to keep in mind because the body is a site of [structural power](#), in which *people* become racialized, gendered, rendered dis/abled, and more.

In other words, bodies and their experiences also become uniquely enacted through intersections of race, class, ability, gender, sexuality, and nationality. For example, blood donation policies that stem from past moral panics have historically been used to certify some bodies as ‘life giving’ and others as deadly, with severe consequences for those in the second camp (see Dryden, 2020). Similarly, colonial projects of dispossession are realized in the body through racist policies such as blood quantum. The fact that some bodies are thought to be more threatening than others is never a ‘natural’ fact, but is instead a biopolitical phenomenon of power and control.

What the body ‘is,’ where it begins and ends, and how it carries out actions is not as obvious as we have once thought. The [complexity](#) of fleshy existence and how the body becomes enacted is precisely what the term corporeality seeks to capture.

Discussion Questions

- How can it be harmful to describe a ‘universal’ or ‘normal’ body?
- Imagine an anatomical representation of the body. How did microscope technology change what we know about bodies and how we represent them? What are some other technologies that influenced how bodies come into view? What are some of the ways social media and other aspects of the digital age have affected embodied existence?
- How have the COVID pandemic and the increasingly felt effects of climate change influenced how we view and

experience our bodies? What are we now less capable of being and doing?

Additional Resources

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Critical Pedagogy

AMANDA DI BATTISTA

***Amanda Di Battista** is the project coordinator at the Laurier Centre for Sustainable Food Systems and Director of Programming, Education, and Communications for the UNESCO Chair on Food, Biodiversity, and Sustainability Studies. She co-produces and hosts the research podcast, Handpicked: Stories from the Field and works closely with food systems researchers on effective knowledge mobilization. She has co-edited several publications including Sustainable Food*

System Assessment: Lessons from Global Practice and Food Studies: Matter, Movement & Meaning.

Critical pedagogy is a term that refers to educational theories and practices that are used to help students understand and challenge systemic differences in power.

“Where learning communities can flourish”: Mapping critical pedagogy onto classroom learning

Critical pedagogy is an approach to education that sees teachers and students as whole, unique individuals who live, work, and

learn within complex systems of power. These systems—which include [capitalism](#), [white supremacy](#), patriarchy, and [heteronormativity](#), among other systems of oppression—exert themselves in unequal ways with profound social consequences. Critical pedagogy aims to engage students in meaningful and transformative learning so that they can better understand, resist, and change oppressive systems of power. Ideally, critical pedagogy brings educational theory and practice together in praxis, the ongoing and reciprocal relationship between thinking (theory) and doing (practice) (Freire, 2000, p. 65–66).



[In this podcast](#), Amanda talks about her experiences as a university student in two very different courses—one that set the stage for transformative learning, and the other, not so much. She looks at how these postsecondary educators’ different approaches to student engagement, the space of the classroom, and the delivery of course content help to illustrate the impacts of critical pedagogy on learning. Paying particular attention to

the work of bell hooks' (1994), including her ideas of engaged pedagogy, self-actualization, mutual responsibility, and the creation of learning communities, Amanda describes how both classroom experiences became turning points in her educational career.

Listen to the podcast:



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/showingthe-ory/?p=89#audio-89-1>

Music Credits: Intermezzo by Patchworker f.k.a. [friend-zoned]; Gentle Breeze & Star Bright by Purrple Cat

Podcast Transcription

[Sound of finger tapping on microphone]

Is this thing on? Hello, hello...

[Soft intro music fades in]

My name is Amanda Di Battista, and this is “Where Learning Communities can Flourish,” a podcast that maps critical pedagogy onto classroom learning.

[intro music fades out]

I went into university sure that I was going to be a scientist. I started first year as a biology major and though most of my classes were challenging, the excitement of the professors was contagious. Organic Chemistry though was different. The class was Friday morning at 10am in a modern building full of bright light. In our classroom, there were two hundred of those plastic chairs with, you know, those tiny desks attached to the arms, all facing a projector screen that stood at the front of the room.

My memory of the professor is super vague—he wore beige slacks and rumpled dress shirts, but I can’t recall his face. Each class he walked briskly [sound of walking] up the aisle without making eye contact with anyone [sound of bag thumping down onto a desk], power up the computer and projector [sound of computer mouse clicking and computer powering on], and bring up his PowerPoint slides. Then, when he was ready [computer beeping], he’d look up from his notes, scan the room absentmindedly, and launch right into his presentation. He used a red laser pointer to call attention to the most important bits on the screen.

Leaning low into my desk, I would write frantically, trying to copy down all of the information on the dozens of slides whizzing past [sound of notebook pages turning], catching almost none of the teacher's words as I wrote [sound of frantic writing with pen on paper]. My notes were a mess—a blur of blue, punctuated by angry red circles [sound of pen being dropped on table]. As the sun shifted in the sky outside the windows behind me, the slides became harder to read and the smallest text faded into the white of the screen.

[clock ticking, fade in musical break]

I think that we've all probably had a similar classroom experience. Critical pedagogue Paolo Freire describes this as the banking model of education—where the teacher is the ultimate authority on knowledge and dispenses that knowledge to in the minds of their students for withdrawl sometime in the future. My chemistry professor dispenses that knowledge into the form of a complicated slide every 90 seconds. It was torture.

bell hooks, a student of Freire, critiques the banking model of education too. Instead, she call for engaged pedagogy—an approach to education that values and teachers and students as whole people, who are mutually responsible for coming together as a community of learners.

My organic chemistry professor created a classroom space where no such community could flourish. He didn't see

students as whole people with potentially valuable perspectives on the course material. In his class, the teacher was the only person worth listening to.

[musical break]

A few years ago, I took an intensive graduate level writing course. The professor, Cate, was a brilliant scholar—I'd been in her class before and found it exceptionally challenging, but also fascinating and exciting. There were three parts to the course—intensive theory, discussion groups, and field writing. The reading list was long and difficult, and I rarely got through it all. But when Cate delivered her lectures, she teased out the important threads with expert precision, moving her hands to the rhythm of her words to give life to theoretical concepts. The class was small, and we built an easy rapport with each other centred on a shared sense of possibility and respect. While I struggled to find my voice—um, I've always been a little bit shy about speaking up in a group, and unsure that what I had to say was worthwhile—my ideas were always valued.

We spent two days each week in the classroom and one day writing in the field [sound of birds in field]. When I was writing, my senses came to life. Closing my eyes to pay attention to the sounds around me opened up an entirely new world. I could hear the rhythm of the wind in the trees [sound of wind rustling leaves and birds chirping], I could smell the heat on the pavement [sound of

passing car on road], I could feel the water evaporating off the grass beneath me [sound of soft water drops].

This shift in my awareness extended beyond the class—sitting on the streetcar [sound of streetcar driving on tracks and dinging bell], I'd become hyperaware of the scratchy seat fabric on the backs of my bare legs [sound of scratching]; I'd get caught up in imagining the life history of the person sitting next to me [ambient streetcar noises and chatter]. Sometimes I'd feel overwhelmed by it all. Sometimes I was dazzled.

I think bell hooks' would describe Cate as engaged pedagogue: she came to the classroom full of passion and brought her personal experiences to bear on theoretical concepts. She was eager to learn from her students, empathetic, and fully aware of her position of power as the professor. Instead of using her authority to bolster her own ego, she used it to bolster our voices and encourage our learning. bell hooks would call this kind of teacher a self-actualized educator—aware of her positionality and politics, full of care for her students, and engaged in the ongoing process of enlightenment herself.

This was also a master class in how to create the conditions for a learning community to flourish. A sense of mutual responsibility is crucial for learning communities, and bell hooks says that the best way to teach mutual responsibility is to model it. Cate modelled deep respect for the personal knowledge of her students so that we learned by example how to engage in dialogue with each

other. We were expected to bring our best selves to each class, to actively participate, and to take responsibility for the creation of our learning community. Because we knew that our voices were valued, we brought our personal experience into the classroom and connected it directly to the course material. We begin to critique—as bell hooks does—the split between mind and body, between theory and practice, between personal and political that characterizes so much of postsecondary education.

[fade in soft music with clock ticking in background]

bell hooks says that, “to teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students is essential if we are to provide the necessary conditions where learning can most deeply and intimately begin.”

In the end, I finished my first-year organic chemistry class with a fine grade, but I can’t tell you what I learned. The things I learned in Cate’s writing course though—especially the embodied practice of writing as a way of knowing—that will stick with me forever.

[music fades out]

Discussion Questions

- What is the **banking concept of education**? Have you experienced a classroom that used the banking concept of education? What did that classroom look like? How did it feel to be a student in that classroom?
- In the podcast, how did the two educators' different teaching approaches encourage or discourage the formation of **learning communities**? How did the presence or absence of a learning community have an impact on the speaker's experience?
- Why is **mutual responsibility** such a key component in bell hooks' engaged pedagogy? How are the requirements of mutual responsibility different for educators and students? How are they similar?
- Do you think that classroom education has a role to play in uncovering and changing structures of oppression? Explain.

Exercise

In five minutes, describe a time where you were fully engaged in classroom learning. Think about the classroom space, the teacher, how you interacted with your peers, what you learned, how you felt during the class, and how you feel about the experience now. Include any details and personal reflections that you think are relevant.

In five minutes, describe a negative classroom experience or a time when you felt disengaged from learning. Think about the classroom space, the teacher, how you interacted with your peers, the content you were learning, how you felt during the class and how you feel about the experience now. Include any details and personal reflections you think are relevant.

With a partner, compare your classroom experiences. Are there similarities? What are the differences? What made your positive experiences so positive? What made your negative experiences so negative? How did your experiences shape the way you think about the classroom?

On a piece of chart paper or a shared document, brainstorm/map the components of a “transformative learning community.” Build on your own classroom experiences and the information presented in the podcast. Be prepared to share with the class.

Additional Resources

Crenshaw, K. (Host). (2018–present). *Intersectionality Matters!* [Audio podcast]. Apple Podcasts. <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/intersectionality-matters/id1441348908>

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Discourse

PETER ANDRÉE

Discourse refers to the power embedded within, and reproduced through, how we communicate and what we communicate about.

[Peter Andrée](#) is a Professor in the Department of Political Science at Carleton University. He is cross-appointed in the Department of Geography and Environmental Studies and in the Institute of Political Economy. Peter is a first-generation immigrant to Canada from the Netherlands and lives with his wife, Chris, and son, Nicolas, on unceded Algonquin territory alongside the Gatineau River in Québec.

‘Knowing’ the Land: The discursive power of maps

In popular usage, discourse usually refers to a conversation or debate between people. In the social sciences and humanities, discourse still refers to communication, but the term comes with additional layers of meaning (and much debate about what those layers entail!) These layers focus on the power embedded within, and reproduced through, *how* we communicate and *what* we communicate about. Michel Foucault, the 20th century French social theorist who provides the most detailed elaboration of the power of discourse, argues that discourse has both *productive* and

disciplinary effects (Foucault, 1976). Being productive means a discourse leads logically to certain ends; it contributes to bringing specific outcomes into being. Disciplinary power refers to the way that discourse, as a claim to ‘truth’, effectively turns other ways of thinking and talking about the topic into nonsense.

This vignette shows how discourse is not only about spoken and written words, but also about the ways we depict the world in symbols and pictures, and how we enact ways of understanding the world through day-to-day practices, like making maps.

Several years ago, I introduced students in my environmental ethics course to the Foucauldian observation that we are always operating within certain discourses and associated practices (and within the [power relations](#) embedded in those discourses and practices). I particularly wanted my students to understand that this happens whether we acknowledge it or not. Our situation within a discursive terrain is not always self-evident because we often take for granted the discourses we operate within. To illustrate my point, I put up a series of overhead transparencies (this was the late 1990s) showing copies of maps, much like Figure 1 below.



Figure 1: Dumont's geological map of Europe (1875) (Wikimedia Commons, 2020a.)

As I was teaching an environmental ethics class, I used forestry, soil, and geological maps as illustrations of how the authorities that produce maps design them to bring certain features to light. This is the productive side of a discourse: It produces certain ways of understanding the land, which then renders certain types of uses or practices (like logging, farming, and mining) normal, even 'natural'. In this example, the productive power of the discourse these maps help enact was plain to see. I also showed maps of rural areas and cities, again pointing out what the map makers chose to illustrate (e.g., roads and rivers), which inevitably means other things might not be present. For example, these maps may not include the habitats of threatened species or cultural features, such as public washrooms or sacred spaces, not considered important enough to be on the maps to those who made them.

We talked about the language the maps were produced in, and what names appeared on them. The classroom we were in was located on traditional Indigenous territories in what is now Toronto, Canada, but nowhere was this mentioned on the official government maps I showed, and Indigenous names for places were (for the most part) absent, demonstrating the disciplinary power of discourse. Discourse produces a certain way of seeing and thinking while hiding others. These observations led to questions like: Who made these maps? What relations to a place do these maps help reproduce? How is power over land, people, and resources enacted simply by what we (or at least the most powerful among us) think is worth putting on a map and what is not? In other words, what do these maps communicate both through and beyond the information they present?

To see discourse and power as intertwined suggests neither that such power cannot be challenged nor that the experts who initially define a discourse for their purposes will always be in control. For example, maps can be used as a form of what Foucault calls [resistance](#), such as when they are created to depict what was previously deliberately excluded. For an open-source mapping project that strives to depict the Indigenous territories of the world, see, for example, [Native Land](#) (n.d.). This website shows how resistance can emerge from within a discourse to challenge its own norms. Foucault would see such resistance as itself a productive effect of the map-making discourse that originally sought to control territory on behalf of state and industrial interests.

After my initial discussion about maps, I then introduced the class to another very different discourse of land, hoping to show how limited western mapping discourses—and their traditional assumptions—are. “Songlines” are a way that the First Nations of Australia pass on their knowledge of the land from generation

to generation, over thousands of years. The Songlines of the Seven Sisters, for example, are “stories of magic and desire, hot pursuit and escape, and the strength and power of family ties” (Common Ground, n.d.). In addition to being captivating stories, they also “map” the landscape—in this case from Roeburn in the west of Australia, all the way to the country’s east coast, a distance of thousands of kilometers. As Common Ground, a First Nations--led not-for-profit, explains: “The story crosses through many different lands, so it’s carried by the Martu, the Anangu, Pitjantjatjara, Yankunytjatjara and Ngaanyatjarra people” (Common Ground, n.d.).

This all led to a great conversation about how different ways of talking about and depicting the land reveal very different types of relationships that peoples have with the territories they call home, and how discourses and what are sometimes called discursive practices (like map making, or passing on songlines) can reinforce these ways of knowing as normal—as the ‘truth’—to those of us who operate within a given discourse.

The moment that brought this lesson home, however, came as a serendipitous accident. I put up an un-annotated map of North America like the one found in Figure 2, below. Students quickly started shouting from the back rows of the lecture theatre that it was ‘upside down’.



Figure 2: North America (Wikimedia, 2020b.)

I saw that I had indeed put the map up differently from how it is normally shown—the South was on the top of the screen, and the North was on the bottom. The usual way we show maps, with the North at the top, fits easily with the convention that places the world’s northern peoples (typically of European descent) and countries on top (in more ways than one!). In this case, however, that convention was disrupted by my accidental inversion. Taking advantage of the moment, I didn’t let on that this was a mistake. Instead, I said “what do you mean, it’s ‘upside down?’” This question elicited a fascinating conversation as some students argued for putting the map up ‘properly’, while others argued that the assumption of a ‘right’ or ‘truthful’ way to depict this

two-dimensional, rather empty picture reveals just how deeply embedded we all are in discourse. Whether we perceive its contours or not, discourse implicates highly specific ways of thinking about, communicating, and practicing our world. This, in a nutshell, is the *power* of discourse.

Discussion Questions

- This vignette focused on the way that a discourse of human relationships to land is reinforced through map-making. What examples would you use to illustrate the power of discourse and its associated discursive practices?
- Can you identify a core discourse at work in your academic field or discipline? What are some of the productive and disciplinary effects of this discourse on how or what researchers in your field do? Has this discourse enabled resistance from within?
- Why do you think it is important to name and critically examine the discourses we operate within, challenging as it may be to recognize them from inside?

Additional Resources

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Wikimedia Commons. (2020b). File: BLANK in North America. Svg. URL: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:BLANK_in_North_America.svg

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Emergence

KATJA PETTINEN

***Katja Pettinen** works at the intersection of cultural and linguistic anthropology. Her current research examines the nature of embodied learning, sensoriality, and human-canid relations through the theoretical framework of Peircean semiotics.*

Emergence is a concept that highlights how certain changes, effects, and behaviours cannot be reduced to their mechanical components.

Knowing the First Dogs

Dogs are everywhere—everywhere there are humans, to be more precise. It is estimated that close to a billion dogs exist in the world. Some of these dogs are attached to particular people—the family poodle, for example, napping on a couch—while others live at the margins of human settlements, surviving by scavenging through garbage, only occasionally being fed directly by humans. Even free, roaming street dogs look and behave quite differently from their ancestors, the wolves, whose numbers are far fewer: only an estimated 400,000 remain.

Compared to contemporary dogs, wolves are a rather homogeneous group; individuals do not vary drastically from each other. In contrast, a Chihuahua and a Great Dane appear to be highly

distinct, but, along with many other breeds, they belong to one and the same species: *Canis familiaris*.

But how and when did the first members of this somewhat recent species come into existence? The initial cross-species interactions that led to the existence of dogs reaches back 40,000 years, when all humans lived as foragers, acquiring their food without agriculture or money. This era is called the Upper Paleolithic, and it is evidenced by archeological findings that demonstrate the presence of complex cultures, including early proto-dogs that were buried side-by-side with humans. It is clear that by 20,000 years ago, creatures that we now call dogs existed; the emotional bonds and notions of the afterlife were deep enough for intentional burials.

In comparison to wolves, these first dogs were smaller in size. They had shorter and wider snouts, shorter skulls, and also, because of this, more crowded teeth. In essence, these changes came about because of a lifestyle change: from running in the wild and hunting for food, to being fed by humans. As the new relationship between these first proto-dogs and humans developed further, the physical and behavioral patterns of the dogs also developed further afield from their closest ancestor, the grey wolf.

Today, we have no problem identifying the numerous differences between wolves and dogs; one is a domesticated species, adapted to life with humans; the other is a member of the wild, not adaptable to being a pet, even if raised by humans since being a cub.

The real scientific challenge, as problematic for the geneticist as it is for the archeologist, is to be able to identify the moment in time at which those early proto-dogs really became 'dogs.' From

a scientific point of view, it would be handy if there were a clear physical marker of this change that could be identified in order to say how long dogs have existed.

Yet everything we know about evolution and domestication points toward the fact that no such singular, readily recognizable physical marker exists—certainly not one that all experts agree upon.

There is another way to approach this problem, however, via a concept that initially came from attempts to develop the first computers after World War II. The overall problem that these early systems thinkers dealt with was [complexity](#), including how to understand it through science. Can complex phenomena be reduced to physical factors and straightforward, cause-and-effect relationships? The concept of emergence came to be used as a way of saying *no*, and that reducing each phenomenon to ever smaller physical variables isn't always required (or even particularly useful). For example, if we look at how the human eye works and try to understand what the *experience* of watching a truly enjoyable movie is, we really cannot understand why some people prefer horror while others hate it. That preference is not based solely on the structures of the eye and the optical nerves.

When I walk with my dog in the Rocky Mountains where I live, I enjoy many small moments of emergence: discoveries or unexpected experiences that give rise, in turn, to other experiences. We stroll together through the woods, and when we come across the bones of a deer or a moose, we stop and inspect them together. I might crack a bone in half in order to expose the marrow inside, while my dog observes every step closely. He then eagerly enjoys the marrow, a nutritious and fatty treat from the wild. As I reflect on longer arcs of emergence—the evolutionary paths that led us to such moments—I think about those early

proto-dogs that became domesticated in part through small exchanges like this one. Staying close to humans, who offered out morsels of food, enabled close connections that—over time—began to shape the bodies and behaviors of the proto-dogs' descendants.

It is the way in which humans and dogs came to *interact* with each other that most centrally demonstrates the concept of emergence. When pre-agricultural humans hunted with the first dogs during the late Paleolithic, they interacted as a kind of cross-species unit: dogs bringing in sharper senses of smell and hearing, and humans bringing in better visual capacities (in part due to height), as well as tools and technologies (like fire, spears, bows, and arrows).

But this complex interactive and collaborative behavior arises as a result of the co-evolution that shaped both species. We can make sense of this collaborative existence—also present in the deep emotional bonds between dogs and humans—through the concept of emergence. None of these collaborations could have been predicted during the early Upper Paleolithic, when humans first started to interact more closely with some of the ancestral wolves. The whole process of dog domestication, in other words, was an unintentional, emergent process. It is nonetheless one that many of us greatly enjoy today, with our close bonds and collaborations with these fellow animals.

Discussion Questions

- What is ethically at stake in reminding ourselves and others that we are animals, just like monkeys, dogs, and wolves?
- When it comes to dogs and wolves, it can be challenging to decide what counts as a ‘dog’ and what counts as a ‘wolf’ if we only reflect on the broader shared evolutionary past of these animals. Dogs and wolves are so similar genetically that they can breed with each other and reproduce viable offspring. Why is it important to contrast their actual behaviour, when we reflect on the emergence of dogs as a distinct species? (Think carefully here about how different it is to be a wild creature, like a wolf, and to be a domesticated creature, like a dog. How would you explain this difference?).
- We can also expand the concept of emergence and think about who and what we are ourselves, as a species, or if we are apart from such classification. Biologists classify differences into taxonomies, as a way to make sense of differences. The word “species,” for example, is part of a taxonomy: our own species, *Homo sapiens*, is made up of all the humans who live on the planet today, as well as those who have lived previously. And if we consider the various categories of mammals that make up the taxonomy of species, we fall inside the category of *primates*, alongside monkeys and apes. Even though this is scientifically accurate, why do you think it is so commonplace for people to forget that we are primates?
- Are there any other animals that you have wondered about (coyotes, perhaps), in terms of how they evolved to become the animals that they are today? Do you think that we can explain the nature of wildlife conflicts that humans commonly have (e.g., with wolves or coyotes) based on our biological, species-level differences? Or are other variables more significant when attempting to make sense of such conflicts, so common in many regions of Canada?

Exercise

Look around you, wherever you happen to be. Consider the many forms of scientific inquiry that went into creating and producing the technologies that you are making use of right in this moment. Engineers likely worked on the systems that enable the electricity, as well as the many other forms of power that are animating your space. Social scientists likely worked on the systems that enable the relationships that are also all around you: the funding that contributes to your studies in university, for example, is connected closely with the work of experts in education, public policy, sociology, anthropology, political science, and other disciplines.

Some of this research occurs through reductionist methods (i.e., when a scientist can break down all the important components of something and reverse-engineer it, basically turning the process backwards in order to recreate it). And that can be enormously useful. Some of this research, in contrast, occurs through the study of processes, which is always in some ways about emergence.

Identify an example of a product or resource, in your own space right now, that came about because of effective reductionist or mechanistic research. Then identify an example that came about through non-reductionist or emergent approach to research.

Some educational experts approach learning as a reductionist process, something that can be broken down into parts and reverse-engineered to achieve specific outcomes. Other educational experts approach learning as an emergent process, something that is closely tied to relationships and dynamics that are too complex to reverse-engineer. Reflect on your own previous studies and try to identify

each approach in the courses you have taken. In your experience, what are the benefits and limits of each approach?

Additional Resources

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Emotional Turn

LINAMAR CAMPOS-FLORES AND MANI TAKWANI

[Linamar Campos-Flores](#) is an FQRSC Postdoctoral Fellow at Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana-Iztapalapa in Mexico City. She studies the emotions involved in everyday resistance strategies implemented by women of Chicomuselo, Chiapas, opposing an extractive project from a Canadian mining company. Her research interests include the politics of emotions, human rights, migration, gender, and environmental issues.

Lina Erandi Campos-Castillo (Mani Takwani) is a Chiapanecan visual artist, currently working as a freelancer. Her work is closely linked to oneirology (the scientific study of dreams) and expressions of the body. She has exhibited her work since 2016 in spaces such as “Colors of childhood,” “Body and Soul”, and “Pulquearte.”

The **emotional turn** in social sciences refers to a growing awareness of the role of emotionality in understanding social relationships and experience, both for those who live them first-hand and for the researchers who study them

View [the illustrated version of this text](#) by Mani Takwani.

What are Emotions?

◇ Emotions are feelings experienced by the mind/body!

◇ No way! They are socio-cultural interpretations with physical repercussions!

◇ Emotions cannot be measured, so we cannot include them in our studies!

◇ I disagree, emotions have different qualities, so we can include them in our analysis!

◇ They are visceral, feminine... science is rational, objective, masculine.

◇ !?!?

The long-standing debate on whether or not to include emotions within social science research has taken place over several decades and continued until the beginning of the 21st century. During that period, social scientists began to consider emotions explicitly in their research, contributing to what is now known as the “emotional turn” in the field. Even today, no consensus exists on how to best define and theorize emotions. Additionally, a dichotomy exists regarding how to approach research on human feelings. Some researchers prefer to explore and analyze **affect** rather than emotions, giving rise to two main perspectives related to the sentient aspect of human social-spatial interactions.

Defining emotions is as complex as the way we experience them. This is because human beings can feel emotions *and* experience psycho-physiological (mind/body) reactions simultaneously.

In other words, the discussion about emotions can be compared to the question: “Which came first, the chicken or the egg?” Do we feel emotions first with our body or our mind?

Is there an inherent cognitive action related to emotion? Or do they arise because we learn to react in such ways?

In 1980, the psychologist Robert Plutchik proposed a structured way of interpreting emotions based on their physiological purpose, currently known as “Plutchik’s Wheel of Emotions.” Other social scientists have used this influential work to structure their treatment of emotions in a logical way.

Sociologists lead the study of emotions. Social-constructionists argue that emotions are purely social, while other sociologists argue that emotions involve sensations or bodily feelings and forms of cognition.

One understanding of emotion is as “a prototypical, conscious, subjective, psychophysiological state of mind which arises in response to a danger or opportunity in the environment or to an event or situation in the social world, and which prepares one for a potentially adaptive, expressive, and/or communicative behavioral reaction” (TenHouten 2013, p. 9). More simply put, emotions involve simultaneous perception/sensation/cognition/behavioral responses through cultural lenses. And sometimes, cognition is not at play, as happens in the fight-or-flight response.

For feminist geographers who coined the term “emotional geographies,” it is important to understand this denomination broadly, since emotions cross disciplinary boundaries. According to geographers of emotion, emotions can be understood as a kind of connective tissue that links an individual’s personal experience with space, time, and place (Davidson et al., 2007).

Social scientists mostly agree that all human beings experience six primary emotions—happiness, sadness, fear, disgust, anger, and surprise (Plutchik adds anticipation). These are considered to be universal, physiological, of evolutionary relevance, and biologically and neurologically innate. *Secondary emotions*, which can result from a combination of primary emotions, are socially and culturally conditioned (Bericat, 2015, p. 492).

Within the study of emotions, several theorists have added other concepts and categories to the field. Arlie R. Hochschild, for example, coined several terms that other researchers have built upon, including *feeling rules*, *emotional work/labour*, and *emotional grammar* (1979, 1983, 2003).

James M. Jasper studies social movements, and has advanced a *typology of emotional processes* (2018). He proposes that researchers privilege the use of the following classifications to avoid conceptual confusions: *reflex emotions* (quick responses to events and information), *urges* (strong bodily impulses hard to ignore), *moods* (de-energizing feelings persisting across settings), *affective commitments* (relatively stable feelings about others or objects), and *moral emotions* (feelings of approval or disapproval based on moral intuitions or principles).

Overall, multiple theories of emotion have now been put forward, including sociocultural (emotions are shaped by sociocultural norms that determine how we express and interpret them), cognitive (thoughts form emotions), physiological (responses within the body cause emotions), and neurological (brain activity causes emotional responses).

There also are other ways to understand emotion, emerging from other disciplines. For example, anthropologist Catherine Lutz suggests that the exploration of emotion is one of the “main

Western cultural categories” (Lutz 1988, p. 288). In other words, we in Western society load emotions with our own conceptions, qualifying them as good, bad, excessive, etc., and then judge the opportune moment to express them. This can have the effect of ‘othering’ (making strange or different) cultural groups beyond those of Western society.

Lutz exemplifies this through her research with a Micronesian cultural group, the Ifaluk, for whom anger and fear have meanings and roles in social life that are different from those in the West.

Everyone, regardless of where they live, feels and shows their different emotions. What is critical for social scientists to understand is that the importance, expression, and meaning may differ significantly based on cultural context. So, you can see: emotions matter!

Discussion Questions

- Consider TenHouten’s definition of emotions. Is it too elaborate, or not elaborate enough? What parts of it are meaningful to you, and what parts are confusing? How would you define emotions?
- What do you think when you hear the phrase “the sociology/anthropology/geography of emotions”? What sorts of research might be possible within each of these realms?

Exercise

Working in pairs, identify your socio-cultural background (if you are comfortable doing so) and reflect on different ways that your upbringing has led you to express or hide your emotions. (This relates to the concept of *feeling rules*.) How do those socio-cultural feeling rules compare to those expected in the place/space you inhabit? If you have experience in non-Anglophone cultures, have you encountered or learned terms or ideas related to emotions that are untranslatable into English, or difficult to define in one word? (e.g., *saudade* in Portuguese or *amae* in Japanese).

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Epistemology

TABITHA ROBIN

Epistemology refers to the frameworks, methods, tools, and assumptions by which knowledge is created.

***Tabitha Robin** is a mixed ancestry Swampy Cree and Métis researcher, educator, activist, and writer. She is an Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Land and Food Systems at the University of British Columbia. She spends much of her time learning about traditional Cree food practices.*

how do you know?

i was told by tipiskâw pîsim,
lit up across a blue-black sky
as though a beacon of my body,
the coming and going
of cycles
a sliver, a shimmer
then shining hard in the night
as my body refuses to sleep

the chickadee
with a playful
chatter
of winter happenings:

dee dee, dee dee, dee dee,
prompts me to forest
snowshoes in hand

the spruce buds also taught me
early that spring,
their tang on my tongue,
how to be well

and the frogs, those big flirts,
spring peepers
filling the morning with
their calls
to creation
sīkwan

the grandfathers offered their
graceful,
balanced beauty
alert, at the edge of the water
bearing witness

my heartbeat
told me too
of fear, longing, and keyam
through the prairie grasses
under the giants in the forest
treading the deep blue waters

that this is the beginning of knowledge

Discussion Questions

- This poem positions nature as teacher. What have you learned from nature? What has nature taught you?
- From an Indigenous perspective, learning from nature requires being in relation *with* nature. What is your relationship to the land and waters? How can you work to form a stronger connection to land and waters?
- In an Indigenous worldview, we understand ourselves to be part of nature, rather than separate from nature. Indeed, Cree scholar Priscilla Settee (2013) argues that “the treatment of Indigenous peoples is a metaphor for the treatment of Mother Earth” (p. 4). The consequences of climate change, contamination, and resource extraction are living realities for the lands of Turtle Island. Do these forces alter nature as teacher or do they alter the lessons of nature? What does this mean for Indigenous bodies?
- This poem incorporates Cree words. Indigenous languages are critical to our survival because they are derived from the land and provide instructions for how to be in good relation to the land. What happens to Indigenous languages in the absence of land?
- Imagine 50 years in the future. What do you think nature will look like then?
- What does it mean to demonstrate responsibility towards the land?

Additional Resources

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Epistemology of Dissent

MARTA BASHOVSKI

The **epistemology of dissent** is a term that refers to the concepts, categories, and languages through which we understand how people oppose or resist existing political authority.

***Marta Bashovski** is an assistant professor of Political Theory at Cam-pion College at the University of Regina, Canada. She teaches courses in the history of political thought, contemporary political theory and the politics of knowledge. She likes questioning assumptions.*

Understanding Occupy Wall Street

On September 17, 2011, a group of people calling themselves “Occupy Wall Street” gathered in Zuccotti Park, in Manhattan’s Financial District. They had arrived to protest growing economic inequality after the 2008 Financial Crisis, an event caused by predatory lending and excessive financial risk-taking by bankers, which had led millions of people to lose their homes and jobs. The group intended to stay in the park indefinitely. By the end of 2011, Occupy Wall Street had spread to 951 cities in 82 countries—with 600 encampments in the United States alone—and had transformed into the broader Occupy movement (Wikipedia, 2021).

While the Occupy movement was driven by many slogans, the most well-known was *We are the 99%*, a slogan intended to distinguish the vast majority of people from those holding disproportionate wealth and power—that is, the ‘one percent’. Hundreds of thousands of images of people holding signs telling their stories of economic struggle and ending with the phrase “I am the 99%” circulated online. Their stories described living on tiny incomes and with massive debt, working multiple jobs to support families, unable to plan for the future.

The encampments in Zuccotti Park and in other cities started food distribution centers, libraries, and teach-ins, featuring well known activists and academics. The Occupy movement was leaderless and organized in ways that looked different from other protests and revolutionary movements. Each encampment operated on a consensus politics model, where decisions for the functioning of the group had to be agreed upon by everyone and using a specific process.

Because of its leaderlessness and organizational structure, the Occupy movement appeared distinct from other recent protest movements, like the 2002–03 movements against the U.S. invasion of Iraq and the 1990s movements to disrupt and shut down meetings of intergovernmental economic organizations like the World Trade Organization, the G7, and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation. These earlier movements had specific aims and goals—they were against war, and against the economic consequences of [neoliberal](#) globalization. Activists wanted to influence authorities to take specific actions. By contrast, Occupy Wall Street had no particular set of demands or goals to start with. They simply declared their opposition to economic inequality. The initial call to gather in Zuccotti Park, made by the Canadian anti-consumer magazine *Adbusters* in July 2011, simply stated that the aim was to “make a better America.” *Adbusters* also

called on people to articulate—together—“an uncomplicated demand” (*Adbusters*, 2011).

Because Occupy Wall Street refused to make specific demands, had no central leadership structure, and did not address a particular political authority, the media and politicians did not know how to describe the movement. Even though most media coverage did not criticize the Occupy movement’s claims about growing economic inequality, many journalists argued that the Occupy encampments were not revolutionary movements because they did not have a specific program or plan of action. The *New York Times*, describing the Occupy Wall Street encampment in Zuccotti Park, wrote that that the movement’s cause was “virtually impossible to decipher,” with demands “for nothing in particular to happen right away” (Bellafante, 2011). Many journalists, like those writing for the *Los Angeles Times*, discussed a growing call—from politicians and the public—for supporters of the Occupy movement to articulate “specific tangible goals,” “specific demands,” or “a message” (Susman, 2011). At the same time, reporters admitted that “the very nature of Occupy Wall Street has made [the] task [of making demands] difficult” (Grossman, 2011).

Occupy supporters argued that the broad, leaderless structure of the movement, expressing discontent with economic inequality, was itself the message. The fact that Occupy operated by creating encampments that occupied public space, included their own political structure, and offered food, healthcare supplies, and libraries, was key to the movement. Some activists within the Occupy movement also refused to make demands because they didn’t want the movement to specialize or splinter. They preferred to remain the 99%, rather than “become a political party” (Grossman, 2011). In other words, participants in the Occupy movement did not want to mimic or join existing forms of polit-

ical activity, like political parties. Instead, it was important to them that their activities in the encampments model the politics they believed in.

Journalists and politicians struggled to understand the Occupy movement because the forms of political activity Occupy participants engaged in were unfamiliar. They did not fit the categories usually used to describe social movements and protests—categories associated with making demands of political authorities, having a political agenda and a defined leadership, and seeking specific reforms or revolutionary change. Put another way, the language or concepts needed to understand Occupy did not exist in the lexicon about social movements. Occupy was therefore outside of the **epistemology**—the ways by which we know a thing—of social movements.

The Occupy movement presented an epistemological challenge because it was of a different kind than those that came before. It challenged the epistemology of dissent—those concepts, categories, and languages through which we understand how people oppose or resist existing political authority. As the Occupy movement shows, new languages and concepts are always being articulated through political action, so the epistemology of dissent is also always changing.

Discussion Questions

What are epistemologies? How does the concept “epistemology of dissent” help us to better understand how we experience the appearance of new kinds of protest or resistance to political authority?

How would you explain the term “epistemology of dissent” to someone else?

The example of the Occupy movement was used to describe a case in which an event did not match the form it was ‘supposed’ to take, which made it difficult to understand. Can you think of another example in which something like this happened?

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Extractivism

SOPHIA E. HAGOLANI-ALBOV

Sophia E. Hagolani-Albov is a doctoral researcher with the agroecology group in the Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry at the University of Helsinki. She currently works for Global Development Studies in the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Helsinki and is one of the founding members of the Global Extractivisms and Alternatives Initiative (EXALT). She also co-hosts the EXALT Initiative podcast. Sophia's doctoral research explores food system redesign in the Finnish countryside. She is also interested in extractivism as an organizing concept and understanding the impacts of data extractivisms.

Extractivism is a concept that describes an underlying logic of capital accumulation at any cost and indicates a particular way that value is placed on the earth's resources.

Apple Tree Care and How One Relates to Resources

There are different ways to approach how humans interact with resources. Many different types of resources exist, for example those that are commonly termed *natural resources*, which include minerals, metals, oil (and other hydrocarbons), and wood/non-wood forest products. Resources also include agricultural prod-

ucts and the soils they grow in. Additionally, resources can be derived from other activities, for example, through the labor or effort that human and non-human beings contribute to the production of goods and services. Further, there are intellectual and cultural resources; even the data we produce when we interact with the digital world can be understood as a resource.

Extractivism describes a way that humans interact with resources. This interaction also describes an underlying logic that drives how humans relate to their resources. Extractivist logic is deeply intertwined with many of the structural and historical features that drive unsustainable practices, for example via political ideologies and economic models. The concept of extractivism is thus a critical lens that highlights the systemic nature of unsustainable practices and processes. Developing alternatives to extractivism—as a basis for developing sustainable practices and processes—often requires one to rethink how nature can be understood and conceptualized.

As an example, consider the two different relationships to an apple tree that are described below. One can be characterized as non-extractivist, the other as extractivist. You will see that while there is ‘taking’—or extraction—from the tree in both instances, the value assigned to the tree varies depending on which logic is at play (i.e., non-extractivist or extractivist).

Non-Extractivist Relations

In the first instance, there is an apple tree that grows in a backyard, and someone tends or cares for the tree. Every year when the time is right, the fruit from the tree is harvested and this fruit is sold for profit. Some of the apples fall to the ground, and they are left there for animals to eat, or else they decompose and their nutrients return to the soil. Every year, the person tend-

ing the tree places natural mulch around the tree—taking care that it is far enough from the trunk that the tree does not rot. This helps the tree to remain healthy and continue to produce apples. Every year during the dormant period, the person tending the tree prunes some of its branches to open the canopy, so there is light and air circulation to allow the fruit to grow. The pruned branches can be used for wood chips, mulch, or in another way that generates benefit or direct profit. If used at all, pesticides, insecticides, and herbicides are administered in a way that causes minimal environmental harm. In this relationship with the tree, the resources from the tree are being used for human gain, but the tree is also being taken care of in a manner that honors the tree. This allows continued production, and ultimately, a more sustainable relationship, minimizing degradation as it does not destroy the tree or its surrounding ecosystem.

Extractivist Relations

In the second instance, there is an apple tree that grows in a backyard, and someone owns the tree. The fruit from the tree is harvested and sold for profit. To generate the most money from sales of the fruit, the owner of the tree liberally applies insecticide so the apples can grow big and round without any damage from insects. In addition, herbicides and other pesticides are applied to keep away anything that might compete with the tree's growth. It works, but the surrounding ecosystem is damaged as a result. The wood of the tree is indiscriminately taken as needed in a way convenient for the owner. For example, if someone decides they would like to make a table from the tree and offers a large sum of money, then the tree, or part of it, is cut down, even if it was still capable of producing apples. The main value of the tree is the capital that can be extracted from

the resources of the tree, rather than the tree having inherent value. In this way, the tree will be used in any way that generates the most capital for the owner—no matter the cost—even if this means the destruction of the surrounding ecosystem and the tree itself.

These two instances show it is not simply the act of using the resource in question that makes it an example of extractivism. In the first instance, the tender receives resources from the tree, but in a way that fosters the continued health and development of the tree (and its surrounding ecosystem). In the second example, the owner only values the tree (and its surrounding ecosystem) for the capital that can be gained from their use. The resources of the tree are thus used to generate the most capital, regardless of the ecological cost. This illustrates a relationship to the tree that employs extractivist logic, which can be identified by its intensity, volume, market orientation, and disposability.

Extractivist logic allows the tree to be destroyed for immediate capital gain—an ethos that can be applied to the interaction with and accumulation of natural, labor, intellectual, and cultural resources. An extractivist logic can be applied at any scale but is most often associated with large-scale developments (e.g., mining, industrial agriculture, mainstream forestry) or large corporations that exploit their users' data without concern for those users' privacy or well-being. Extractivist logic is often imposed on local populations and landscapes through the actions of large corporations in the name of capital accumulation.

For in-depth discussions of extractivism in different contexts, and to learn more about the alternatives to extractivism, listen to the [Global Extractivisms and Alternatives Initiative podcast](#), a monthly conversation with academics and activists focused on this subject.

Discussion Questions

- How would you explain extractivist logic to a friend? What different example would you use to illustrate extractivism?
- Why is it important to understand the underlying logics of specific natural resource accumulations?

Additional Resources

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Feminist Historiography

STEFANIE RUEL AND KAITLYNN C. HAMMEL

Stefanie Ruel is an Assistant Professor in the Department for People and Organizations at the Open University, U.K. After close to a twenty-year career in the Canadian space industry, she is now a scholar who focuses on addressing the marginalization of ciswomen and gender diverse individuals in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) contexts, both in historical and contemporary society.

Kaitlynn C. Hammel is a secondary-school student who continues to develop her skills, knowledge, and love for her art work. Notably, through her unique treatment of colors, shading, and perspective, she has designed and published a Christmas/Seasonal greeting card, and created an Academy of Management award-winning graphic design for Dr. Ruel's case study titled "Rogue One: The Canadian Space Agency and 'understanding the [non] inclusive organization'."

Feminist historiography is a method of bringing together different kinds of feminism (e.g., liberal, radical, postcolonial) with ways of retelling the experiences of ciswomen and gender-diverse individuals who lived in the past.

Reconstructing histories that include ciswomen

and gender-diverse individuals

Take a moment to ask yourself: How might you find stories about ciswomen and [gender-diverse](#) individuals who lived in the past, when there is minimal to no information about them on the internet or in publicly available corporate documents? For example, say you were interested in learning about Black ciswomen who worked as mathematicians during the U.S. race to the moon in the 1950s and 1960s, but they were “hidden” (Shetterly 2016) among more prominent and celebrated White cismen, like Neil Armstrong and John Glenn. What steps could you take to learn more about these Black ciswomen?

Much of what we can know about the past is captured in documents—official letters, copies of speeches, court recordings—or in published texts, such as newspapers and pamphlets, and more recently as digitized documents. These types of ‘official’ archives are largely focused on retelling “[cis]man’s story” (Wallach-Scott 1983, 174), however, like those space stories surrounding Neil Armstrong and John Glenn. Undoing discriminatory practices today and in the future, by sharing histories that are more diverse and inclusive, is a noble goal to strive for; structural barriers, such as governmental or institutional bureaucracies, that affect what is deemed to be ‘important to keep’ versus ‘what is to be discarded’ makes attaining this goal challenging.

Feminist scholars in ciswomen’s and gender history, as an example of those who use feminist historiography, strive for more inclusive processes to be put in place when practicing social history. Feminist historiographers try to uncover the stories of ciswomen and gender-diverse individuals, and then strive to share these stories in either academic publications and conferences, or with the public through workshops and events at museums and other public places. In so doing, such people aim to change

societal imbalances, in part by bringing individual experiences to light that have previously been excluded from those ‘official’ archives. Ciswomen’s and gender history is a broad field that some may approach as a study of fragmented ‘factual’ events of the past, even as others see it as an act of resistance.

Feminist historiographies meld [feminism](#) (e.g., liberal, radical, psychoanalytic, socialist, transnational/postcolonial, etc.) with historical studies. These types of historical studies are not always focused on creating “a realistic record of every event and experience in time” (Suddaby et al. 2010, 152), however. In their practice, feminist historiographers incorporate oral accounts retold and passed on through time, personal diaries, personal letters, blogs, and social media—and, when possible, interviews with the individual in question. These historians also develop more encompassing methods, including tracing patterns of thought/ideas in storytelling practices, and accepting that a fragmented re-telling of the past is a plausible history.

Feminist historiographers also look to social contexts that have rules and meta-rules that are in place to impose an order; these rules and meta-rules can be written or unwritten, formal or informal, and can influence how individuals act. For example, in the 1950s, once a North American woman married, she was expected to immediately stop working. Feminist historians attempt to unravel such informal rules in ways that reveal power dynamics among individuals. One example is that of Doris Jelly (1932–2021), a trained physicist, mathematician, world traveler, and a woman who worked on Alouette I, the first Canadian satellite launched into space in 1962. Jelly recognized early on in her career that if she wanted to work in space, she could not marry, and so she chose to have two live-in partners at different times in her life. During the post-World War II period in which Jelly worked, the practice of taking a non-marital partner was not as

common as it is today. These power dynamics showcase Jelly's courageous choices in light of such discriminatory practices. Notably, while many Western ciswomen were under tremendous pressure to conform to a meta-rule of choosing marriage over career/work, others had to live in 'hidden' fashion, like Jelly did. Cismen, on the other hand, did not have to make such choices.

Feminist historiographers also call for the development of more inclusive archival policies and practices, so that institutional and 'official' records can evolve. Ultimately, these more inclusive sources and methods will help to undo the 'hidden' existence of ciswomen and gender-diverse individuals. Feminist historiographies are, in essence, acts of resistance against the proliferation of White, masculine-centric narratives and stories that seem to dominate our understandings of the past and that, as a result, reinforce the marginalization of ciswomen and gender-diverse individuals in the present. By untangling the 'grand narratives' of history, and by looking for more complex and fragmented meanings and lived experiences, we can arrive at a more nuanced and varied understanding of our histories and cultures.

Discussion Questions

- Based on your reading of this vignette, how would you explain feminist historiography to someone who has never heard of it?
- Why do you think this approach is important?

- Think of a cis-woman or a gender-diverse individual in the past, say someone who was born prior to the 1950s. (It can be a family member or a distant friend of a friend, but the idea is that it is not someone famous, like Indira Gandhi.) List some ways you think you could find out more about them. How would you share what you found out about them with others?

Exercises

Within the particular growing area of contemporary war histories, considered to be post-1800, Brookfield and Glassford (2019) focus their efforts on Canadian ciswomen's experiences, in and outside of the home. There are also other ciswomen's and gender-diverse individuals' stories post-1945 that are bubbling to the surface. These include welcoming soldiers home and the necessity for a conspiracy of silence (Bruce 1985; Korinek 2004), immigration and care for children (Brookfield 2012; Freund 2009; Sangster 2007), and ciswomen earning a university education and going to work outside of the home, along with the growth of the middle-class (Guard 2004; Iacovetta 2000; Ruel et al. 2020; Strong-Boag 1994).

In Figure 1, ciswomen and gender-diverse individuals are depicted as a non-binary person, tinted in the black and white of the past. As shown in the illustration, they are attempting to break through the current barriers of 'official' archives, here depicted in color. The care and responsibility required to undertake such acts of breaking through 'official' archives, in contexts of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), needs courageous people to work together at revealing these ciswomen's and gender-diverse people's contributions.



Figure 1.

Create your own feminist historiography, keeping in mind your answer to the third discussion question.

- Do a preliminary search on the internet to find some basic, high-level information about your person of interest.
- Go to, call, or email your local library, whichever is most convenient. Talk to the librarian about the different ways you can find out more about this individual and their past. Ask the librarian for contact information for a variety of archival sites, such as community-based archives or university-based archives, or in the case of oral histories, contact information for Indigenous elders or band councils that may be of assistance to your search.
- Communicate with these archival sites or individuals/organizations to see how they might assist you in finding out more about this person of interest.
- Document what you learned about this person of interest, in such a way that you can recall and use this information.
- How could you share what you found out about this individual?

Think of different options, like making a drawing or collage, or by telling a story. Then share this depiction with someone else and ask them for feedback. (e.g., Was the story coherent, did they want to learn more about this person, is there something missing that would help them understand this person better, etc.?)

- What are some of the challenges you encountered in doing this exercise? Document the challenges, and then consider and note down what you could do to overcome them.

Additional Resources

The following movies may be of interest: *Hidden Figures* (2016), *Agora* (2009), and *Paris is Burning* (1990). Ask yourself why these particular films or documentaries were included here—are they legitimate histories? Or, are they plausible histories, with fragments of stories melded together? Are they valid examples of where we can go to collect information about someone, beyond ‘official’ archives?

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Food Sovereignty

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Food sovereignty is a term that refers to the right of a people to manage their own food systems and foodways.

Heirloom Tinawon Rice Farming in the Philippine Cordilleras: Resisting Commercialized Seeds

Sovereignty is a political concept usually used in reference to states, countries, or territories. It refers to how a ruler, a group of persons, or governments have supreme governing power over the affairs of a particular place. For example, Sultan Haji Hassanali Bolkiah of Brunei is an absolute monarch who has sov-

ereign power over the affairs of his country. The term is also important in international relations. An independent country, for example, must respect the sovereignty of another independent country by not invading it or meddling in its affairs.

In the same way that political sovereignty denotes control over the affairs of a country, food sovereignty is about “the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems” (World Forum for Food Sovereignty, 2007). The drive for food sovereignty came about as the World Trade Organization pushed for the liberalization of agriculture around the world, and control over food production started being concentrated in the hands of a few powerful conglomerates aimed at maximizing profit. The term was coined by the international peasants’ movement, La Via Campesina, in 1996. Prior to this date, however, manifestations of the aspirations of food sovereignty advocates have been found in small pockets of the world, in the lived experiences of Indigenous peoples.

In the Philippines, productivity-oriented agricultural policies beginning in the late 1960s forced generations of lowland farmers to abandon their traditional/heirloom seeds and planting practices in favor of hybrid seeds that supposedly give higher yields. However, the farmers must also spend a lot more for farm inputs, such as inorganic fertilizers and pesticides, to achieve the promised yields. Furthermore, they must buy new seeds for the next cropping season, because saving and replanting hybrid seeds results in lower-quality produce, as this second generation of plants displays a more varied assortment of genes that express both desirable and undesirable qualities (Burrows, 2019). As a result, farmers have become dependent on big agribusiness companies for their seeds, fertilizers, and pesticides. Coupled

with unfavorable market conditions (abusive middlemen, cartels that restrict competition, and dumped imported products), widespread poverty in the agricultural sector has ensued. The lowland farmers have lost much of their agricultural heritage together with their food sovereignty.

However, in the Cordillera Mountains of the Philippines, many Indigenous farmers asserted the principles of food sovereignty with their rice crop, the *tinawon*. In response to colonial efforts to control them (when the Spanish arrived in the 16th century), these erstwhile plains farmers fled to the mountains. They then constructed flooded terraces on the mountainsides to continue their rice planting. The Rice Terraces of the Philippine Cordilleras became a UNESCO World Heritage Cultural Landscape in 1995. The variances of ecology and microclimates in these mountains resulted in a great diversity of *tinawon* (once-a-year) rice varieties. Each farmer-family would plant several cultivars of rice in various locations of the village. Different types of rice were used for everyday eating, desserts, wine-making, gifting, and ritual offerings. These rice varieties were specially selected and saved by knowledgeable women, and passed on from generation to generation. They were also freely shared with people who needed seeds for planting. Figure 2, below, shows cooperative hand-harvesting of rice in the UNESCO World Heritage Batad Rice Terrace Cluster. Women work together in harvesting the crop from each other's paddies.



Figure 1: Women harvesting tinawon rice in the village of Batad, Banaue, Ifugao



Figure 2: Short-grain Tinawon rice placed in a basket in preparation for bundling and sun-drying

As the Philippine government and other private companies tried to introduce high-yielding hybrid rice varieties throughout the country, many Cordilleran farmers shunned these campaigns. They rejected the idea of needing to purchase rice seeds; their subsistence farming did not generate the cash necessary to purchase manufactured agricultural inputs. They also knew that these hybrid rice varieties would not thrive in their climate. Unlike their counterparts in the lowlands, they maintained ownership and control over their rice crops—they freely planted their heirloom seeds on their own terraces, adopting nature-friendly, traditional methods (e.g., using locally sourced organic fertilizers, avoiding chemical pesticides, and doing multi-crop farming). The indigenous Ifugao farmers also continued to perform their ancient rituals, which are centered upon these traditional cultivars. Their seed-saving efforts helped to safeguard agricultural biodiversity in the country. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations subsequently names these rice terraces Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Sites. Elsewhere around the country, more contemporary progressive agricultural organizations like MASIPAG (*Magsasaka at Siyentipiko para sa Pag-unlad ng Agrikultura*, or in English, Farmers and Scientists for the Development of Agriculture) mirror the efforts of the Ifugao through projects such as training farmers to be rice breeders, and establishing living community seed banks.

The Indigenous Ifugao people of the UNESCO World Heritage Rice Terraces of the Philippine Cordilleras have a long history of struggle against outside forces that aimed to colonize them, and their [resistance](#) to commercial rice seeds perfectly demonstrate the goals of food sovereignty advocates. By continuing their traditional rice culture and opposing efforts to ‘modernize’ their agricultural production, they effectively safeguard their plant

biodiversity, mountain ecology, food culture, ancient rituals, and way of life.

Discussion Questions

- Aside from seed saving by farmers, how have other people worked towards food sovereignty in other places
- What are some of the signs that a community exercises food sovereignty?
- How might you work towards greater food sovereignty in your own community?

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Financialization

JOSH HAWLEY

Financialization refers to the ever-increasing influence of financial strategies, tools, and technologies within people's daily lives.

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Financialization of housing: The repositioning of Heron

Gate Village

Heron Gate Village, a large rental complex in Ottawa, is home to about 4,000 tenants. They all rent from one landlord, Toronto-based Hazelview Properties. Hazelview owns billions of dollars worth of real estate around the world, but mostly in Canada, and Heron Gate Village is its biggest property. Hazelview has started implementing a massive redevelopment plan which has already seen over 600 tenants, mostly Black and brown families, lose their homes. The process underway at Heron Gate Village exemplifies what has come to be known as the financialization of housing. Financialization describes the process of embedding

strategies from the world of finance further into aspects of daily human life.

Hazelview and other landlords that share a similar business model package their properties into attractive investment portfolios they can pitch to investors. Hazelview sells a carefully curated image of Heron Gate Village to potential investors. By investing in Hazelview, investors expect a predictable return on their investment, because everybody needs a place to live and property consistently increases in value. As one company executive said, “we are looking for ways to generate a predictable yield on an apartment building, where the rent comes from tenants who are paying for a roof over their heads.” However, the reality of the on-the-ground living conditions and day-to-day experiences of tenants who call Heron Gate Village home are vastly different from what is presented in Hazelview’s investment portfolios.

Hazelview acquired Heron Gate Village in 2012 and 2013 (under its previous name Timbercreek Communities) with one objective: to reposition the property. Repositioning is an industry term that means completely changing the character and image of the property, in order to make it more attractive to investors, not better for tenants.

A traditional landlord makes their money from rent collection. A landlord could sit back and collect a steady stream of predictable, passive income from tenants paying their rent. If this landlord was feeling ambitious and had enough capital, they might redevelop or renovate their property and then charge higher rents. In any case, the goal for this landlord is always to rent out all available units to maximize rent collection, thereby increasing their return on investment.

For a financialized landlord like Hazelview, however, rent collection makes up only a small amount of their revenue. They make most of their money from investors, who buy into investment funds or shares in the company, if it is traded publicly. Conceptually, it could be viewed that investors in a financialized landlord own a fraction of a rental property, or even a fraction of an individual unit. When the rent goes up for tenants or the property increases in value because the landlord succeeds in repositioning, the investors get a higher return on their investment. While any individual can buy shares in a company that is publicly listed on the financial markets, financialized landlords primarily target the big players: institutional investors. These investors are often large public sector pension funds, like the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan. One executive, when talking about Hazelview's plans for Heron Gate Village, said, "We're not investing \$100 million as a bet on rent. This is an important investment for Timbercreek and its pension plan."

There are many reasons why Hazelview views Heron Gate Village as ripe for repositioning. Hazelview sees the neighbourhood as having a lot of what they call "value-add" potential. Ottawa is expected to grow rapidly over the next 20 years, and the neighbourhood is in a good location while property becomes scarcer and more valuable. Heron Gate Village is right in the middle of the city, halfway between downtown and the airport. Most significantly, however, is that the area is the most racialized area in Ottawa and one of the poorest, with many tenants having English-language barriers and varied immigration statuses, and working low-wage jobs or living on social assistance. Landlords like Hazelview target areas like this because they think tenants will be easier to push out to allow for a new image of the property to be crafted. To help craft these images and derive value from their properties, these landlords calculate and analyze every-

thing from the building mechanics to the personal lives of tenants and their guests.

Financialized landlords use several tactics to reposition their properties. One is improving the “curb appeal” (think of viewing a property while standing outside on the curb or looking at one online) rather than improving conditions inside tenants’ units. In Heron Gate Village, Hazelview replaced the concrete balconies on the five apartment towers with glass ones. They cut their own operating costs by installing new water systems in their buildings, which also acts as a form of “greenwashing” to attract investors. Another tactic is “rolling the tenants.” In Ontario, high turnover benefits landlords because there is no rent control—a limit on how much landlords can increase rent each year—on vacant units. Once tenants who are paying leave their units, the landlord can increase the rent without making any improvements, giving investors an impression of an increase in value. “Squeezing” is another tactic, which describes increasing amounts of financial pressure on tenants, which in turn encourages rollover. Squeezing can be accomplished by rent increases, increasing laundry costs, charging for visitors’ parking, and submetering utilities.

In late 2015, Hazelview gave notice to around 80 households that they had to move because their townhouses were going to be torn down. Everybody moved out, the houses were demolished, and luxury rental buildings were built in their place. In 2018, Hazelview did the same thing to 150 households. This time, however, tenants across the neighbourhood organized and fought back. They showed the public what Hazelview was doing, and the story even made international headlines. Sadly, all of the tenants again were pressured to move, with many ending up in the shelter system or paying hundreds of dollars more in rent elsewhere in the city, and the townhouses were demolished by

Hazelview. The tenants' organization was not all for nothing, however. They filed a collective human rights case against both the City of Ottawa and the landlord—the largest housing human rights case in Canadian history.

Financialization occurs when parts of our lives are increasingly influenced by strategies, formulas, tools, and technologies from the world of finance. Traditional rental landlords derive value from a property through rent collection, saving on expenses through neglect, or selling a property when housing prices have increased. Financialized landlords, however, are in the business of image creation and investor returns. In the case of Heron Gate Village, Hazelview has targeted the neighbourhood for repositioning because of its value-add potential, and is realizing this plan by kicking out current tenants and demolishing housing. Financialization allows landlords to sell to investors *the idea of a property*, instead of the property itself, as it is experienced and lived in by the tenants who call it home. When tenants work together to expose the landlord's tactics and push back against evictions and rent increases, they can resist being victims of financialization.

Discussion Questions

- What are some key features that distinguish a landlord of a financialized property from a traditional landlord?
- In what ways are tenants affected in their daily lives by the tactics of financialized landlords?

- How can tenants build power to challenge landlords who have financialized their properties?
- What kind of neighbourhoods do landlords target for repositioning? In other words, if you were a financialized landlord looking to attract institutionalized investors by repositioning a property, what characteristics would you look for in a neighbourhood or rental complex?
- What other aspects of our lives are affected by the process of financialization?

Exercise

Find a financialized landlord in your city and identify the properties it owns. Identify which of those properties the landlord might be targeting for repositioning based on the area and statistics of the neighbourhood. Work with your classmates to create a poster, flyer, pamphlet, or website that can be used to explain to tenants in this neighbourhood how financialized landlords make their money, what tactics they might be using against tenants, and how tenants can organize together to save their homes.

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Gendered Messaging

SARAH ROTZ

Gendered messaging is a means through which ideas about power, norms, expectations, categories, behaviours, and practices of gender are presented, disseminated and reproduced across culture.

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Performing and Pushing Back on Diet Culture: Exploring gendered messaging on Instagram

With the rise of social media, hashtags have become key tools of cultural messaging, and are both productive and reifying of gender and gendered behavior. In other words, social media helps to transform abstract messages into material forms, because of the ways we physically present, behave, and act out such messages with ourselves and one another. Hashtags are not neutral, but instead reveal the ways that the **performativity** of language can reinforce oppressive gender dynamics. In the context of gender, food, health, and the

body, hashtags have become visual spaces where gendered food habits and practices reveal themselves—idealizing certain body sizes and health behaviors over others. Too often, these messages are based in shame and control, which often leads to harmful responses to emotional experiences, punishing internal thought patterns, and disordered eating behaviours. One of the systems fueling these responses and behaviours has been described as ‘diet culture’.

Diet culture is a system of beliefs that equates thinness and smaller body shapes to health and moral virtue. Diet culture is rooted in Western, patriarchal messages, perspectives and practices of food, eating, and health. As a result, diet culture disproportionately harms woman, non-binary folks, people with large bodies, non-white people, and those who do not reflect and conform to white, Western gender norms and bodily aesthetics.

Gendered messaging is foundational to the (re)production of diet culture. For instance, research and lived experience have shown that familial and community responsibility for food preparation, health, and well-being is largely borne by women. These behaviors are modelled repeatedly for young women (and men), and the messaging that food work is women’s work remains ubiquitous. Meanwhile, women’s bodies—as well as their food and bodily performance and practices—are highly controlled, largely through messages about discipline, shame, and regulation, including an obsession with thinness. These messages have very real, material impacts.

Women (and women of colour specifically) take on nearly all of the paid and unpaid responsibilities for food and care work. This work has been systemically undervalued (both culturally and economically), highly exploited, and excluded from even the most basic labour standards and regulations. For instance, the

Canadian government increasingly relies on racialized and migrant women to do domestic care work in Canada, yet these women are often unable to have access to permanent residency, are provided with limited worker rights and low-wages, and have few protections from abuse and exploitation (a common issue for workers).

With this in mind, it becomes obvious why dominant food culture and industry continues to invest in ways to keep women fixated on our body size and image, instead of such political issues of sexism, homophobia, fatphobia, racism, and poverty. Luckily, many resist diet culture messaging and instead call for #riotsnotdiets, #genderequity, #foodjustice, and #justicefordomesticworkers, while seeking ways to #smashthepatriarchy, #fuckdietculture and build a more just way forward for all through #bodypositivity. In fact, women- and LGBTQ2S+-led movements that resist gender binaries and diet culture, and instead advance body positivity, liberation, sovereignty, and fat acceptance are on the rise. These movements see all bodies as worthy and condemn any form of body shaming and policing: all bodies have the right to exist on their own terms, as they are.

Consider the food- and gender-related hashtags in Table 1, below. In small groups, select two columns per group from the table. (All of the columns should be addressed during the classroom exercise.) Look through the corresponding hashtags on Instagram and use the following questions to guide your discussion together. Come together as a group and share your findings for each column.

Exercise Questions:

- What are some of the dominant images in the hashtag?
- What messages do the images and hashtag convey about

gender, body image, health, or nutrition?

- What do these messages say about the cultural ideas of femininity, masculinity, health, and bodies?
- What do these images tell you about how women and men are being told to live, perform, and behave?
- What are some of the physical, social, and emotional impacts of these messages?
- Who is being included and centered, and who is excluded? (i.e., race, class, body size, ability, sexuality)
- As you look through the images/messages/hashtags, do you observe any connections between ideal body image, size, or food habits and these dynamics?
- How might this messaging have an impact on non-binary people, or those whose **gender identities** do not align with—or exist outside of—these gender binaries? What forms of resistance to these gender binaries do you see?

Table 1: These food- and gender-related hashtags are organized into broad thematic categories. Not all images or messages may affirm the categorical theme. The themes should be used more so to guide your thinking. I also want to offer a content warning when reviewing some of the images and messages in the hashtags, as they may trigger and/or reinforce harmful thoughts and messages about weight and body size. Please use your discretion, and be sure to hold adequate space to allow everyone to reflect critically on these messages together.

Diet Culture messaging	Feminizing messaging	Masculinizing Messaging	Balance and wellness messaging	Anti-diet culture messaging
#dietfood #eatingclean #eatwell #eatright #healthyfood #healthy eating #cleanfood	#babefood #cutecarbs #foodgirl #foodbabe #babeup #eatlikeagirl #girlfood	#dudefood #guyfood #realmanfood #manfood #cavemanfood	#balancednotclean #intuitiveeating #whatieatinaday #wellnessdiet #wellness #wellnessfood	#dietculture #riotsnotdiets #antidiet #dietculturedropout #losehatenotweight #fatpositive #ditchthediet #fuckdietculture

Discussion Questions

- Think about your relationship to food, health, and your body. How have you experienced gendered messaging?
- What are your earliest remembered messages about gender, and how you were expected to behave, perform, or respond?
- In what ways has diet culture had an impact on your daily life and your relationship to food and your body? Have you responded or resisted this? If so, how?
- How might gendered messaging affect people differently, depending on intersecting dimensions of race, class, sexuality, ability, body size, etc.?

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Genealogy

MARTA BASHOVSKI

Genealogy is a method of tracing the complex histories and origins of concepts that are assumed to be timeless and/or universal (like morality, sexuality, inalienable rights), and aims to show how these concepts emerged through specific cultural, social and political circumstances.

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Are “inalienable rights” as timeless as we think they are?

You may already know about the most famous ideas in the United States *Declaration of Independence*: that all people are created equal and hold certain “unalienable rights,” among them the rights to

“life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.” These words were written in 1776 by Thomas Jefferson, one of the founders of the United States. In the *Declaration of Independence*, Jefferson also listed the American colonies’ grievances against the British

crown, announcing the colonies' independence from the crown. The colonies should be independent because, Jefferson argued, the duty of governments is to protect people's "unalienable rights," which Great Britain had failed to do. This was the starting point for the American Revolution.

"Unalienable rights" or, as we would say today, "inalienable rights," are rights that cannot be given up or taken away by any government. These are the most basic rights we tend to take for granted: they are *obvious* truths about our lives. The right to life means that no one can harm or kill you. The right to liberty means you can act as you would like, and, except for limited cases—usually when you infringe on the rights of others—the government cannot tell you what to do. The right to the "pursuit of happiness" is trickier but intuitively still seems obvious. We have a right to choose to live our lives in ways that make us content.

Even though we tend to think about "inalienable rights" as obvious and universal, they have a history. Tracing the multiple historical threads through which the concept of "inalienable rights" emerged is an example of the practice of *genealogy*. Genealogy is a method used to investigate how supposedly timeless or universal ideas—"what we tend to feel is without history" (Foucault, 1977, p. 139)—came about through specific cultural, social, and political circumstances, and at particular moments in history. The genealogy of "inalienable rights" shows some of the political activity through which certain ideas—ones that we assume are obvious—came about.

While "inalienable rights" and how they relate to our governmental systems may seem obvious today, they were hotly debated when Jefferson wrote the *Declaration of Independence*. This was a time when the absolute power of monarchs was

declining and the power of parliaments was growing. By 1776, there was an established European philosophical tradition that held that there were basic, ‘God-given’ laws of human life, and rights that all human beings were born with. This is known as the “natural law” and “natural rights” tradition and it is from where Jefferson drew many of the ideas in the *Declaration of Independence*.

One key influence on the writing of the *Declaration of Independence* was the English philosopher John Locke’s 1690 text *Two Treatises on Government*. Locke was a strong proponent of natural rights and the power of parliaments over monarchs. He was also connected to the American colonies and is thought to have helped draft the Carolina colony’s first constitution. However, there was one key difference between the “unalienable rights” declared by Jefferson in the *Declaration of Independence* and those listed by Locke. Rather than proclaiming the “unalienable rights” of “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness,” Locke described “property” as a God-given natural right of every person, arguing that every person has a right to “life, liberty, and estate [property]” (Locke 1980, p. 46).

For Locke, the most basic forms of property we own are our bodies and our labour. Our bodies do not belong to anyone but ourselves, and we can use and sell our labour to create value for ourselves. Importantly, we can use our bodies and our labour to create private property out of the earth, which, Locke argues, has been given to all humans in common. For Locke, land itself is of no specific use until we have improved it with our labour (usually agricultural), like when a farmer grows an apple orchard. For Locke, when a person works on a piece of land, that land becomes their private property. Because people need private property to thrive, he believed, property constituted an “inalienable right.”

To make his case, Locke compared European agricultural and industrial practices to his understanding of the practices of Indigenous peoples in the Americas. He argued that engaging in agricultural labour produces economic resources that make land more valuable. Because Indigenous peoples were not practicing stewardship of their lands in ways Europeans viewed as productive, Locke argued that they were wasting these lands. This view of land and private property thus justified the taking of Indigenous lands by European settlers. For Jefferson and the U.S. Founding Fathers, Locke’s understanding of property as a natural right was politically helpful, because they wanted to expand their landholdings by taking land from Indigenous peoples, a practice that King George III had limited. These limits were one of the grievances Jefferson listed in the *Declaration of Independence*.

The genealogy of “inalienable rights” includes both large-scale events and concepts like the *Declaration of Independence*, the philosophy of “natural rights,” and the dispossession of Indigenous lands, as well as smaller details like John Locke’s involvement in the Carolina colonies and important changes in the phrasing of documents. Genealogy helps us to better understand how the histories of things we view as obvious have been woven together to create the [political conditions](#) we live with today.

Discussion Questions

- The commonplace definition of genealogy refers to the

tracing of one's family tree. How is the philosophical concept of genealogy, as described above, similar to and different from the commonplace definition?

- The concept of genealogy is demonstrated above by describing some of the lesser-known histories associated with the idea of “unalienable rights.” Are there any other political ideas that we take for granted that you think would benefit from a genealogical study?
- Has your view of “inalienable rights” changed after reading this genealogy of the term?

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Governance

CHARLES Z. LEVKOE

Governance refers to the structures and processes of decision-making, including the rules, policies, laws, and regulations that influence and exert power over social behaviour.

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Participatory Food Systems Governance

Governance involves the rules, policies, laws, and regulations that determine *who* and *what* are considered part of a given system. This includes not only the practical elements of what people are able to do (or not do), but also the political, social,

environmental, and cultural elements that enable or constrain social behaviour. Governance structures also determine *who* should be included in decision-making, and *how* decisions are made. Such structures are useful because they help people to understand what is required to participate and how to take part in decision-making. They can also be problematic, however, by inhibiting participation of those affected by decisions. This occurs when the people and groups that hold the most power in any given society establish and enforce rules that reinforce their own power positions. This has been evident with respect to groups that have been excluded from participating in electoral politics throughout history, for example, women, Indigenous peoples, youth, people living in poverty, members of certain religious denominations, and non-citizens, among others. Dominant, top-down approaches to governance, which are overly influenced by a small group of elite actors holding a disproportionate amount of power, limit broader engagement and participation, and impede solutions that aim to address underlying causes of the world's biggest challenges.

A food system comprises an interconnected web of relationships that bring food from the fields, forests, and waters to our plates. This includes the activities and resources that go into producing, harvesting, processing, distributing, and consuming food, as well as the drivers and outcomes of these processes such as the environment, economy, health, and politics. The food system is governed and controlled through a set of rules, policies, and regulations that, in most cases, operate independent and in contradiction to one another. For example, government departments of the environment ask us to protect biodiversity and departments of health encourage us to eat well balanced, nutritious diets, while departments of agriculture and trade promote monocultural production of high-value indus-

trial crops for export. These dominant governance structures ostensibly aim to support economic growth, food safety, and human health, but instead primarily benefit corporations and elite governments at the expense of food producers, harvesters, and workers across the food chain.

Food systems governance goes beyond singular issues addressed in isolation, to consider the ways that food is **relational** and connected to other people, communities, and the natural world. Rather than focusing on one element or aspect of the food system (e.g., agricultural policy or emergency food access), a *systems* approach to governance starts with an integrated understanding of how single issues and elements are connected. For example, food insecurity (i.e., inadequate access to food, primarily due to financial constraints) is a serious public health problem and disproportionately affects people that have already been made vulnerable (e.g., refugees, migrant workers, **racialized** and Indigenous Peoples). Using a food systems lens, governance solutions go beyond emergency and charity-based responses to increase social protection mechanisms such as livable wages (and basic guaranteed income), social assistance, universal health benefits, and affordable housing. A food systems governance approach sheds light on why some people have access to significant amounts of safe, nutritious, and culturally appropriate foods that meet their personal preferences and needs, while far too many people around the globe do not.

Taking this a step further, participatory food systems governance is an approach that seeks to involve a diverse range of perspectives—not only of policy makers and scientists, but also of people across the food chain. It is common for governments to impose food systems related rules, policies, and regulations that maintain power and influence for a small group of private

sector actors (e.g., agri-business corporations). *Participatory* governance involves establishing favourable conditions that ensure the involvement of people who are typically excluded from decision-making systems (e.g., women, youth, Black and Indigenous people). To understand what this might involve, we have only to look to initiatives that have been established across the globe by food producers and harvesters, social movements, civil society organizations, and Indigenous Peoples that demonstrate alternatives to the dominant forms of food system governance.

One example of participatory food systems governance at the regional scale is the [Indigenous Food Circle](#) (IFC) working on the Traditional lands of Fort William First Nation, signatory to the Robinson Superior Treaty of 1850 (also known as Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada). The IFC is a network of Indigenous-led and Indigenous-serving organizations that aims to reduce Indigenous food insecurity and increase food self-determination. Embracing ideals of decolonization and advancing culturally appropriate approaches, the IFC functions as a collaborative network with the goal of promoting [food sovereignty](#) (i.e., the ideal that all people have a right to healthy and culturally appropriate food and the right to control their food systems) and relationships with settler populations and the state.

Another example, at the national scale in Canada, is the [People's Food Policy](#) (PFP) project. Between 2008 and 2011, the PFP was led by a coalition of organizations that involved thousands of people from across the country through “Kitchen Table Talks.” The objective was to develop a food policy platform grounded in the lived experiences of a wide diversity of participants. The PFP's platform included a range of recommendations based on ten policy papers that focused on Indigenous food sovereignty, rural and remote communities, urban communities, infrastruc-

ture and livelihoods, sustainable fisheries, environment and agriculture, science and technology, healthy and safe food, and food democracy and governance. In this way, the PFP sought to influence federal food policy ‘from the bottom up’ (i.e., the experience of everyday people), rather than relying on the ‘top-down’ perspective of bureaucrats and corporations who prioritize economic interests.

These two examples show that governance structures can be established in ways that are more democratic and inclusive of diverse perspectives. Yet they also show how other, broader, dominant governance structures need to be re-imagined (or dismantled) in order for alternative structures to be established and thrive. Participatory governance is not an endpoint, but a process of engaging with and listening to the lived experience of many different peoples and communities actively involved in bringing food to our plates. This process ensures decision-making that better serves the needs of the population, while ensuring those involved have a sense of connection, ownership, control, and empowerment, all of which are essential for sustainability, equity, health, and well-being.

Discussion Questions

Today’s dominant food systems governance structures are representative of the uneven power dynamics and conditions that shape food systems. Many of the current rules, policies, and regulations bring great profits to large corporations and elite governments at the expense of farmers, harvesters, and workers across the food chain.

- What kinds of rules, policies, and regulations could be established to make these structures more equitable and socially just?
- What are some of the different areas of governance that need to be considered in relation to food systems?
- What kinds of structures and mechanisms could be developed to ensure all people can engage in decision-making processes?
- What other areas or systems might benefit from more diverse and participatory approaches to decision-making?
- What might be some of the challenges and opportunities of putting in place participatory governance structures at the regional level, the national level, or even the global level?

Exercise

Create a diagram of all the different actors that ought to be included in food systems governance. Given that they don't all have the same level of power, consider how you might prioritize diverse voices and perspectives. What criteria would you establish to determine who should be engaged? What structures would effectively allow such broad participation?

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Habitus and Field

EUNICE GAERLAN-PRICE

Field

describes the social spaces within which humans move, socialise, and position themselves; fields encompass power relations that determine the structure of social positions within it.

Habitus refers to the socially acquired or acculturated norms, dispo-

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States of play: High schools, social fields, and the habitus

Dylan hated her first few months at a new school. Her family moved around a lot so she was well accustomed to the “new kid, new school” vibe. She was used

to the awkwardness of trying to work out how things rolled, but it never got easier. In fact, the older she got, the harder it was. Walking nervously through the hallway of Rangeview High as a new student in her senior year, Dylan thought, “You think every school would be the same as they seemed to have the same cliques, same cafeteria layout, same syllabus—but no. Every school has its own code; an unwritten set of rules in a game that you don’t quite know unless you’ve been playing it for some time. The trick is working out the game and the rules, and playing it well. That is, of course, if you want to play it.” The first month was make or break for Dylan. She knew after one month whether she’d worked out the state of play and was destined for a year of ease or whether she’d be counting down the days until her family moved away again.

sitions, values, conditioning, and capital ingrained in social structures, which become embodied by the individuals from within those social structures.

Play 1: What's in a name?

Dylan shouldn’t really count her name as being the first play because she had no control over it, but it was. She could tell that if the school was full of Beths, Graces, Simons, and Marks, she might as well set herself up in the corner of every room and learn to love her own company. Schools with Beths, Graces, Simons, and Marks would question her choice of name (as if it were her choice) and deem her an **other** because she was “a girl with a boy’s name.” She’d had the joy of attending a couple of

schools where the response was, “your name’s Dylan? Cool.” Sure enough, she’d won that play in those schools. But what about Rangeview High? She knew what had to happen. The hallway walk invariably led her to her locker and it would be at her locker that she’d make eye contact with the students congregating close by. She’d flash a friendly smile. Usually, the smile would be reciprocated with some hesitancy but it would be polite enough. Dylan would eek out a mild “hi” to which there would be an equally mild but still polite response. There would be an eyeing up and down of her attire. And then one girl (the one with the most social power) would speak for the group and say, “Hi. You’re new here. I’m What’s your name?” This play was predictable.

“Hi. You’re new here. I’m Beth.” (Great, thought Dylan. I know where this is going). “What’s your name?”

“Hi, I’m Dylan.”

“Dylan? Isn’t that a boy’s name? Shall we just call you Dee?” And before Dylan had time to respond, the group walked off.

Rangeview 1, Dylan o.

Play 2: Mastering the academic game

Dylan made her way to Period 1, Math, her favourite subject. She had arrived slightly late as she worked out the geography of the school, and ended up in the last remaining seat in the front row alongside some eager boys. Glancing behind her, she noticed most of the girls sat towards the rear of the classroom. This gender segregation seemed strange to her. In other schools, classroom seating in the mathematics classroom was far more integrated. As the class progressed, she demonstrated

her aptitude and enjoyment for the subject. She forgot her usual first-day hesitancy when it came to math. The subject excited her. She jostled for attention with the boys in the front row who were eager to the point of disruptive. They would call out, debate, argue with the teacher, argue with each other. Dylan loved it. It was dynamic and exciting—just as math should be! But she noticed very quickly that she was the only girl who showed any such excitement. She noticed the boys would talk over her, or they would disregard her ideas. She noticed the girls were far more reticent, often rolling their eyes when Dylan would call out her responses to problems. She observed how the teacher would request her to put her hand up but wouldn't offer the same correction to some of her more rambunctious male peers. Over time, slowly but surely, she found herself shrinking back in class, not wanting to rock the boat, not wanting to get off-side with her teacher or the other students. Slowly but surely, she found herself habituating to the expectations placed on her.

Rangeview 2, Dylan O.

Play 3: Social media

Coming to the end of her first month, an important play was the social game on social media. Dylan found herself drawn to a visual world of comparison and 'best selves.' She was happy to have her Facebook friend requests accepted by the girls in her year. It made her privy to their perfect little lives. She pored over their photos, status updates, and posts. She commented on their pages, with no response. She began to Like what they liked and shared similar posts with the hope that they would recognise her as one of them. She tried to shed the eager academic maths-geek label she was now assigned. She privileged their

tastes over her own. The more she did this, the more she felt like a stranger in her own skin. There was such a dissonance between the real Dylan, the Rangeview High Dylan, and the Dylan she found herself being online. Her tastes, her strengths, her identity... these just didn't seem to hold any currency in her world at this new school.

Rangeview 3, Dylan O.

Game over.

Discussion Questions

- How would you describe the *field* at Rangeview High?
- How would you describe *habitus* based on Dylan's social negotiations at Rangeview High?
- What clues might Play 1 offer about the social power inherent in names and labels?
- What clues might Play 2 offer about the expectations around intelligence and success at Rangeview High, and how does this affect Dylan's *habitus*?
- How do names and labels help to establish and maintain social power?
- Unlike individual high schools, social media creates connections with other intersecting fields. How might these intersections and connections enhance and strengthen the power of social media?
- How might you conceptualise or understand social media in terms of field and *habitus*?
- Have you ever moved schools? What did it feel like? Were

you aware of the difference in your habitus versus the habitus of most of the other students? What helped you?

Exercises

Watch [this excerpt from the movie “Mean Girls”](#) and consider field and habitus within the context of Cady’s move to this new school.

Then, using [the film’s script, written by Tina Fey](#), present/act out relevant scenes from the film that showcase the notions of field and habitus. Discuss how it feels to embody habitus within the context of this movie.

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Hegemony & Counter-Hegemony

LAURIE ADKIN

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War to Save the Planet: The Hegemony of Fossil Capitalism

Hegemony relates to the ways in which a ruling class or group holds on to (and wields) power over time. While different theorists have used the term to mean somewhat different things, it is commonly associated with the Italian Marxist theorist, Antonio Gramsci (1891–1936). Gramsci developed the concept of hegemony in the context of the anti-capitalist and anti-fascist

Hegemony refers to the social, political, and economic power that a ruling class or group wields, with relative stability, over an extended period of time.

Counter-hegemony refers to the efforts of social movements and political forces

that resist a hegemonic order and seek to reform or replace it.

struggles of the first half of the 20th century.

Counter-hegemony refers to the efforts of social and political actors that [challenge the cultural and institutional foundations of hegemony](#). They call into question the structures, beliefs and norms that underlie the economic, social, and political order,

and attempt to show that alternatives to the status quo exist, are needed, and are achievable.

Hegemony is not equivalent to “domination.” While domination conveys the idea of rule by force, hegemony implies foundations of rule that are far more complex. Gramsci (1971) argued that, in 20th-century, western capitalist societies, hegemony rests on people’s internalized belief that capitalism is the best—or only—way of organizing social relationships. Liberal democracy is “democracy,” even if it does not encompass social equality. The quid pro quo for workers’ loss of control over the fruits of their own labour and time, and for their subordination to bosses, is the wages that allow them to rent homes and feed their families. Built into this trade-off are cultural and sports events that relieve the tedium and stress of working life, and religions that preach the virtues of obedience and promise rewards in an after-life. Such material and cultural conditions generate the *consent* of those who are ruled, and are intrinsic to hegemony, allowing it to appear as the ‘normal’ order of things.

During times of economic or political crisis, however, the injustices and flaws of the hegemonic order may become more visible to the subordinate classes. When the economic system fails to

deliver basic needs, or the ruling class discredits itself by governing badly (or by excessive corruption), people will question whether the system is deserving of support, or should be reformed. These are moments of opportunity for counter-hegemonic movements to advance their critiques of the system and to propose alternative ways of organizing production and government. When this happens, those who occupy key positions in the hegemonic order (in political and economic institutions) may respond by using the coercive powers of the state—the police and the military—to suppress protests, strikes, occupations, or other forms of organized opposition. Hegemony thus relies not only on the consent of the ruled, but also on the tactical use of coercion by the state. Another response of the ruling group might be to accept some of the demands of the reformers, and even to bring some of the opposition bloc’s leaders into the ruling coalition. Such compromises might be enough to persuade at least some elements of the counter-hegemonic movements that they should support the existing system.

Gramsci viewed politics as a “war of position” (or a war *for* position) between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic forces (which, for him, were predominantly class-based). That is, these actors struggle to capture ground—or “trenches”—within state institutions, the economy, and the cultural sphere, that is, where people’s beliefs are shaped. They try to build or maintain coalitions in support of their class interests, either to shore up the hegemonic order, or to undermine it and lay the foundations of a new order.

The crisis of hegemony of fossil capitalism

The capitalist order that became hegemonic after World War II was characterized by rapid economic growth and mass con-

sumption, made possible by both political-economic reforms and by fossil fuels. Ecological thinkers refer to this economic system as “fossil capitalism” (Altvater, 2007; Malm 2016). Fossil capitalism spread around the globe with colonialism and, in the 1980s, involved the relocation of many industries to the Majority World.

As we have known for some time, our reliance on fossil fuels (and capitalist industrialization more generally) has had catastrophic ecological consequences for climate stability and biodiversity (Steffen et al., 2018; Wallace-Wells, 2017). As the science demonstrating these relationships has become established, a global movement has arisen to challenge the hegemony of fossil capitalism. This movement is often referred to as the climate justice movement because it brings together the social and ecological dimensions of the crisis. Indigenous movements around the world play a leading role in these counter-hegemonic efforts; their demands for the restoration of land and for the recognition of their sovereignty pose deep challenges to the existing order. These movements propose reforms that would create new, “post-carbon” and decolonized economies and societies (Klein, 2020). Some examples include 350.org, the [Indigenous Environmental Network](#), and [Acción Ecológica](#).

The initial response to these counter-hegemonic movements from leading elements of the hegemonic, fossil capitalist order (i.e., corporate and political leaders) was to deny the science (McGreal, 2021). But as people everywhere experience the effects of climate destabilization in the forms of frequent and severe floods, droughts, fires, heat waves, the spread of pathogens (and their consequences for agriculture, fisheries, forests, and other systems upon which human and other species depend), the risks and failures of the hegemonic order become more “visible” to ordinary people. Millions are being displaced from their homes

as their lands become uninhabitable (UNHCR, 2021). These experiences reinforce the arguments of the climate justice movements that rapid, profound changes to our economic system must take place. Faced with such challenges, actors who are invested in the existing order have adopted a new hegemonic strategy, characterized by theorists as “climate capitalism” (Sapinski, 2016; Adkin, 2017).

Climate capitalism seeks to win consent for an incremental, long-term response to the climate crisis, acknowledging that global warming is really happening, and that it is a serious concern, but downplaying the need for radical responses. These responses have included a ban on new fossil fuel exploration and extraction, termination of state subsidies to fossil fuel industries, carbon rationing, and “degrowth” (Kallis et al., 2020; Victor, 2019). But such responses would shift power away from the capitalist class and substitute ecological sustainability for profit-driven economies. Climate capitalists propose, instead, a gradual replacement of fossil fuels with other forms of energy, but at a pace that would allow them to profit from their existing investments. They advance technological solutions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and resist measures that would shrink capitalist control over our economic systems. (These include larger roles for governments in deciding where investments should be made, and public or community ownership of renewable energy systems.) (Sapinski et al., 2020). In these ways, climate capitalists attempt to engineer a form of capitalism that might continue long into the future, without any radical changes in who owns resources and productive capacity, or what they are used for.

These broadly delineated lines of conflict are being played out in countless trenches around the world—from the curriculum children learn in schools about climate change, to the lobbying of

governments, to divestment campaigns targeting financial institutions. The trenches also include civil disobedience to stop new pipelines and fracking, as well as attempts to get candidates elected to political office who will back climate justice projects. Gramsci may never have imagined that the 21st century's war of position would be a global war for a habitable planet.

Discussion Questions

How do you see hegemonic politics surrounding the climate crisis being played out where you live?

Why do you think fossil capitalism is so entrenched and difficult to reform, despite the scientific consensus that if we continue this economic system, it will continue to destabilize Earth's climate, possibly leading to a very inhospitable planet for humans and many other species?

What actors would you place in the "denial," climate capitalist, and climate justice camps? How do you understand your government's approach to climate change in relation to these different camps?

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Ideology

NICHOLAS DAVID GERSTNER

***Nicholas Gerstner** is a doctoral student in the Department of Communication at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. As a media and cultural studies scholar, his work explores the construction of “polarization” in the contemporary conjuncture.*

Theories of **ideology** explain how ideas—the stuff of thought and consciousness—are created, maintained, and mobilized across society.

Thinking With(in) the Box: The nine dot puzzle

Try to complete the puzzle below.

Using a pencil, connect the nine dots with four straight lines. Do not lift your pencil from the paper while doing so.

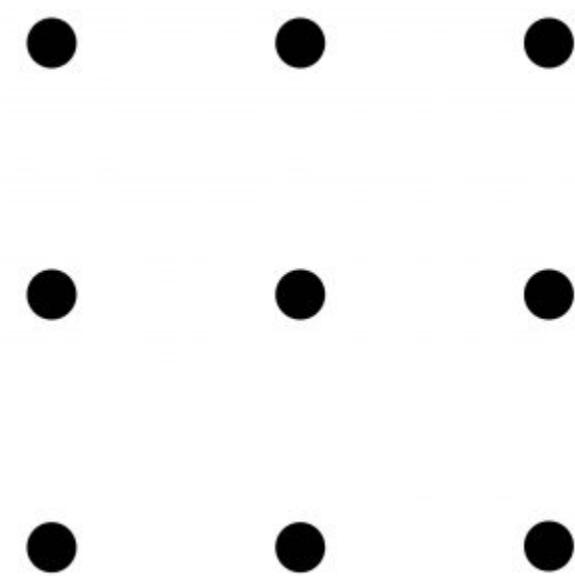


Figure 1: The nine dot puzzle, unsolved

First published in Samuel Loyd’s 1914 *Cyclopedia of Puzzles*, the nine dot problem still challenges even the smartest thinkers today. This small puzzle has had an outsized cultural impact: in the 1970s and 1980s it was used to train corporate employees—most famously those at Disney—in creative thinking, and today there is a \$100,000 [“Nine Dots Prize”](#) for innovative approaches to contemporary problems.

Did you solve the puzzle? Here’s a hint: doing so requires literally “thinking outside the box.” Sound familiar? This puzzle is the source of that now-cliché phrase.

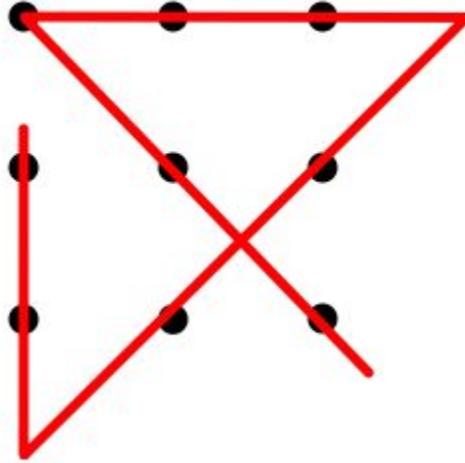


Figure 2: The nine dot puzzle, solved

Once explained, the solution may appear obvious. After all, the instructions say nothing about staying within a box, square, or boundary. So, what makes this puzzle so difficult? Why is “thinking inside the box” so ingrained? Where does “box thinking” come from, and what work does it do?

Ideology can help explain why the nine dot puzzle is so difficult. Generally, theories of ideology insist that our ideas—from opinions on presidential candidates and Netflix programming to family structures, personal [habits](#), and puzzle-solving practices—are shaped by our shared social and [material worlds](#). While the *exact* nature of the relationships between material things—Big Macs, smartphones, tractors—and ideas—politics, art, religion—are highly debated, theorists often agree that the question of *how* and *what* we think in a specific period and place

can be answered by exploring the social and material things that we use to survive and thrive.

Work on ideology is closely linked to theories of [identity](#), culture, and [power](#). Frequently cited examples include capitalism, socialism, communism, [\(neo\)liberalism](#), conservatism, and fundamentalism. These ideologies often mix and are further complicated by ideologies of [race](#), [gender](#), ability, and ethnicity. Ideologies are complex, contradictory, and varied.

To understand “box thinking,” a theory of ideology might direct our attention to how we learn, work, and play. From the moment we start school, we are taught to think *inside* the box: coloring books ask us to draw within the lines of the image, and written assignments occur on blue-lined notebook paper. School cafeterias, airports, and banks demand that we stand in lines, and refusing to do so risks punishment. Moving outside the box or across the line while travelling is quite dangerous: painted lines on roads prevent car crashes as the concrete squares of the sidewalk direct those on foot. Smartphones, televisions, tablets, and computer monitors direct attention to bounded rectangles for much of our time awake.

For most people, the lines, rectangles, and squares that surround us become habitual or subconscious tools to think with. And as they become habitual, ideologies—“box thinking” in this case—start to appear natural and obvious. For those who think with a particular ideology, it is hard to think differently. “Thinking outside the box” is only difficult in a society in which thinking *inside* the box is the norm.

Discussion Questions

- What ideologies are at work in your life? Keep in mind that living with an ideology is not the same as agreeing with it, and that ideologies often appear natural and obvious. How do these ideologies shape you and your community?
- Is “box thinking” an ideology in the same way that liberalism, capitalism, or patriarchy are? How is it similar or different?
- Choose one ideology, and briefly describe its core ideas. How are those ideas related to your social and material world?

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Intersectionality

NAMITHA RATHINAPILLAI

Namitha Rathinappillai (she/they) is a queer, Tamil, disabled poet and academic living on unceded and unsundered Algonquin Anishinaabeg territory, colonially known as Ottawa, Canada. They are a two-time Canadian Festival of Spoken Word (CFSW) team member and represented Ottawa at the Canadian Individual Poetry Slam (CIPS) in 2021. She published her first chapbook titled *Dirty Laundry with Battleaxe Press* in November of 2018. In 2019, they won the RBC Youth Ottawa Spirit of the Capital Award for Arts and Culture. Having completed her Bachelor of Arts in Criminology and Criminal Justice at Carleton University in 2021, Namitha is now an MA Candidate in Sociology at York University.

Intersectionality refers to the multiple disadvantages (or advantages) that individual bodies carry and the ways this combination of identities can marginalize (or privilege) them within a given society.

Listen to [the audio version of this text](#), performed by the author.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/showingtheory/?p=125#audio-125-1>

Intersectionality: A Play In 3 Acts

Act I.

I am woman when I am raised in the air by the doctor,
my gender, declared by my genitals.
I wear a tongue-in-cheek shade of pink to every occasion.
A bow in my hair so that my girlhood never goes unnoticed.
Strangers in my life read my future like a crystal ball.
Tell me I will remain untouched until worthy,
pure until union,
beautiful before anything else.
All this read from the palm of a newborn infant.
I am told and not asked what I want.
My life, a road trip I am given the directions for but never the
keys to.
I am taught to be out of sight,
silent, preferably.
During conversations,
during arguments,
during sex.

Act II.

I am (woman and) brown at age five when I think my best friend
more attractive than me
because of and not despite
her complexion.

I learn to pray every morning that when I wipe down the foggy
mirror,
my distorted reflection, an unknown complexion,
will be a white face, instead.

I learn a new lesson on silence.

I do not move when the white girls compare their tanned fore-
arms to mine in the blistering heat,
do not flinch when I am spoken over by the white people in the
room.

In my own family, this lesson of silence is one I am home-
schooled for, too.

I am taught to be out of sight when I am not serving others.

My only companions in the kitchen are the cardamom pods in
the milk tea,
mocking me.

Act III.

I am (woman and brown and) queer at age 18 when I leave my
high school in the dust
and finally see faces like mine love the way I have been embar-
rassed to do for years.

I meet queer adults with dark skin and know now that I am the
descendant
of something beautiful.

Something worth a lineage.

I learn yet another lesson on silence when the white gays talk

about their families that know,
and still love them the same.
When they share coming out stories like it is hazing to be
accepted into queerness,
I look at my palms and realize
I do not know where these intersecting lines will lead me,
but I know it will be somewhere new.

Epilogue.

I am woman at birth
brown at five,
queer at 18.
These parts of me found in myself in succession,
and now, I am all at once.

Discussion Questions

- Black scholar and leading critical race theorist, Kimberlé Crenshaw, coined the term “intersectionality” in 1989 to describe the violence and discrimination faced by Black women. Crenshaw notes the term has subsequently become “a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects” (CLS, 2017). Why is it significant that this term has its genesis in Black identity?
- How is your identity a unique constellation of varying degrees of disparity? To begin, think about race, gender, sexuality, class, age, ability, credentialed/formal education, fertility, and citizenship. What other aspects of identity

create disparity?

- What are some experiences of intersectionality that you have faced? How have they privileged or disadvantaged you? Think about what ways or things you have been able or unable to do, say, exhibit, act because of your identities.
- How might major institutions (e.g., academia, healthcare) apply an understanding on intersectionality to provide more inclusive guidance?

Exercise

First, take a few moments to reflect on the privileges you hold. Do you notice how they affect how you move through the world? Next, [complete this quiz on the BuzzFeed website](#). How does your score compare to others? Given that this quiz was made in 2014 by a popular media company, how would you update or revise it? What are your criticisms and praises regarding this exercise? Lastly, how does privilege tie into the discussion of intersectionality?

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Landscape

BEN GARLICK AND RACHEL HUNT

Landscape can refer to a particular, designated area of the environment, but it also expresses how such an environment is encountered, experienced, and perceived through cultural relationships.

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Rachel Hunt is a Lecturer in Geography at the University of Edinburgh, UK. Her research interests sit at the interface of cultural geography, historical geography and the geographies of wellbeing. Her current research focus falls into three related areas: cultural geographies of landscape and land; rural lives and leisure; and the links between landscape experience and well-being.

A Visit to the Yorkshire Sculpture Park

“Landscape” is a common term in discussions of human-environmental relations. But *what* is landscape?

To answer this question, let us consider one of the places thought of *as* a landscape: the [Yorkshire Sculpture Park](#) (YSP), near Wakefield, in northern England, U.K. The [Cambridge Dictionary](#) defines landscape as “a large area of countryside, usually one without many buildings or other things that are not natural; a view or picture of the countryside.” The YSP certainly fits the bill. Established in 1977 within the grounds of Bretton Hall—an eighteenth-century country estate—YSP showcases nearly 100 artworks amidst 500 acres of grass, woodland and lakeside (YSP, n.d.). Gazing across the estate, we can understand the landscape in different ways, from different cultural approaches, expanding on the dictionary definition offered above. These are certainly productive surroundings to consider the many, interwoven, meanings of landscape.

Leaving the car park, we encounter the parkland arranged before us as a typical rural scene: grassy slopes gently lead down to a ribbon of water framed by trees; the form of the stately house pokes through, breaking up the view. A picturesque sight indeed—it is *Nature as art* (Figure 1). But to talk about and see it in this way reveals the ‘landscape’ not as a neutral “area of countryside” or simple backdrop, but as a cultural ideal or visual category, filled with specific meanings. Landscape here is what art critic John Berger (1972) termed a ‘way of seeing’ the world, and one that is locatable within a specific cultural-historic context.

The rules of linear perspective and the many, many rural vistas found adorning gallery walls—not to mention calendars, postcards and social media—depict such views as desirable, and arranged for an observer to consume. In other words, such images, circulating throughout society, inform our evaluation of our physical surroundings in terms of the conventions of art.



Figure 1: A view across Bretton Hall estate, Yorkshire Sculpture Park. (photo: [PJ Marriot](#). (cc))

However, cultural specificity is important. This way of seeing YSP owes a particular debt to *European* traditions of landscape painting. Depictions of the environment in Western art are different to those from other contexts, times, and places (for example, Chinese landscape painting). Thus, a visitors' ways of perceiving the landscape of YSP changes depending on their **positionality**. Gender, race, ethnicity, and socio-economic position all affect how it is understood. Personal and shared histories and subjectivities, alongside our lived experiences of landscapes and cultures elsewhere, inform these responses (Tolia-Kelly, 2010).

Of course, YSP's management have a vision for how the park's landscape *should* look, perhaps contrasting with that of other land-users, now or in the past. Their rules and regulations, not to mention wider cultural norms, produce a set of expectations for

how we engage with and evaluate this place. Nevertheless, other ways of using and valuing the park proliferate too, for example as a picnic spot rather than an open-air gallery. In this way, alongside a set of visual conventions, ‘landscape’ usefully characterises a bundle of rules, assumptions, or [discourses](#); flowing from, and reinforcing, particular ‘ways of seeing’ to constitute practical, and particular, *cultures of landscape* (see Matless, 2014).

From our elevated vantage point, gazing across the sculpture-dotted parkland, it is appealing to consider landscape in purely visual terms. One may be tempted to view the scene as natural and timeless, exemplifying the myth of a bountiful, pastoral landscape where humans and land coexist harmoniously. But the landscape is also *more* than what is seen.

Through the centre of YSP runs a lake: excavated and dammed at one end in the mid-18th century at the behest of a wealthy landowner, fond of entertaining high-society guests with fireworks and mock-naval battles (YSP, n.d.). Today, visitors arrive from across Yorkshire (and beyond) to appreciate the variety of artworks, as well as relish the opportunities afforded to urban dwellers by a large green space. For YSP to function as an accessible visitor attraction, numerous volunteers and paid staff work to control entry, manage parking, guide guests, sell refreshments, combat growing vegetation, and repair eroding paths.

Consequently, embedded in this environment is the *labour* of generations, past and present, making and remaking the landscape what it is (see [social nature](#)). YSP is the outcome of these (often hidden) exertions, including complex histories of ownership, management, and purchase (see Olwig, 2016). Its present appearance, reflecting familiar aesthetic ideals of an ‘English country landscape’, is inseparable from the material, social, and economic struggles—the *work*—producing it.

And lest we forget the sheep! Visual representations of the ‘rural’ often feature familiar animal icons: the expected, ‘natural’ inhabitants. But more than this, our *interactions* with such beings—as well as their own activities—also shape how landscapes are made and experienced. For some visitors, these grazing animals might add rural charm. For others, their skittish demeanour and faeces detract from an otherwise pleasant parkland. And, whilst their presence reflects active agricultural management (herding the flock and grazing as a strategy to keep vegetation in check), they also have a role in making this landscape what it is. Roaming the park on their own terms, sheltering from rain and sun, approaching, or fleeing visitors; such animal comings and goings are part of this landscape’s liveliness.

In addition to its [social construction](#)—whether through histories of art or working the land—YSP is *experienced*. Standing looking across the park affords a view of the land by virtue of the body’s senses and situation within its immediate surroundings. Light hits our optic nerve, which becomes images. We might feel a light breeze, the prickle of sunburn, a dull calf-ache from walking up the steep incline. We may even smell sheep poo, or a nearby picnic lunch. In this vein, landscapes are a gathering of such bodily sensations, each revealing the different ways in which the body interacts with its environment. Might YSP appear so inviting if one suffered sunstroke, or was soaked by a rainstorm? And what of those with differently abled bodies, navigating the grassy slopes with mobility aids, or negotiating sculptures with a visual impairment? Different bodies all play a part in creating the landscape we experience, and, consequently making the same landscape a different experience for others (Wylie, 2018).

We might appreciate the way in which the sculptures themselves texture such experiences (see Warren, 2012). Figure 2 depicts Henry Moore's *Large Two Forms*, positioned near the shore of the lake. Glinting in the sun, glistening in the rain, these bulky bronzes invite curiosity as their qualities change. Circling onlookers peer at them. The sculptures, in turn, reframe their surroundings, from different angles and in different ways for each visitor. The installation disrupts lines of sight, buffers wind, deflects rain, refracts sound, and offers an arresting subject for photographs. Like the sheep, the sculptures are involved in an experience of landscape. They are both features of it, and active things making possible a particular appreciation of the environment.



Figure 2: Two Large Forms, Henry Moore. Yorkshire Sculpture Park, UK. (photo: [Nigel Homer, geograph.org.uk](https://www.geograph.org.uk))

And what of the other, less tangible forces captured by the term ‘landscape’? After all, environmental experience is also shaped by emotions, feelings, sensations—what we might collectively call **affects**—changing encounters in various ways that exceed our ability to adequately put them into words. Such affects come

together to give landscapes an atmosphere—a ‘vibe’ or ‘energy’ associated with place. For one of us, YSP holds personal significance as a site that *nearly* hosted a wedding proposal. On a late September afternoon, the park was a damp, drizzly place; anxiety swirled around the upcoming question. The ring clutched in the pocket; a sense of exposure being out in public. The atmosphere was all wrong. It didn’t *feel* right.

So, *what* is landscape?

As YSP helps us understand, it is a great many things. Landscape names a construction of our cultural imaginations; the accumulated traces of overlapping labours; a domain of bodily experience; a field of material forces; and a space charged with feeling, memory, and emotion. The sculpture park is simultaneously a particular physical environment that we encounter and perceive, and a site prompting all manner of conflicting questions about the ways that people understand and relate to such environments. If there is a common thread to landscape, it is a concern with how we encounter our surroundings, as well as the role played by the process, forces, and other beings (human or not) shaping that encounter. Landscape is no simple matter.

Discussion Questions

- Picture a ‘landscape’—any place you associate with this term. What are some of the different ways in which your experience of this environment might be affected by your gender, race, ethnicity, cultural, or socio-economic back-

ground? Can you think of any other aspects of your social identity that might shape how you experience this place?

- Choose a piece of 'landscape art' and consider it as a story, told from a certain perspective. *What* is the story being told, *why*, by *whom*, for *what purpose*, and *to what effect*?
- Working with a partner, picture a specific landscape you have visited recently in your mind, and describe to them any smells, textures, sounds, tastes, or emotions you associate with that scene. (Don't tell them what the landscape looks like, however.) Your partner should then describe what they can 'see' based on these descriptions. Compare their response with the example you were thinking of. What might this tell us about how landscape is experienced by different people?

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Mediatization

IAIN MACPHERSON

Mediatization

refers to the powerful influences and effects that media technologies and organizations exert within everyday life.

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autism-focused disability communication to the mediatization implications of emerging technologies.

“Media...what?” Mediatization

Kentarō flops onto his futon, groping in the darkness to plug in his phone. He’s got to get up early but can’t resist a flick through Facebook. Face aglow, he scrolls the newsfeed until drawn into a post on some hot-button controversy du jour. Kentarō hates or loves what the author says (it doesn’t matter which, just that he’s riled up), and he spends an hour trading comment-stream insults with someone of opposite political faith. Then he

impulse-buys a hoodie before finally shutting things down for a few hours of fitful sleep.

This isn't a particularly pretty picture, but it's quite commonplace in its basics. And lots is going on behind the scene, in terms of life impacts for Kentarō from this interlude with social and mobile media. There's the data harvesting of his bedtime web-surfing to inform future advertisements (Wells, 2016). There's an echo-chamber hardening and/or misinforming of his opinions (Cinelli et al., 2021). Not least, there's the blue-light sabotage of his sleep (Biali Haas, 2018). Such 'media effects'—sociopolitical, psychological, and physiological—are often grouped by scholars under the concept *mediatization*. This term is definable, in its simplest sense, as the powerful influences that media technologies and organizations exert on everyday life.

Mediatization isn't a pretty word, being an anglicization of the German *mediatisierung*; however, no one has yet coined a term more elegant and equally accurate (Couldry & Hepp, 2013). 'Mediation,' after all, merely indicates message conveyance, as though medium doesn't matter to meaning. Marshall McLuhan's contrary dictum—"the medium is the message" (1964)—is clearly an overstatement. But equally obviously, our interpretation of any *text* is influenced by *contexts*, such as whether it's mediated by page, in person, or via an electronic device. Arguably, the latter influence is especially powerful when that machine is a portal into communications spaces such as the internet, social media, and virtual reality.

In recent decades, these media effects have been investigated most intensively under the banner-label *mediatization*. With roots in the 1980s, and based in Europe and the United Kingdom, this tradition attained its prominence in the 2000s. Like most longstanding communication fields, it is very multidisciplinary.

This is reflected in mediatization’s customary division into two branches—*social-constructivist* and *institutionalist* (Couldry & Hepp, 2013). These approaches focus, respectively, on psychological concerns and more political and economic matters.

Constructivists would concentrate on Kentarō’s late-night rage posting, plus how sluggish and irritable he’ll be the next day. They study how the physical properties and technological capacities of media operate mentally and interpersonally in the ‘[social construction](#)’ of societal realities—that is, how a society’s taken-for-granted values and attitudes are shaped by its central institutions (Berger & Luckmann, 1968). Constructivist mediatization scholars study media as the main mechanism for this social construction. For prime example, consider the always-accessible ubiquity of current communications, alongside their visuality and/or verbal brevity—first TV, then Tweets, and now TikToks. This multimedia ambience permeates public discourse with “simplification, polarization, intensification, personalization, visualization and stereotypization” (Strömbäck, 2008, p. 233).

While also a psychological phenomenon, Kentarō’s compulsive hoodie purchase is more in the wheelhouse of mediatization *institutionalists*, who would consider the smartphone-mediated intrusion of corporations (plus who knows what other organizations) into what should be his sleeping hours. They examine the increasing political-economic centrality and consolidation of media sectors, from advertising and public relations to news, polling, entertainment, education, and consumer technology. Their focus is on how these institutions converge with each other and, increasingly, with everything else in our post-industrial ‘symbolic economy,’ where data, brand, and services reign (Reich, 1991). Consider, for far-flung examples, the increasing computerization and internet-connectivity of cars, or the mega-money spectacle of YouTube influencers.

Contemporary mediatization scholarship aims to bring together constructivist and institutionalist approaches (Couldry & Hepp, 2013), mutually illuminating media effects and societal contexts. They've been compelled to undertake this complex task by emergent technologies that—weirdly but truly—are transforming mediatization from abstract theory and cyberpunk fiction to literal fact, by blurring distinctions between communications and physical reality. This encompasses various often-connected examples. One is Artificial Intelligence (AI). Another is 'deep-fakes,' which are photorealistic but illusory videos. There is also the proliferation of microcomputers and sensors being embedded within infrastructure, products, and people—also known as 'the internet of things.' And yes, this includes people. Reportedly, Swedes especially are early adopters of hand-implanted data chips for ID and contactless payment (Winterburn, 2020). Not least, the COVID context has hastened the adoption of virtual reality (VR) for homebound folks, both in the loose sense of Zoom-mediated work and socializing, and literally, in the mass adoption of VR headsets (Anderson, 2021).

CEO Mark Zuckerberg has prophesied that social-media interactivity will augment VR popularity (Stein, 2021), and as prices fall and technical improvements make VR more hi-def, less bulky, and more mobile, our immersion in virtuality will become more ubiquitous and more seamless. In a technical sense it will also become less *mediated* and thus more imperceptibly *mediatized*.

This brings us to the tech-sector buzzword *metaverse*, upon which Facebook has staked a claim with its name change to Meta. The metaverse is variously and vaguely defined, being both buzz and prediction, but not description. Most commentators envision it as an imminent 'embodied internet,' as Zuckerberg puts it (Newton, 2021), in which digital communications and physical, everyday life are blurred or blended. This omnipresent mediatization

of life—socializing, relationships, work, even just walking down the street—will be powered by an array of existing and emergent technologies: 5/6G, ‘the internet of things,’ and AI; deepfakes and holograms; the internet and social media; VR and AR (augmented reality, meaning the superimposition of digital information on real reality as viewed through computerized screens). If metaverse futurists are right, this will first be mediated via goggles, then by eyeglasses, then using ‘smart contact lenses’ (Hackl, 2020; Koetsier, 2021), if not bodily embedded microchips.

Picture Kentarō again, in the not-so-distant future, thus kitted out as he starts his day or over-prolongs it, dividing his viewfinder attention between various data feeds, emails, chats, avatars, and whatever he’s doing with his body. Mediatization scholars are working to understand this scenario’s implications for social construction and political-economic power. Doubtless, the time has come to master the meanings of mediatization: the societal impacts of media institutions and their instruments.

Discussion Questions

- How would you explain *mediatization* to your parents or other older relatives? To some of your best friends? To your younger sibling or child?
- In this text, I write that mediatization theorists’ “time has come.” In a similar vein, I note that the impact of media effects on people is particularly powerful when the medium is internet-connected. Do you agree with these statements? Consider this question in relation to possible

counterarguments, such as the following:

- Literal message content (i.e., words, images) has more of an impact than how a message is conveyed (its medium).
 - New media technologies and institutions aren't any more influential than earlier mass media (print, radio, etc.).
 - Most people interpret messages according to pre-existing inclinations, such as individual personality, intellect, or cultural background, rather than the medium (i.e., physical newspaper, video screen, internet, smartphone) that conveys the message.
- Based on your background knowledge or some reading (e.g., Winterburn, 2020), would you be willing to adopt the 'bio hack' of having hand-implanted microchips for purposes such as identification and cashless payment? Consider your answer with regard to the psychological and relational impacts studied by *constructivist* mediatization theorists, and the broader economic and political significance that *institutionalist* mediatization scholars study.
 - Mediatization is typically theorized in terms of its negative or worrisome ramifications, aspects, or potentials, from 'internet addiction' and eye strain to 'political polarization' and misinformation. What are some positive manifestations and possibilities of mediatization, and how much do you think they counterbalance the negatives?
 - Consider how mediatization relates to *the metaverse*. Then, after reading some tech-industry news articles on that buzzword, devise your own one-sentence definition for the metaverse.

Exercise

For one to three days, don't use any digital communication device, or your TV (assuming you have one). After you've survived this experience, reflect upon it in terms of *constructivist* and perhaps *institutionalist* mediatization concerns. For each moment when you refrained from using such media, how difficult was it to do so emotionally or in terms of things you needed to get done? What impact did it have on your feelings or relationships, in the short or longer term? How long do you think you could make this 'digital abstinence' last?

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Methodology

ANN DEL BIANCO

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Methodological considerations to researching children's return to school during the COVID-19 pandemic

Methodology is the part of the research process concerned with research design and the various considerations made when collecting, analyzing, and interpreting the data used to answer a research question.

Methodology is an important part of the research process, providing a common language and toolkit necessary for researchers to conduct good studies needed to acquire knowledge. It provides a detailed roadmap that explains the different steps taken and types of decisions the researcher has made. In this way, it

provides a level of transparency, which is important especially if another researcher wants to replicate the study results. This is possible for quantitative studies that are objective and use numerical data, but not for qualitative studies that are subjective and use other data, such as those that are text-based or images.

There are many different ways a research question can be posed and answered. Depending on the choice made, there is an impact on the research approach taken, the selection of research design, and the type of data collected (which needs to be done in an ethical way). Researchers also need to use a common language to describe how the data was analyzed and interpreted. For instance, in the social sciences, it is typical for qualitative researchers to use conceptual and/or theoretical frameworks to inform this process. The table below provides a simplified overview of what a methodology section addresses within a research study. The table is not meant to be exhaustive; it is meant as a guide.

All research begins with a topic. In this example, it is *children and the COVID-19 pandemic*. Prior to each new school year during the pandemic, schools request that parents/legal guardians decide the mode of delivery (remote only or in-person) for their children's education, which is made with or without input from their children. Little is known on how children feel about returning to in-person learning during the pandemic and why. An example of a good research question about this issue that could be posed would be: *In York Region, Ontario, to what extent does grade three, in-person school enrolment for the 2021–22 school year reflect how students going into grade three feel about the prospect of going back to in-person school during the COVID-19 pandemic and why?* Note that the research question is framed to capture students from York Region and follows a mixed methodology because it uses both quantitative and qualitative research approaches. The first part

is quantitative because it uses numbers to describe and make predictions about student enrolment. The second part is qualitative because it is about understanding how students going into grade three feel and why. The study can also be considered as cross-sectional because the data collected represents only one moment in time.

The research design for the first part of this question is descriptive and uses enrollment data gathered by school boards. This means that it will use secondary data, because the information used was already collected by someone else for other purposes. From this data, we might learn that 95% of grade three students are going back to in-person learning for the 2021–22 school year. Enrolment data is publicly available, but the most current data can only be obtained by contacting each school board serving York Region. These population-based findings might in turn be generalized to other populations. If you wanted to also obtain more sensitive information tied to enrolment data, such as race, gender, and household income, you would have to inquire if this data is collected by the school boards and then submit an official request and research proposal to each of the Research and Ethics Boards (REBs) of the involved institutions (including your own university). This is because such data is not publicly available or accessible, and the study also involves interviewing human participants. If approved, this additional data would allow you to examine, for example, if there is a relationship between in-person enrolment and household income, changing it to a correlational research design. You could use statistical analysis software to then analyze the data, and previous research from the literature to help interpret it.

The dataset from the school board would never include confidential information like the student's name, address, or contact information. Therefore, you could not expect to contact and

recruit a sample of this population to interview them for the second part of the research question. Before considering interviewing seven and eight year olds, there are several ethical issues that need to be considered, since these children are not of age to provide informed consent. Their parents or legal guardians would need to consent, ideally in writing, for their child to partake in the study, which would maintain anonymity and permit withdrawal from the study at any time. The study would have to be fully explained to all involved, including how data would be stored, and for how long, as well as how findings would be communicated.

Phenomenology is a qualitative research design you might choose to understand the feelings that these children are experiencing. It is an approach that evaluates how a phenomenon (e.g., in-person learning during a pandemic) is consciously experienced (e.g., by a student going into grade three). The primary data (collected solely for the purposes of the study) could be gathered using an interview guide that consists of demographics and a series of open-ended questions, and probes that would allow different themes to emerge during the interviews. To collect the primary data, you could use a technique called convenience sampling. This might mean that you live in York Region and directly ask parents in the community if their children could be interviewed for your study. As part of the methodology, you would have to [position](#) yourself, to try to avoid any researcher biases or conflicts of interest you may bring to the collection and interpretation of the data. For instance, if you are interested in gaining perspectives across York Region and you had an eight-year-old child, interviewing a sample of only their closest friends that go to the same school and using leading questions to do so would be problematic. Also, if you were funded to conduct the research,

you would have to ensure that this was disclosed and that your funder was impartial.

Data collection would end once data saturation was reached, meaning that no new themes were emerging during your interviews. One example of a theme that might come up consistently would be household income. If the quantitative portion of your study already found a relationship between in-person enrollment and household income, your study is able to show what is called data [triangulation](#). This means that you have cross-referenced different methodologies and data sources to verify and show the same results, increasing the validity and reliability of your work (for quantitative studies) and showing credibility (for qualitative studies).

Examples of some other data that might come out of the interview would be students who say they are “feeling excited” because they “cannot wait to see friends and teachers,” or perhaps students who are “feeling anxious” because of “wanting to stay home, but cannot because parents have to go to work,” or even “worried” because they “might contract COVID-19 by attending school.” Software programs such as NVivo can help you analyze data, and the subsequent interpretation or discussion should be couched in a theoretical framework informed by the current literature and/or drawn explicitly from your findings. Note that the example research question provided above explores just some of the research designs that may be selected, as well as some data, sampling, and ethical considerations that would need to be identified in the methodology section of a research study.

Discussion Questions

Use Table 1 to answer the following questions.

- What should a methodology section of a research study include?
- Come up with another research question that can be derived from the topic, *children and COVID-19*. What sort of research approach and design could you use to answer this question? Would you use primary or secondary data? How would you collect and/or obtain the data? What are the ethical considerations that need to be made?
- Describe some of the kinds of data that might be generated. How might you analyze this data?

Table 1: Research methodologies and their components. The ways in which each method or process are applied also depend on broader methodological, ethical, and other considerations.

Research Approach	Qualitative	Quantitative	Mixed
Characteristics	<p>Subjective</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Couched in an existing theory or one derived from findings - Exploratory and/or investigative - Interested in gaining a contextual or in-depth understanding - Explores under-researched problems or previously researched ones from a different perspective or positionality - Used to generate new ideas/concepts 	<p>Objective</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Couched in other literature - Explanatory and/or empirical - Descriptive - Predictive - Interested in relationships, causality or making comparisons - Interested in studying phenomenon by controlling and/or isolating variables - Tests hypotheses between variables 	<p>Both qualitative and quantitative</p>
Research Design	<p>Design can be cross-sectional or longitudinal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Narrative - Participant-action-research - Case study - Phenomenology - Ethnography - Interpretative Description - General Qualitative Inquiry - Grounded Theory 	<p>Design can be cross-sectional or longitudinal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Experimental - Quasi-experimental - Correlational - Descriptive 	<p>Uses designs and data from both approaches</p> <p>Order of how quantitative and qualitative data is collected and analyzed is identified by one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Convergent parallel - Embedded - Explanatory sequential - Exploratory sequential

Research Approach	Qualitative	Quantitative	Mixed
Sample Size and Sampling Techniques	<p>Small sample size; data collection ends when data saturation is reached</p> <p>Sampling Techniques:</p> <p>Non-Probability Sampling</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Convenience - Snowball - Purposive - Voluntary response - Theoretical 	<p>Large sample size predetermined by a calculation</p> <p>Sampling Techniques:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Population based - Probability Sampling (based on a sample of the population): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Simple random - Systematic - Stratified - Cluster - Multistage 	
Data Source & Data Collection	<p>Primary data: Uses mostly open-ended questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Diaries - Video, audio, texts, images - Maps - Narratives - Focus groups - Interviews - Participant-observation - Questionnaires <p>Secondary data:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Documents (e.g., newspaper, social media, blogs) 	<p>Primary data: uses mostly closed-ended questions with categories and scales</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Polls - Surveys - Questionnaires - Experiments <p>Secondary data:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Government, industry, institutional data - Census - Enrolment data - Geological data (i.e., air, soil, water) 	
Data Generation	<p>Text-based: themes and/or patterns</p> <p>Images</p>	<p>Statistics - Numerical</p>	

Research Approach	Qualitative	Quantitative	Mixed
Data Quality	Trustworthiness: - Credibility - Transferability - Dependability - Confirmability - Authenticity	Trustworthiness: - Rigour - Reliability - Validity - Generalizability	
Data Analysis	- Content - Thematic - Textual - Discourse - Narrative - Visual Software such as NVIVO	- Descriptive Statistics - Inferential Statistics Software such as SPSS, SAS	

Additional Resources

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Notes

1. The author has previously published under the name Ann Novogradec.

Mobilities

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Grounding Perspectives on Mobilities: Theory meets practice in an artist's eyes

Mobilities can refer to the movement, transport, or flows of peoples, goods, ideas, designs, programs, and agendas across geographic space-time, as well as the (in)ability to exercise change within a society.

The COVID pandemic provides important insights on (im)mobilities. Quarantine, lock-down, travel bans, and physical distancing measures have resulted in noticeable changes in both global and local (g/local) flows of people, capital, goods, services, information, and ideas. In several geography classes during the pandemic, I asked students to make “Before/During COVID

[BC-DC] Mental Maps” to discuss changes in their movement patterns, such as to/from home, school, work, or recreation. For example, during the early months of the ‘lock-downs’, many of these BC-DC maps illustrated tightly constrained movements and less or non-use of various mobility modes (i.e., jogging, transit, car, etc.), as home confinement and school or workplace restrictions took effect. Later, as various restrictions were amended, mobilities across cityscapes and beyond morphed.

Mapping travel (im)mobilities across time and urban space can serve as a useful approach for analyzing broader patterns in movement practices, under distinct circumstances such as a pandemic. Indeed, the very definition of a pandemic (i.e., a global-scale disease outbreak) underscores not only dramatic shifts in movement practices across world systems, but also in many other ways: changes in urban-rural migrations; altered (home)workplace operations; amended shipping or logistics schedules or flows; transportation choices; variations in information communication technology usage; fluctuations in tourism flows and behaviours; and so forth.

The pre- or in situ pandemic mobilities of relatively materially affluent tourists, can be compared with many residents of the Global South, particularly non-elites, many of whom have not had access to vaccines, let alone mobility affordances. Mobilities can therefore highlight the glaring global disparities and inequalities within and between societies. Besides demonstrating changes in human mobilities during the pandemic, COVID also illustrates how vaccine technologies and public health ideas were mobilized around the globe. Ideas, plans, designs, policies, programs, and agendas can also be mobilized (in this case amongst privileged societies first).

Who has agency in questions related to mobilities? The concept of geographic scale and socio-technical modes of mobility becomes crucial when discussing *how* and *why* people can move or mobilize. Race, class, caste, age, and ability critically shape who and under what conditions individuals and communities have access to mobility options or infrastructures. In materially wealthy states and increasingly much of the Global South, personal mobility choices often revolve around *automobility*—the use of private/personal vehicles for movement. This in turn has important ramifications for urban form, functions, and placemaking. The global rise of automobility also shapes myriad aspects of the quality of urban life and has spawned entire (sub)cultures (car culture, off roaders, racers, commuters), economics (direct and indirect manufacturing jobs), automobile dependent urban forms (suburban sprawl) and places (parking lots/garages), and increasingly oil- or gas-polluted carbonscapes.

Mobilities scholars and urban designers or planners are increasingly interested in designing cities to be more transit friendly, accessible, walkable, and liveable—beyond simply becoming community spaces that are dependent upon or consumed by car culture and automotive infrastructures. As before the pandemic, however, the issues of a growing auto-dependency (including limited transit choices for many working class suburbanites) underscore the need for alternatives to car culture.

The examples above serve to illustrate that mobilities relate to *technological and modal* choices (e.g., air travel vs. bicycle), but also the *geographic scale* of movements and infrastructures, whether within the home, neighbourhood, community, urban region, or beyond and between. A lack of access to mass transit or the ill-conceived placement of a bridge or road can result in socio-economic or environmental injustices in the present and far into the future. Mobilities research can therefore provide critical insights

into socio-economic flows, traffic, designs, or practices over time and across geographic space, as well as a path for understanding power asymmetries and injustices inherent in these systems.

A helpful illustration of distinct debates about mobilities at the local level comes from an artist's graphic recording of an event held online in April 2021 (see Figure 1). This event, while focused on mobility questions that were local in nature, is illustrative of several distinct perspectives. The online Geo-Forum included presentations about First Nations perspectives on mobilities, universal design (for variously abled residents), walkability, city-level transportation planning, and equitable urban futures for all. The online presentations and dialogue served to illustrate how questions about mobilities (dis)connect present mobility patterns from longstanding historical uses and practices; and shape the health of the people and places in our communities. Speakers at the event also highlighted that, while details about mobility can potentially get bogged down in technicalities, it remains crucial to widely involve diverse publics when considering mobility options, not just simply auto drivers.

The artist's visual synopsis of the event synthesizes and summarizes key details presented from the various speakers. For example, delightful urban spaces are often 'car free', or speed-limit restricted (e.g., below 30 kph), and placemaking should consider car-minimized spaces to enable people of all ages and abilities to access diverse community services. Envisioning liveable and just communities and societies must therefore involve tackling key questions about mobilities, ideally working with the distinctive local knowledge base of the diverse communities in our midst.

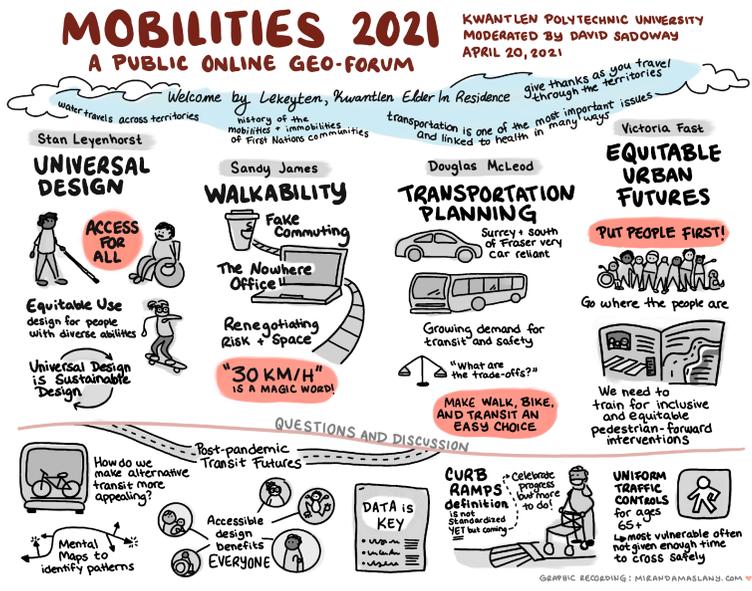


Figure 1: Artist and graphic recorder Miranda Maslany's rendering of the online event, MOBILITIES 2021: A Public Online Geo-Forum, organized by Kwantlen Polytechnic University's Department of Geography and the Environment.

Discussion Questions

- What are some of the main modes of mobility that you and your peers typically use in any given week? What are some of the socio-economic and environmental consequences or challenges in making these choices? How could these consequences or challenges be addressed in your view?
- Drawing from discussion about the preceding question, what do you feel are some of the linkages between the climate emergency and mobility choices in our daily lives? To

what extent is mobility a personal choice, and to what extent is it shaped by public choices and policies? What role do you feel collective choices should take in shaping mobilities, especially given that public roads are paid for by and available to all?

- Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? “High-tech solutions will eventually resolve mobility challenges and socio-economic asymmetries in the long run.” What might the role of low- or appropriate-tech mobility choices play in resolving mobility challenges (e.g., walking, biking, etc.)?

Exercises

BC-DC Mobilities Mental Maps. Working individually or in a small group, draw Before/During COVID mental maps of your mobilities. Share and compare with the rest of your class to examine commonalities and differences.

Mobilities of the Future. Envision your community 20 to 30 years from now. Devise several ‘mobilities visions for the future’ (i.e., future scenarios/future visions that centre on mobility choices and that improve socio-economic and environmental circumstances for diverse community members. For example, consider scenarios or visions that are linked to the five perspectives noted above (Indigenous, universal design, walkability, transportation options, equitability).

SEEing Mobilities. Sketch out how mobility could be improved in your community, not just from an efficiency perspective, but also from an integrated approach that links together *social* needs (e.g., housing, recreation), *economic* needs (e.g., access to food, shops, work), and *environmental* concerns (e.g., access to green space, reduced greenhouse gas emissions). How could mobility be planned better to integrate various needs, not just efficient movement, across or in your community?

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More-than-human

SARAH ELTON

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How does a more-than-human lens change the way we understand the food we eat?

More-than-human refers to contexts in which multiple species and processes come together to produce a result.

Cheese has been made the same way for many centuries in a region of France called the Aubrac. Every spring, farmers walk with their cattle from the village barns up the mountains to an area where there are wide-open meadows. This multispecies march of mother cows, calves, a bull, and people, is called the transhumance¹. On the day that I joined a group of farmers and their cattle to climb the slopes of the Aubrac, the journey ended in a meal of potatoes and fresh cheese curd, mixed together to make a dish called *aligot*. It was delicious and filling.

Laguiole, the cheese this area is famous for, is produced from the milk of cows that spend the summer eating wild grasses in the mountains. The purpose of the transhumance is to accom-

pany the cattle from the barns, where they've spent the winter, to meadows higher up in the mountains. The cows spend the summer months grazing on the wild grasses that thrive during the long sunny days. The same cycle continues every year: the grass plants convert solar radiation, water, and micronutrients into more complex molecules through photosynthesis. The cows ingest these plants, which are inedible to humans—because we cannot digest the cellulose that they contain. From the grass, the animals then produce milk. In the case of Laguiole, the milk is processed by cheese makers who work at a co-op. To make the cheese, an enzyme is added to the milk, breaking molecular bonds and allowing the curd to be separated from the whey. The curd is then pressed into a large block and left in a cold, dark room. Because Laguiole is a raw-milk cheese, the milk contains naturally occurring bacterial communities, which ferment the sugars and proteins in the cheese as it ages. Many months later the cheese is ready to be eaten.

So who makes the cheese? We tend to think of cheese as a food produced by cheese makers—by people. Yet as you read this text, are you certain that the cheese is made by the people in the co-op? Or could you say that the cheese is produced by a larger community of more-than-human actors, who all play their role along the production chain?

In the social sciences and humanities, theory typically focuses on people and the institutions and structures that they have created. But when we focus only on the human and on human social worlds, we leave out many non-human actors. Scholars working in a variety of disciplines, from sociology to public health, education, history, geography, and even law consider the ways in which our human social worlds are co-produced by non-humans. More-than-human approaches to social theory are part of this work.

What are non-humans? They are all the creatures with which we share this world—flora and fauna, and all sorts of creatures that are too small for us to see with our eyes, but that are nonetheless our daily companions. Non-humans include the plants that convert solar radiation into food and the microorganisms that ferment milk to make cheese.

When considering more-than-human influences on the planet, it is not simply individual animals or insects or groups of bacteria that play a role in our lives. Climate and geography, as well as all the elements of ecosystems, shape the way cities are built, politics are practiced, health is produced, and so much more. Our species exists in a total state of relation with all these other forms of life. In fact, we are so intimate with more-than-humans that [we cannot exist without them](#). We cannot breathe without oxygen being produced by plants and trees. We cannot live without eating plants and animals, and we cannot digest some foods without the microbes in our gut that turn what we eat into metabolites that we need to be healthy. We cannot shelter or clothe ourselves without the materials that come from our ecosystems. We cannot do anything at all without non-human help. More-than-human theory attempts to fill gaps in the social sciences and humanities, fields that have, for the most part, left non-humans out of the analysis.

That non-humans are social actors and important to human worlds may be a new idea to many in a Euro-Western framework. But Indigenous peoples and many Eastern cultures [have long understood](#) that humans cannot be separated from what we often call ‘nature.’ This way of looking at the world may be new to a Euro-Western approach, but other cultures have been thinking this way for time immemorial. Kim Tallbear, a researcher who studies the way science is done, calls the impulse to see people as separate from nature a “settler colonial binary.”

That's because people from Europe, and the settler colonial societies that they founded such as those in North America, have held as a core belief for centuries the idea that humans have dominion over the more-than-human world, and that we live apart from other life forms. This Euro-Western view of the world rests on the assumption that humans are different and therefore separate and better. The scholarly term for this is [human exceptionalism](#). It is bound up with patriarchy and [white supremacy](#) and has fuelled many forms of oppression, profoundly shaping the world we know today.

When we look at a wheel of cheese and only see the human labour involved in producing it, we are tricking ourselves into believing that only humans made the cheese. With a more-than-human framework, the labour of animals, plants, microbes, and even the sun and climate become more visible.

Discussion Questions

- What are other more-than-human or non-human actors that are involved in the food system?
- What do we miss out on when we focus only on humans in the food chain?
- What other parts of society involve more-than-human or nonhuman actors? Is there *anything* that exists free from the influence of more-than-humans? Is there anything that exists outside of relationships between humans and non-humans?

Exercise

Look at these pictures of different cityscapes. What do you see? If you are working on your own, jot down some notes about what you see in the pictures. If you are working in a group, discuss the pictures together. Now try looking at the pictures through a more-than-human lens. What do you see? How does the lens change what you see? Make another list of the various more-than-human actors you identify, and include a description of the role that they might play in the city. Draw on the knowledge of other disciplines, such as ecology, biology, and environmental sciences, to interpret these photos.

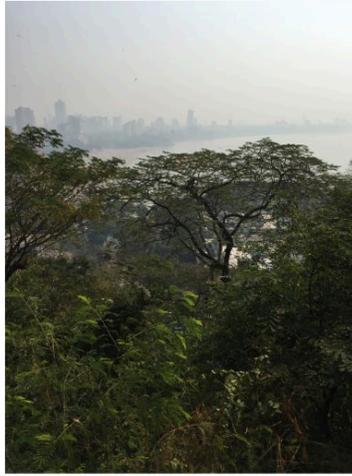


Figure 1: Four cityscapes

Additional Resource

The website, [Geneology of the Posthuman](#), offers short, online explorations of concepts that relate to more-than-human approaches such as agency.

Notes

1. While it might appear that the word 'human' is embedded in the word 'transhumance,' according to the Oxford English Dictionary, this word has its roots in the Latin 'trans' for 'across' and 'humus' meaning soil or ground. So the transhumance is the annual migration of people and animals across ground.

Neoliberalism

RYAN J. PHILLIPS

Neoliberalism

refers to an ideology obsessed with individual responsibility and the state-sponsored creation of new capitalist markets.

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Neoliberalism and Plant-Based Burgers

Imagine reading a newspaper headline or social media post about how dire the global climate crisis has become. Now imagine reading a second text linking climate change to meat consumption and animal agriculture. If these sorts of messages stir any emotional response or desire to do something, the odds are good that your mind will quickly jump to what products you should start or stop buying. Which products are being made sustainably, and should therefore be supported? Which companies are harming the environment, and should therefore be avoided or boycotted? If you do stop buying certain products, which other products should you purchase as replacements? The fact that social or political action is

so intuitively equated with consumer choices is indicative of what is called neoliberalism.

Neoliberal **ideology** is an obsession with markets and market-based activities—a view that everything is either already market-related, or else needs to be brought into the realm of the market—even social and environmental change. Neoliberalism assumes that wherever markets do not yet exist, they should be created in order to further expand the (re)production of the currently dominant economic system, capitalism (Harvey, 2005). Unsurprisingly, then, neoliberalism insists that addressing environmental sustainability and climate change mitigation can be achieved simply by individuals buying more environmentally friendly products. As a result, more and more companies are promoting their products as environmentally friendly, sustainable, or ‘green’.

In relation to food, neoliberal arguments have been made for decades that individual consumers should choose to buy foods labelled as ‘organic’, ‘local’, ‘non-GMO’, ‘free range’, ‘grass-fed’, or ‘plant-based’, in order to reduce their carbon footprint. In other words: it is up to *you*, the individual consumer, to solve environmental problems through your choices at the grocery store—despite the fact that most existing environmental problems were created by large corporations in the first place. Neoliberalism shifts the onus of responsibility to the individual, diverting attention from more substantive structural changes.



Figure 1: A prepared Beyond Burger (photo: author)

Neoliberalism emerged as a radical re-orienting of governmental policies in places like the U.S., the U.K., and Chile during the 1970s and early 1980s. These policies worked to systematically dismantle publicly funded protections for things like labour, healthcare, education, and the environment. By the 1990s and early 2000s, neoliberalism had been adopted as the dominant ideological position by most countries, international organizations, and individual persons.

Today, neoliberalism is so pervasive in our everyday lives that many people simply equate this ideological position with ‘common sense’. Individualization (the process by which emphasis is placed on individual responsibilities rather than social cooperation) is one of the most fundamental elements of neoliberalism. As such, we now see a widespread cultural emphasis on individ-

ual food choices as crucial to addressing social, economic, and environmental issues, rather than more co-ordinated or collective efforts to address those issues systematically (Aschoff, 2015; Kevany, 2020).

The emerging plant-based meat industry's emphasis on individual choices is a recent example of neoliberalism. Companies such as Beyond Meat and Impossible Foods promote their products as environmentally friendly ways of eating meat without feeling guilty. Beyond Meat's CEO, Ethan Brown, encourages people to eat more of what they love, stating that "If you love meat, I can give you plant-based meat" (Brown, 2017). With these sorts of promotional talking points, Brown appeals to people's self-perceptions as consumers in a market rather than as social or political subjects with responsibilities. Indeed, the logic of neoliberalism is such that we feel compelled to fix the negative aspects of things we enjoy (such as meat), rather than just avoid harmful or problematic products in the first place. In other words, neoliberalism does not allow us to consider giving up meat for environmental reasons—instead, we are encouraged to figure out how to keep buying and eating 'meat' in more sustainable ways. This is also why words like 'vegan' and 'vegetarian' are noticeably absent from plant-based meat advertising: veganism/vegetarianism are defined by their *not* consuming certain things, whereas 'plant-based' encourages *more* consumption.

Moreover, even the sorts of critiques of neoliberalism mentioned above are themselves somewhat stuck in the loop of neoliberal logic—they are still primarily concerned with individual choices and actions rather than cooperative efforts aimed at structural change. But it is also important not to interpret neoliberalism as a totalizing or all-consuming force, given that alternatives to this dominant ideology do still exist. Small-scale

gift and sharing economies, the global cooperative movement, and perennial instances of collective social action all represent fissures within existing neoliberal societies—and, indeed, represent alternative ways in which we might restructure society in a post-neoliberal world (Gibson-Graham, 2006)

The idea of appealing to the individualized, selfish nature of consumers—or, appealing to people’s wallets rather than their hearts or minds—might seem normal in the 21st century. Yet, it is this sense of normalcy that masks just how deeply embedded into our cultural consciousness neoliberalism has become since the 1980s.

Discussion Questions

- Have you ever experienced the neoliberal condition of wanting to address social issues through your own consumption habits?
- What products or services have you bought (or, purposefully not bought) for ethical or political reasons?
- How might we better address ongoing social, political, and environmental issues outside of market activities?

Exercise

Look through some of the foods currently in your fridge or cupboard and record how many of them have a certification label (e.g. 'organic', 'non-GMO', 'vegan', 'plant-based', etc.). The next time you find yourself shopping for groceries, take note of how many items you come across that also include these certification labels. Do you find that these labels entice you to purchase certain products over others? If not, have they become so commonplace that you no longer consciously notice them when shopping?

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Objectivity

BESSA WHITMORE

***Bessa Whitmore** is a Professor Emerita in the School of Social Work at Carleton University. She earned her PhD at Cornell University (1988) with a concentration in program evaluation. Over the years, her focus has been on participatory and collaborative approaches to research and evaluation. More recently, she has focused her efforts on local activism around issues of social justice.*

Objectivity refers to the idea that knowledge in the sciences and social sciences can be produced without bias—devoid of a researcher’s values, assumptions, and influence.

Debunking the myth of truly objective research

Objectivity is often posited as essential: the only path to finding truth in the social sciences. “It expresses the idea that scientific claims, methods, results—and scientists themselves—are not, or should not be, influenced by particular perspectives, value judgments, community bias or personal interests” (Stanford Encyclopedia, 2020). The notion of objectivity and scientific reasoning arose in 17th- and 18th-century European thought, moving away from the medieval dominance of religious ortho-

doxy and the authority of the monarchy. It has been a central tenet of science ever since.

Yet there are many examples of supposedly ‘objective’ research that carry implicit bias or [ideology](#)—evident in what questions get asked, who gets to ask them, who gets to answer them, and even who funds the investigation. Here is one example of how different research questions might be applied to the same situation. Neither is ‘objective’. Each reflects an underlying, though unstated, political ideology.

In the 1970s, there were a series of floods in Appalachia, a coal-producing region in the U.S. People living in the ‘hollows’ (low-lying areas) were flooded out repeatedly, year after year. One year, the federal government leased trailers to those affected so that they would have a safe, interim place to live until the waters receded. The problem was that they could not find anywhere to place the trailers.

Two different organizations decided to research this problem. The [Appalachian Regional Commission](#) (a quasi-governmental body) conducted a series of case studies focusing primarily on individual needs (such as education, jobs, and health care), and actions (such as where people chose to live (Gidez, 1978, June–July). The underlying assumptions were based on the dominant sociological theories at the time, that “the lack of civic responsibility represents a deficiency in the culture,” and is a “logical consequence of the traditional social organization of Appalachian society based on family and the culture of individualism” (Ford, 1962, cited in Gaventa, p. 40). The implicit question thus became: Why do people live in hollows? [The Highlander Research and Education Centre](#) proposed a different focus: Why couldn’t the government find an appropriate place to put the trailers? Who owns the land?

Each of these ostensibly ‘objective’ studies reflect very different perspectives. In framing their studies, the Appalachian Regional Commission assumed individual responsibility—that people lived in hollows by choice. And because there were frequent floods, that choice implied a lack of intelligence, abdication of personal responsibility, or, at the very least, poor education. This question reflects an underlying conservative ideology, based on individualism, that individual freedom allows people to choose where they live. It was thus assumed that people freely choose to live in hollows (as opposed to making rational choices amongst a constrained set of options).

In investigating the same phenomenon, the Highlander Center assumed a broader lens that looked at land ownership, and more deeply, the capitalist system. It assumed that people live in hollows because they have no choice and thus the problem was rooted in systemic inequality and poverty. (John Gaventa details this research in a book entitled: *Power and powerlessness: Quiescence and rebellion in an Appalachian Valley*). It turned out that the federal government could not find anywhere to put the trailers because the land was owned by the (very powerful) coal companies of the region, who would not allow the trailers to be located on their (private) property. People lived in hollows because there was no other place for them to live.

During the 1980s, I was a graduate student at Cornell University, where my research courses focused on the importance of objectivity and [rigour](#) above all else. At that time, the big issue in program evaluation (my area of focus) was why decision-makers opted not to use our ‘perfectly crafted’ (objective and rigorous) evaluations? A 1983 volume edited by Anthony Bryk, called the *Stakeholder Model*, suggested a seemingly novel idea: if the evaluators/researchers *involved* the people being evaluated (or researched), they might actually become more interested in

using the reports that were generated. Coming from a social work background, I couldn't figure out why the idea of participation was so new and controversial, until I finally realized that it was perceived to undermine the rigour of the research! Researchers had generally been taught not to engage with their 'subjects,' as that would ruin the purported objectivity and therefore the credibility of the findings. If the 'researched' were involved (other than to provide data), the conclusions were assumed to be biased and the research was negatively characterized as '[subjective](#)'.

In 1983, I attended a workshop at the Highlander Research and Education Center and met John Gaventa (the Center's research director at the time). I told him this story and he introduced me to something called '[participatory research](#)' (which was then common practice in Latin America, India, and Africa, but not yet in North America). He piled my arms full of books on the topic and I duly wrote down their titles, assuming that a place as renowned as Cornell University, with its 23 libraries, would have at least some of these books. There were none!

I never looked back. Gaventa's example of the fallacy of objectivity in social science research has influenced my work ever since. I read research with these questions in mind: Who is included in the sample, who is excluded, and to what effect? What underlying assumptions are there in what questions are asked (or not asked)? Who funds the research? By making these things visible, we debunk the myth of objectivity, expose power relations, and ask deeper, structural questions that get closer to the roots of suffering and inequity.

Reiss and Sprenger (2020) further assert that "since humans experience the world from a perspective, the prospects for a science providing a non-perspectival 'view from nowhere' or for

proceeding in a way uninformed by human goals and values are fairly slim.” I would argue, therefore, that given [intersectionality](#), [positionality](#), and the infinite [complexity](#) of variables, that there can never be totally objective research, certainly not in the social sciences.

Discussion Questions

- What does ‘being objective’ mean to you? Can you be ‘objective’ about something you observe or experience
- Think of some examples in your experience or in the literature of research or evaluation questions. What underlying ideologies do those questions reflect? Are they implicit or explicit?
- Consider your own interest in conducting research (or evaluation). What question(s) would you want to ask? What implicit perspective(s) do they reflect?

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Ontological Multiplicity

NATHAN A. BADRY

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Ontological multiplicity refers to the interplay between different understandings of what things exist, and how those things interact with each other.

The many intersecting worlds of the Kermode bear

What is a Kermode bear?

On the surface, this is a simple question. However, the answer can be surprisingly complex. And it can have tangible impacts on the decisions we make, for example, by helping to determine our priorities around wildlife conservation.

This was made clear to me in a conversation on wildlife conservation with a professional biologist, when the topic of Kermode

bears came up. Kermode bears—or spirit bears—are a white colour variant of the American black bear that inhabit the forests of coastal British Columbia, Canada. These bears carry two copies of a recessive gene that changes their fur colour (Ritland et al., 2001). Kermode bears (as well as bears with only a single copy of the gene, who retain their black fur) are now classified as a subspecies of Black bear, *Ursus americanus kermodei*. Kermode bears have become part of the conservation conversation in recent years because they are facing a number of threats (Toronto, 2020). These threats have included pipelines: The Enbridge Northern Gateway Pipeline, before being cancelled in 2016, was slated to pass through key Kermode bear habitat in the Great Bear Rainforest. Hunting is another threat. While hunting Kermode bears has been banned since 1925, the hunting of black bears is not, and were a black bear carrying the unexpressed recessive gene to be killed, the gene would not be passed on. Developments such as logging and mining also pose threats, as much Kermode bear habitat falls outside of protected areas. More recently, concerns have been raised over declining salmon populations, a key food source for the Kermode bear.

The biologist I was speaking to had recently seen a research presentation exploring whether isolated populations of black bears with high proportions of white coats—but with too few individuals to be self-sustainable—could be better conserved if connectivity with other bear populations was improved, perhaps by establishing new protected areas. The downside would be that connectivity would invariably increase for all bears—including those carrying and not carrying the gene. This would dilute the gene in the formerly isolated Kermode bear populations, decreasing the numbers of white bears carrying two copies. To the biologist, this was an acceptable loss. Conserving genetic diversity is crucial to wildlife conservation, and these recessive

genes would still be present in the population, even if they were not expressed in white coats. The decline in Kermode bears, despite being animals of great significance to people in the region, should not determine conservation decision-making. It was genes that mattered, not appearance, the biologist argued.

The cultural significance of Kermode bears, however, is difficult to discount. They remain an iconic animal in British Columbia, having been named the province's official mammal in 2006. Kermode bears have been a flagship species in efforts to establish new protected areas in coastal British Columbia, featuring prominently in campaigns and communications. Crucially, they are also enormously significant to the Indigenous peoples of the region. In the Tsimshian languages, Kermode bears are known as *Moksgm'ol*. Relationships of respect and reciprocity are shared with these bears, and they feature prominently in stories, dances, and songs. *Kitasoo/Xai'xais* and *Gitga'at* First Nations are invested both in burgeoning ecotourism related to the Kermode bear (*Great Bear Rainforest Spirit Bear Lodge*, n.d.), as well as scientific research on the bears (Service et al., 2020). To these people, Kermode bears are much more than just a genetic variant.

So, what is a Kermode bear? Is it a genetic variant of a black bear, or a provincial symbol? Do Kermode bears represent new potential tourism revenue? Are they a reminder from the trickster Raven of the harsh conditions of the ice age, a lesson passed down in *Kitasoo/Xai'xais* oral histories (Carter, 1966, as cited in Service et al., 2020)? Do they embody the values of respect and reciprocity integral to many Indigenous cultures? One answer is that Kermode bears are all these things simultaneously and more—as well as an example of ontological multiplicity. (See also, [social nature](#).)

Ontology refers to the beliefs people hold about what exists in the world (Blaser, 2013). Different groups of people hold different ontological assumptions, shaped by their practices and interactions with the world. For example, the biologist's understanding that Kermode bears are a genetic variant of black bears is an ontological one. The conditions in which multiple ontologies intersect, and contest one another, create what is known as *ontological multiplicity* (Theriault, 2017).

It is in this context that processes of world-making take place, and complex questions such as “What is a Kermode bear?” are negotiated. The question is not just theoretical. In the case of the Kermode bear, protecting the genetic diversity within populations and protecting *Moksgm'ol*, with all its cultural, social, and economic significance, could entail entirely different conservation strategies. And it is more complex than merely saying one belief is true and the other is false. Ontological beliefs are not points of view that can be easily discounted. They are instead deeply held beliefs about the reality of the world, and these different beliefs can be in conflict with each other while still remaining equally valid. Recognition of these multiplicities, and the need to negotiate them, are thus paramount to decision-making. This applies not just to wildlife conservation, but to any context characterized by different understandings and assumptions, in which questions of ontological multiplicity invariably arise.

Discussion Questions

- How do you think the threatened Kermode bears should be protected, if at all? How does your **positionality** influence your decision?
- What other examples of ontological multiplicity can you think of?
- How could ontological multiplicity be included more in policy discussions, and what are some obstacles to this?

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Othering

NILOFAR NOOR E. AND MANAAL SYED

Othering refers to the exclusionary process by which people perceive, represent and respond to those they see as different from themselves.

Nilofar Noor E. is a PhD candidate at the University of Toronto with an academic and professional background in adult education, community development, and the non-profit sector. Her research focuses on social justice and technology in education that meets the needs of minority and immigrant learners. Her international work experience in South Asia spans projects related to women development, human rights, family law, and community health education.

Manaal Syed is a PhD graduate from the University of Toronto. She is a social worker and course instructor with a background in educational development, adult education, and community development. Her professional interests include equity-based curriculum design, supporting students in academic success and career development, and advancing inclusive on-campus services that focus on students' well-being.

Understanding Islamophobia as a form of Othering

Take a moment to ask yourself: “Who am I?” You might describe yourself in terms of the various roles you occupy in school, work, family, sports, social activities and so on. You might also refer to factors such as race/racialization, culture, ethnicity, religion/fait, indigeneity, ancestry, economic and citizenship status, age, abilities, neurodiversities, gender identity and expression, sexuality, or other innumerable aspects of [identity](#).

Now consider the question: “Who am I not?” This might feel more difficult to answer. Determining who we are *not* requires us to imagine, visualize, presume, and define *others*, that is, those individuals, groups and communities we differentiate ourselves from. This process is called *othering*—the way people and systems define those with whom they do not identify or affiliate themselves. The [binary thinking](#) of ‘self vs. ‘other’, or ‘us’ vs. ‘them’, is a core principle of othering.

In historical and contemporary conditions, various structures of power have relied on othering as the framework through which to organize their nation-building, domination, and subsequent social relations (i.e., interactions and interconnections between members of a society). For example, in the western context, historical events such as colonization, the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, territorial occupations, and wars have been integral to creating and perpetuating contemporary inequalities and divisions around the world. These historical events have relied on constructing people who have been colonized, enslaved, and occupied as *others*.

Today, groups that are most often in minority are frequently othered through [hegemonic discourse](#), which stereotypes and

dehumanizes them through labels such as being inferior, flawed, lazy, inadequate, harmful, underdeveloped, uncivilized, backwards, deviant, strange, dangerous, ugly, criminal, immoral, unintelligent, or subhuman. Notably, othering can be explicit or tacit, which allows it to be implemented through a range of methods including [ideologies](#), governance systems, policies, political rhetoric, media representations, and social commentary among the public.

The implications of othering can be grave. For instance, it can perpetuate inequality/inequity, social exclusion, discord, and violence, as well as violate standards of human rights and freedoms. Common manifestations of othering may include Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, racism, and discrimination against Black, Indigenous, People of Colour (BIPOC) communities, misogyny, and homo/transphobia, to name a few.

Islamophobia, as a potent example of othering, is defined as the unfounded fear and/or hatred of the Islamic faith and of Muslims. Many scholars trace the origins of Islamophobia to the historical violent and cultural encounters of Europeans with people from the Eastern and Middle Eastern regions. Western travellers, government officials, and authors of Medieval, Renaissance, and Colonial literature often misrepresented Muslims with paradoxical impressions of being uncivilized but exotic, barbaric but enticing, fascinating but repulsive (see Asad, 2000; Said, 1979).

The start of the 21st century sparked a renewed wave of world events such as the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Centre buildings in New York City and the subsequent invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq by the U.S. and its allies. For over two decades, legislation, politics, the news media, and cinematic representations have significantly contributed to the continued oth-

ering of Muslims, who are frequently stereotyped as violent terrorists, barbaric and frightening, with radical beliefs. In Canada, this prevailing Islamophobic atmosphere translates into systemic othering that is embedded across various systems and institutions, as well as hate-motivated violence inflicted on everyday Muslims (Chaudhry, 2017).

As further illustration of Islamophobia, research suggests that within the charitable sector, Muslim-led charities face patterns of bias, discrimination and surveillance in federal revenue agencies' auditing processes (Emon & Hasan, 2021). Similar prejudicial patterns also appear in many aspects of the education sector. School board reviews have pointed to Islamophobic content in the curriculum and instances of Islamophobic incidents in school governance activities (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2019). Muslim students also report facing microaggressions (subtle and indirect discriminatory comments or actions) within schools, due to their religious identity and faith practices (Hindy, 2016). At the higher education level, extracurricular student groups such as Muslim Student Associations (MSAs) and their members have reported facing increased scrutiny, tracking and/or aggressive targeting by government security agencies (CBC News, 2019; The Varsity, 2019).

Canada has also seen rising Islamophobic violence. For example, the 2017 hate-motivated shooting attack at a mosque in Québec City resulted in the murder of six Muslim worshippers. In 2020, a white nationalist murdered a Muslim man, by slitting his throat, while he was sitting quietly in front of a mosque waiting for prayer time in Etobicoke, Ontario. In 2021, four members of a Muslim family in London, Ontario on an evening stroll were intentionally mowed down in a truck attack by a man who espoused anti-Muslim sentiments. In addition, Muslim women—wearing religious attire in particular—face frequent

violent physical and verbal attacks in everyday public spaces across Canada. Like institutionally embedded Islamophobia, these incidents do not occur in isolation. In fact, across these violent acts, perpetrators are either found to be active members of fringe hate groups or heavily influenced by readily available information and materials that demonize Muslims through Islamophobic, xenophobic, misogynist, and racist messaging.

At the policy and government level, several legislative actions, policies, and public debates in Canada have also furthered the othering of Canadian Muslims. Notable previous and ongoing examples include: Québec's Bill 21, which bans the wearing of religious symbols in many public professions; Canada's Zero Tolerance for Barbaric Cultural Practices Act, which facilitated the increased surveillance of Muslims and other minority communities; and a *federal ban on the niqab* (a face-veil religious symbol worn by some Muslim women) in Canadian citizenship ceremonies. Critics of such political actions have expressed significant concern that these political actions disproportionately and harmfully target Canadian Muslims' religious and civic rights and freedoms.

These examples indicate that othering can follow a cyclical process—social othering (i.e., discriminatory sentiments and actions in society) often serves as justification for policy actions and political rhetoric, which, in turn, validate and amplify the intensity of social othering. Given that othering can be perpetuated in many ways, interventions are needed that cut across ideological, socio-cultural, and political spectrums to combat it. In the case of Islamophobia, these interventions have included policy advocacy efforts and public education campaigns by civil society organizations, faith groups, academia, and some government representatives. This chorus of voices raises awareness about Islamophobia as a broader phenomenon, while underscor-

ing the need to address the everyday social othering of Canadian Muslims.

Discussion Questions

- Think back to a time when you, or someone you know, was made to feel othered. What actions perpetuated the othering? What actions (if any) helped to curb it?
- How might you as a student in the social sciences combat the othering of various groups in society? Are there on-campus activities (e.g., in academics, professional work, research, extra-curricular or social activities) that address this phenomenon?

Exercise

Develop an activity or resource that either raises awareness or helps address Islamophobia—or any other form of othering—in Canada (e.g., racism and discrimination against Indigenous peoples, anti-Black racism, anti-Semitism and so on). Be creative! Explore how you can incorporate engaging and creative multimedia formats for your activity or resource (e.g., infographics, a website, video clips, a podcast episode, a poem, artwork, a zine, etc).

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Path Dependence

RICHARD HARRIS

Path dependence refers to the fact that the character of a person, place, institution, or cultural practice at any point in time depends on its history.

***Richard Harris** has taught urban geography at UBC, the University of Toronto, and McMaster University. He has written about the history of housing, urban development, and the social geography of cities in North America, India, and Kenya since the late nineteenth century. His most recent work is *How Cities Matter* (Cambridge University Press, 2021). He is currently writing a history of Canadian neighbourhoods, city and*

suburban, since the 1880s.

Toronto's Inner Suburbs: An illustration of path dependence

Path dependence is a formal way of saying that the past shapes the present. What the definition alone does not reveal is that this influence is often forgotten, or simply overlooked. There are countless examples, but one that illustrates this influence clearly is the built environment (Harris, 2021). The inner suburbs of Toronto, Ontario are a case in point.

In the 1980s, these suburbs found international fame. The Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) had some of the highest per capita ridership levels in the world. American and Australian experts came to the city, hoping to learn what the Commission was doing right. They were especially intrigued by the fact that ridership rates were high in the suburbs that lay just beyond city limits. These suburbs included North York, East York, Scarborough, and Etobicoke, municipalities that were merged into an expanded City of Toronto in 2000 and which today are often referred to as Toronto's inner suburbs.

The foreign experts did not realize that the TTC benefitted from decisions made before it even came into existence. Many parts of those inner suburbs were developed in the first three decades of the twentieth century (Harris and Lewis, 1998). At that time, the streetcar system was privately owned by the Toronto Railway Company (TRC). The TRC had a franchise which gave it a monopoly on streetcar service until 1921. Its most profitable lines were those that served the central business district and inner city neighborhoods, where ridership levels were highest. Its directors knew that extending lines into fringe areas that were largely undeveloped would be unprofitable. Despite pressure, they therefore refused to expand the system.

At that time, almost everyone walked or took transit to work. Even middle-class families could rarely afford a car. Suburban land developers knew that they would have to create high-density subdivisions so that as many people as possible would be able to walk to the end of the nearest streetcar line. They created innumerable gridded streets of 25-foot lots, or narrower. These were situated beyond city limits in semi-rural municipalities that could not afford to install piped water and sewers. Because small lots on such streets, coupled with long walks on muddy streets, were unappealing to middle-class male commuters (and

their wives), these early suburbs were settled at high densities by working-class families. For many, the only way they could acquire a home was to build their own.

In 1921, when the TRC's franchise ended, the publicly-owned TTC took over. Responding to demand, it soon extended lines into areas that had by then become half-developed, but the die had been cast. More homes were built in the 1920s, and indeed some in the early post-WWII years, on narrow lots in the subdivisions laid out before 1921. The result was high-density settlement. Servicing those suburbs has never been 'profitable', but it was at least feasible: it required much less public subsidy than if those areas had been developed at the lower densities that became typical across Canada after 1945. That is why, in the 1970s, it was feasible to provide those areas with good transit service, as indeed it is today.

The visiting experts from Australia and the U.S. overlooked this back story. They worked hard to figure out what lesson they could take from the TTC, without recognizing that the main influence was historical and now well beyond control. They had missed the bus—actually, the streetcar—by more than half a century. The TTC's later success depended in large part on the shrewd caution of its privately-run predecessor, the TRC.

There is nothing extraordinary about this story. The built environment is durable, shaping peoples' lives for decades, or centuries. That is why cities endure long after their original reason for existence has gone (Briggs, 1968; Polèse, 2009). That is also why many planners and environmentalists worry about the lower-density post-WWII suburbs that are built around the car. Reducing their carbon footprint is not easy. Just as important are the institutions in Canada that frame our built environment, including private property ownership, zoning, and demo-

cratic municipal elections (Sorensen, 2015). Although redevelopment happens, it is tricky and expensive, especially when it requires the assembly of multiple lots or the insertion of multi-unit buildings into single-family areas, which can provoke NIMBY (Not-In-My-Back-Yard) opposition. Gentrification, which involves the influx of middle-class households into lower-income and immigrant neighbourhoods, has become common in older areas of Toronto and some other cities, but the legacy of the built environment still has an impact. Gentrifiers favour houses, streets, and neighbourhoods with ‘character’, or else old warehouse districts ripe for ‘loft living’. Indeed, there is no part of any city, least of all the street network (whether gridded or not) which is path *independent*.

Path dependency is not unique to the built environment. Have you ever wondered why we all type on a keyboard layout (known as QWERTY) that was designed to be inefficient? The answer is that, when people were using typewriters, the spokes that carried the metal letters to the paper would get tangled if people typed too quickly (Diamond, 1997). And why do CN and CP—like most train companies around the world—use a rail gauge (the width of the rails) that is suboptimal? Because, two hundred years ago, it was the standard for horse-drawn coal carts in the north of England (Puffert, n.d.). Again, the answer is happen-chance, combined with historical inertia. The examples are endless. In all spheres of life—economic, political, social, and cultural—the past matters.

Discussion questions

- Can you think of a person or place whose character has been shaped by its past? How did that happen?
- What does your answer tell you about the importance of history?
- How far back in time do we need to go in order to understand the present?
- Why do we forget, or overlook, the importance of history?

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Personal Agency

REBECCA HEIMEL

Personal agency refers to an individual's ability to control their own behaviours and reactions to circumstances beyond their control, even if their actions are limited by someone or something else.

***Rebecca Heimel** is the Elizabeth J. McCormack Chair of Humanities at Cambridge College in Boston, Massachusetts and is a practicing interdisciplinary artist. Her academic research focuses on cultural texts as they relate to race, class, and gender.*

Yuri's Decision

Damaris was the first friend Yuri knew who had posted. Damaris chose a close-up of a rose in her Abuela's backyard garden, which was pretty much the same as the

other posts Yuri had seen.

Kamila texted first thing Saturday. "You seen?" Kamila asked. "Ya," Yuri replied. Until that post on Friday, Yuri hadn't known anyone personally who had actually done it and now it seemed like things were closing in on her. If Damaris had done it, who would be next?

Kamila's texts kept coming. She screen-capped other girls' posts with dates. Yuri was mostly silent. She wasn't going out with anyone, unless you counted Alexey Monsenore. They weren't technically together, but he had asked her in the hallway if she was "ready to post." She feigned insult and said "shut up," but now she was reconsidering. She didn't want to, but she certainly couldn't tell him that, and she definitely couldn't tell Kamila who would never shut up about it.

"Who started this stupid thing anyway?" Yuri asked Kamila by text, but got no reply. It annoyed Kamila when Yuri thought too deeply about things. Yuri didn't know how to possibly turn her brain off, and the fact that new posts of stupid flowers popped up all the time didn't make it any easier. Why did the girls have to do this, and the guys didn't? Two hours later, exactly, Kamila replied. "Who cares just do it and post it—I can't be the last to do it, and neither can you."

Yuri sat in her room holding her phone, wishing there was someone to talk to who was not involved in this whole mess but who wouldn't question the basis of the mess to begin with. Her fathers were both downstairs, but what would they know about it? When she was a baby and they flew to Seoul to get her, could they have imagined that someday their daughter would be considering losing her virginity and then announcing it on social media?

By the time late Saturday evening came around, Yuri felt like she had been in her room for three days. Dad had brought her lunch. She had scrolled through Instagram, then tossed her phone away, then picked it up again, over and over. She tried to draw, which usually helped, but got nowhere. Kamila hadn't texted in a few hours. She tried to imagine having sex with Alexey.

Once the sun had completely gone down, Dad knocked on her door.

“You seem down, Yur, what’s up?”

“All good, Dad.”

“Okay, doll. If you are coming to church tomorrow morning, would you let me know? I want to figure out which Mass to go to.” After he closed the door, Yuri buried her head in her pillows again. Hearing about church made the whole thing worse.

She was sitting in art class on a Monday afternoon when the idea came to her. By that time, Kamila had done it with Denny Hernandez and had posted—some kind of bushy blue flower in Elizabeth Park. Kamila talked only about Denny, with brief pauses to analyze her own post and the reactions. The other girls were treating Kamila differently, and Kamila was delighted. Yuri sat there with her new colored pencils drawing the still-life scene in front of her when she figured out what to do.

After school she found Alexey outside the auditorium stairs. “Want to take a walk?” She asked him. Alexey raised one eyebrow, which set her stomach turning.

On the walk, they were silent for most of the time. For all of his prior confidence, Alexey did not seem too pleased now. When they reached Crow Point and found a private spot he seemed very, very nervous when he said “I don’t have a condom.”

“Neither do I,” Yuri said. “But we don’t need one.”

He exhaled, then paused. “Yuri, what’s going on?”

“Listen,” she said. “Thank you, for—offering. I know you know about the posting, everyone knows, and everyone expects girls to

do it, but I really don't want to. It's not like I'll never want to, I just don't want to right now. And I don't like feeling pressured."

"Sorry, Yuri. But really, I get it. I only asked you because I assumed you'd say no. I'm not ready either."

"Oh well—oh. Thanks for telling me that. I wanted to take a walk with you today because I'm willing to say we did it if you want. We can pretend it happened today. I'm going to post later but it won't be for sure, it will be kind of coded, so really no one will know. I'm not going to talk to Kamila or anyone else about it, so it's up to you what you want to say. If that's okay with you."

When she got home, Yuri went upstairs to her room. She took out her old colored pencils from her desk and looked up a picture of a Rose of Sharon online. It only took her about 15 minutes to draw and shade the flower, and by the time she had finished, taken a picture of her drawing, and uploaded it to Instagram, she was certain she had done the right thing. No one had ever posted a picture of a drawing; everyone had posted a photograph of a flower. She had figured out a way around the pressure. It wasn't honest, but it was better than the alternative.

Discussion Questions

- Social scientists use the term "structure" to talk about forces or factors that control our individual actions. Which structural forces can you identify from Yuri's story?
- How do structural forces impact Yuri's decision to have sex

for the first time?

- How did Yuri exercise personal agency in the story?
- Considering Yuri's example, do you think that individuals can ever have total personal agency?
- Yuri's decision depended on her circumstances and the popular trend in her school of females posting a picture of a flower to social media after having sex for the first time. In what ways is personal agency context-specific?

Exercise

Personal agency refers to the agency that people can exercise in their own lives and over their own circumstances and bodies. Other kinds of agency exist in the world, however, which are theorized differently. These include *material agency* and *linguistic agency*, in which non-human things (physical objects and words) are able to effect change in the world.

- If you are not familiar with the concepts of *material agency* and *linguistic agency*, look them up to get a sense of what these terms mean.
- How is personal agency (like that described in Yuri's Choice) similar to material and linguistic agency? How is it different?
- Can material agency or linguistic agency every be 'total'? What implications does this have for the ways in which humans, objects, and language are all connected and interdependent?

Positionality

DAVID SZANTO AND COURTNEY STRUTT

David Szanto is a teacher, consultant, and artist taking an experimental approach to gastronomy and food systems. Past projects include meal performances about urban foodscapes, immersive sensory installations, and interventions involving food, microbes, humans, and digital technology. David has taught at several universities in Canada and Europe and has written extensively on food, art, and performance.

Positionality

refers to the different ways in which each person perceives a given 'reality', depending on how they look at it.

Courtney Strutt is a white settler educator and community development practitioner based out of Thunder Bay, Ontario. Using a lens of decolonization and social justice, Courtney's work spans municipal emergency food system response planning, supporting local Indigenous food sovereignty movements, and addressing climate change through teaching and municipal policy making.

What if we could look at the Big Dipper from Alpha Centauri?

The ways we perceive a given situation depends on how we look at it, both literally and figuratively. That ‘stance’ is called positionality. It includes our physical placement relative to what we are looking at (e.g., near/far, above/below, inside/outside), as well a more figurative kind of placement. *Figurative positionality* relates to our formal and social education, upbringing and culture, personal experiences, race, class, age, gender, and other characteristics. These aspects of our identity act like a series of disciplinary, emotional, and cognitive lenses that influence how we view the world.

In some ways, positionality is like [subjectivity](#), meaning that ‘reality’ depends on myriad individual ways of understanding the world. In academic research, acknowledging positionality is very important, because it allows the audiences of our research to understand the inherent biases in our work. Even in so-called objective or scientific research, positionality plays a role. (Think about how differently a physicist and a biologist might view and describe the role of carbon or hydrogen in their work.)

It can be hard to step out of our own frames of reference to understand our disciplinary, emotional, and cognitive positionality. (Frames of reference are the ways we understand everything, after all, including ourselves.) Fortunately, to better understand figurative positionality, the more concrete example of physical positionality can help.

In the gray area in the illustration below, you can see how the Big Dipper constellation (Ursa Major) looks when viewed from Earth (the usual physical placement of we humans). In the black area, the yellow circles show how it might look from another angle,

far away in outer space. The familiar Big Dipper shape is a flat, two-dimensional pattern that looks like a stylized ladle. But if we could zoom out into space and fly around the seven stars that make up the constellation, we would see very different patterns, none of which would look familiar. The reality of those stars is that they exist in three dimensions, and it is only from the surface of Earth that we see them as the Big Dipper.¹

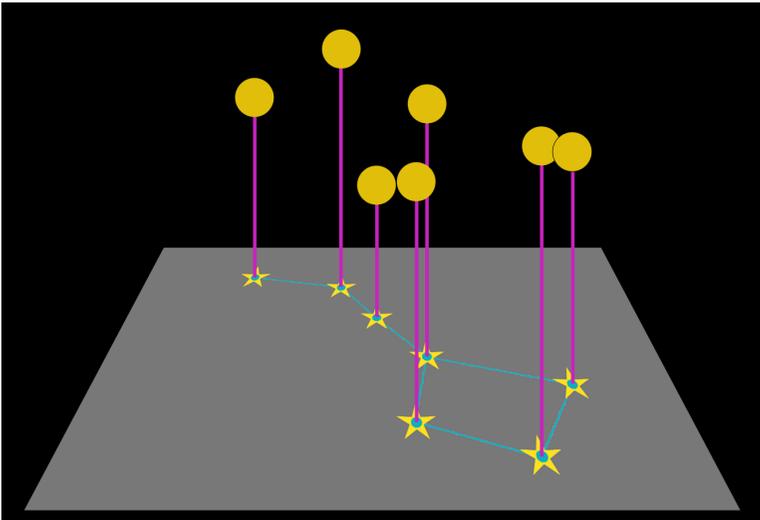


Figure 1: A sketch of the Big Dipper constellation, showing two different ways of seeing it.

In the same way, figurative positionality also influences the ways we perceive ‘reality’. Depending on the makeup of this composite lens, concepts and objects may appear to us very differently. Being a scientist, artist, or philosopher is like looking at a set of stars from the surface of the Earth, a spaceship near Alpha Centauri, or a wormhole that connects us to other dimensions. Said otherwise, reality is relative—a relationship between *us*, the observers, and *it*, the thing we perceive as real.

Discussion Questions

- Identify five aspects of your own identity that contribute to your positionality. In other words, what ‘lenses’ (educational, cultural, social, etc.) do you use to perceive and understand the realities around you? How easy or hard do you think it would be to exchange these lenses for another set?
- Why is it important for social science researchers to acknowledge and account for their own positionality? Name some examples of research contexts in which a researcher’s positionality could radically (or subtly) affect the ways they understand and write about those contexts.

Exercises

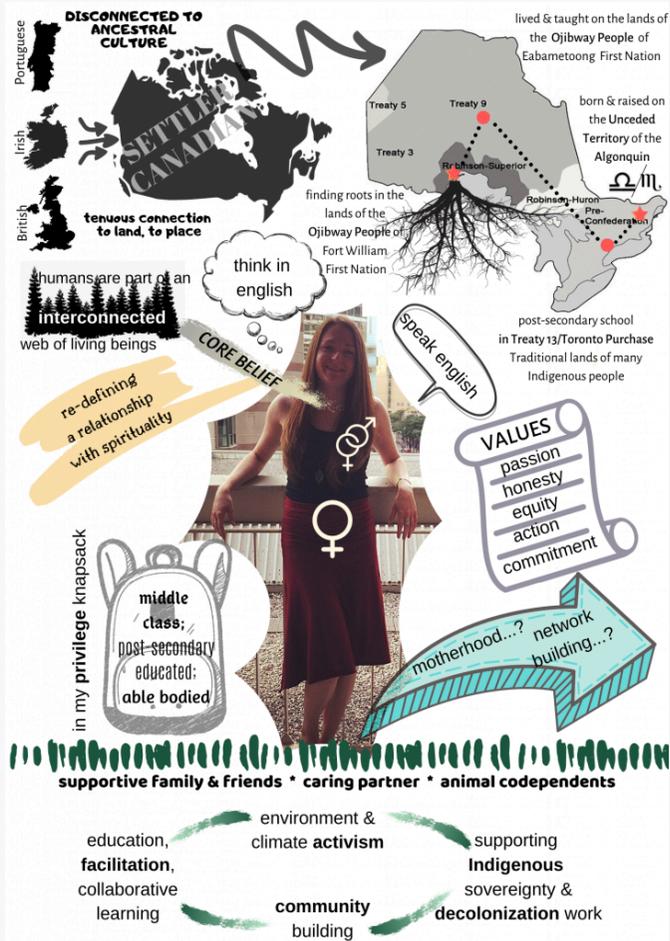
Taking Multiple Positions on a Social Context

Imagine a social context like a party, a shop, or a park. Using household items (toys, paper, building blocks, tools, etc.), create a simple set-up (on a desk or table) that represents this social context. Include elements of the built environment (architecture, designed objects, food, technologies, etc.) and the natural environment (people, plants, animals, soil, water, light). Imagine a scenario playing out and what you might do to demonstrate that scenario to others with your set-up.

- Place three or four colleagues around the set-up, in different physical positions. Be creative in your placements, in terms of distance from the table/desk, the viewing angle, and the people's sight lines.
- Ask your colleagues to take notes on what is happening as you act out your scenario with the elements of your set-up. Although you can speak or make sounds as you do so, do not describe to your colleagues exactly what is happening (i.e., let them interpret).
- Once you have acted out your scenario, ask each of your colleagues to describe to the class what happened, based on their notes. (You can choose to have the other colleague-observers step out of the room until it is their turn to describe the scenario.)
- Ask the rest of the class to note differences among the colleagues' accounts, including ideas about why their physical positionality might have affected these descriptions. Ask the colleagues to also consider their own *figurative positionality* (differences in identity, education, experiences, disciplines), and how this influenced what they perceived.

Make a Self-Positioning Sketch

In the image below, Courtney has depicted herself and multiple elements of her past, present, and future. Together they form a representation of her positionality in the world: a stance, a filter, an angle on all that she perceives.



As an exercise, make your own sketch or collage, including as many parts of your life that you think bring an influence to the ways in which you view the world and its 'truths'. Then:

- Exchange sketches with another student in the class, and discuss with them the similarities and differences between the two sketches.

- With your partner, pick a subject or issue related to your work in class and discuss your perspectives on it, bearing in mind your different (or similar) positionalities. Make reference to the sketches when noting the ways you agree or disagree. How does your positionality help you see this issue?

Additional self-reflective questions:

- It is one thing to create a representation of your positionality for yourself and another to think about how you share it with others. How do you currently position your perspective when you are introducing yourself (or your work) to others?
- Consider the sketch you just made. What aspects of your positionality do you omit when you introduce yourself to someone for the first time? Why?
- How does the way you position yourself change depending on the audience? (e.g., in academic work, in a racially mixed space, in a predominantly white space, in a predominantly Indigenous space.) Why?

Additional Resources

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Notes

1. In fact, the Big Dipper is recognizable from the Moon, or from a camera on a Mars landing module. Relatively small differences in physical positionality don't have much difference in the way we see a constellation. In the same way, subtle differences in figurative positionality—say, between how a sociologist and an anthropologist view a wedding party—might not alter how that reality is perceived in a huge way either. But then again, they might.

Positivism

PAULINE COUPER

[Pauline Couper](#) is a geographer at York St John University, U.K. Her research and teaching have spanned the physical sciences and social sciences/humanities traditions within geography. Through her teaching she aims to enable students to think about the world with multiple perspectives.

Positivism refers to a philosophy of science/social science that emphasizes observable phenomena as the basis for knowledge and prioritizes quantitative analysis.

One in Ten: Society by Numbers

Before you start reading, listen to the song [“One in Ten”](#) by UB40.

“One in Ten” is by British reggae and pop band UB40, from their 1981 album, *Present Arms*. When the band formed in the late 1970s, all members were unemployed, and the name UB40 derives from the form for claiming Unemployment Benefits (social security payments). At that time, the U.K. unemployment rate was between five and six percent (around 1 in 20) of the working-age population. By August 1981, it had risen to 10 percent. The band members were no longer unemployed, but they knew what it meant to be part of that statistic.

“I am a one in ten, a number on a list.”¹

A key principle of positivism is that knowledge is based on observable phenomena (this is its **epistemology**). The term ‘positivism’ was popularised by Auguste Comte, a young French scholar based in Paris in the 1820s. Amidst the social and political upheaval arising from the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars (1792–1815), Comte aimed to develop a philosophical and political system that would lead to a more stable, harmonious society—a “positive philosophy.” He noted that the most advanced sciences progressed via observation, classification, and reason, identifying constant relations between phenomena to understand how the world works. In Comte’s view, this emphasis on observation removes subjectivity, as any prior assumptions must give way to the facts of empirical evidence.

Comte applied that approach of observation, classification, and reason to understand relations between fields of knowledge. His resulting classification is hierarchical. At the base of the hierarchy, mathematics is the simplest, most generally applicable form of knowledge. The hierarchy then moves upwards, through more complicated, less generally applicable forms, with each level being dependent upon those below. “Celestial physics” (his term for astronomy) is based upon mathematics; physics is dependent on astronomy; chemistry is dependent on physics; and “physiology” (his term for the study of life) is dependent on physics and chemistry. Comte then proposed that a science of society would be possible, naming it “social physics.” Sociology was thus conceived as a science based on observation, classification, and mathematics (quantitative analysis). In Comte’s view, such a science would provide knowledge of how society actually works, and a politics aligned with how society actually works would achieve a more stable society.

This kind of quantitative scientific approach to studying society has its uses. It enables us to identify large-scale patterns that may not be readily apparent through everyday individual experience. This was illustrated as the COVID pandemic was developing in 2020. Large-scale analysis of data revealed that, in the U.K., Black and Minority Ethnic groups were disproportionately affected. Knowing that fact then enabled investigation of the causal factors at work; ethnicity intersecting in various ways with lower incomes, poorer housing, and prevalence of employment in occupations at higher risk of exposure to the virus. Government communications had also not been effectively tailored for different cultures. The pandemic laid bare pre-existing structural inequalities in society.

"I am a one in ten, even though I don't exist."²

The UB40 song's lyrics give us some insight into the problems that can arise in and with positivist social science. Treating people as observable, quantifiable *objects* dehumanizes them. With its focus on observable phenomena, positivism cannot recognize the non-material dimensions of being human: the thoughts, [emotions](#) (fears, hopes, frustrations, and so on), connections, and friendships that are as much part of our life as the material world. Treating humans as objects negates our *humanity*: the living, feeling person does not exist in a positivist [ontology](#).

"Nobody knows me, but I'm always there; a statistic, a reminder, of a world that doesn't care."³

The verses of the song remind us of the traumas behind the statistics: poverty; hunger and malnutrition; crime; disease; loneliness; and other forms of marginalization. Positivist social science can *reveal* that such marginalization exists (if we choose to look for it), identifying those large-scale patterns, but it does

nothing to tackle the problems. If anything, knowledge based on positivist methods tends to reproduce existing conditions. Categorizing households by the male adult's occupation reinforces patriarchy. Positivist, quantitative analysis of crime is fed into predictive algorithms that are used to determine who is at risk of crime, or what parts of a city need the most policing. These algorithms render people and places into 'types', and those people and places are then treated as that type, reproducing negative stereotypes. Katherine McKitterick (2021) traces the ways this perpetuates [structural racism](#) and the logic of White supremacy, meaning political and social disadvantages remain embedded in society.

This is an appropriate point to return to Comte's original conception of positivism. Alongside his hierarchy of subjects, Comte 'observed' a developmental progression of societies: beginning with societies explaining the world through reference to multiple gods; progressing through monotheistic societies; to White, Western European societies explaining the world through science. From its inception, positivism reproduced and legitimated ideas of racial hierarchy that enabled colonialism. An important lesson here is that observation and categorization is *always* shaped by the preconceptions of those doing the observing and categorizing (see: [positionality](#)). While large-scale quantitative analyses can be of value, we must always ask ourselves: whose interests are embedded in the underlying assumptions, whose are excluded, and what will the data gathered be used for?

Discussion Questions

- This vignette opened with a statistic referring to a proportion of adults who were unemployed. What other quantitative measures of society have you seen being used? Select one example. What classification or categorization of people does it rely on? What differences or nuances are lost in that quantitative measure?
- In many Western societies such as the U.S. and U.K., 'hard science' has a prominent place, valued above other forms of knowledge. Why do you think this is? Think of as many possible reasons as you can. What other ways of thinking about social issues might be side-lined by this focus on 'hard science'? Can you think of specific examples?

Additional Resources

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Notes

1. "One in Ten" lyrics © Universal Music Publishing Group
2. "One in Ten" lyrics © Universal Music Publishing Group
3. "One in Ten" lyrics © Universal Music Publishing Group
4. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy and Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy are continually updated, and links provided here are to the 'live' entries.

Postfeminism

KRISTEEN MCKEE

***Kristeen McKee** is an educator and writer. She currently teaches Communications courses at Cambrian College in Sudbury, Ontario. Her latest project examines contemporary Disney transformation quests featuring non-human, male-identified figures.*

Postfeminism refers to contemporary ideas and patterns of gender constructions that evoke both pro- and anti-feminist sentiments.

The Postfeminist Commodification of Disney's Classic Princesses in “Ralph Breaks the Internet”

Even though Disney's Snow White, Cinderella, and Aurora were born nearly a century ago, the princesses remain timeless figures in Disney's expansive catalogue of consumer products and experiences. They appear in merchandise, perform at theme parks, and occasionally return to the big screen.

In 2018, the classic trio re-emerged alongside princesses from later Disney animated films for cameo appearances in the movie, *Ralph Breaks the Internet*. For the first time in the history of Disney animated storytelling, eight generations of princesses united in

a metatextual universe where the likes of Snow White and Cinderella wore trendy clothes and openly mocked the recurring tropes and templates used to animate princesses of the past. With *Ralph Breaks the Internet*, Disney repositions its classic princesses as enlightened and empowered feminist icons, and then links their transformations to postfeminist themes.

The emphasis upon individualism and a preoccupation with the female body as a source of power are core postfeminist themes (Gill, 2007). Messages about individual choice, personal comfort, and self-fulfillment are common in postfeminist texts produced for a contemporary female audience that has been taught that changes (e.g., makeovers), consumption (e.g., fashion and beauty), and monitoring (e.g., diets) are means of achieving desired outcomes, such as sexual attraction. In postfeminist media texts, like *Ralph Breaks the Internet*, the female body functions as a brand or commodity and not as a source of liberation. Nowhere is the [commodification](#) of the “empowered” female body more evident than in the film’s princess sequence.

The sequence opens as Vanellope enters a dressing room reserved for princesses. Inside, the feisty nine-year-old princess-turned-racer stands at the centre of a group of armed and hostile princesses. The intrusion provokes the princesses to defend themselves against the youngest and smallest of trespassers. The image of female empowerment is connected to the unique object handled by each princess—Mulan aims a sword, Rapunzel holds a cast-iron pan, and Cinderella grips a piece of glass. The presence of pointed objects and essential kitchen tools capable of causing physical harm signals that the studio is ready to break away from the patterned construction of girlish passivity found in earlier films. At the same time, the presence of Cinderella’s glass slipper and Aurora’s spindle, for example, allows Disney to renew audience interest by cross-promoting its classic princess

films while rebranding its Princess Franchise as a ‘feminist’ commodity.

Cross-promotional strategies and metatextual references intensify as Vanellope interacts with her predecessors. The conversation begins as Vanellope announces that she is also a princess. Doubts about her royal status provoke an interrogation. The princesses take turns quizzing the young girl about her magical abilities and the trauma she endured as a prototypical Disney damsel. To assess whether Vanellope is a legitimate Disney princess, Rapunzel asks: “Do people assume all your problems got solved because a big strong man showed up?” (Moore and Johnston, 2018). From this moment, an alliance is formed based on a key grievance—their shared resistance to the damsel-in-distress trope. The recognition and ridicule directed at the one-dimensional princess archetype is evidence that the studio is actively revising the formulaic gender tropes used to script its princesses. While the sequence has satiric elements, it appears that Vanellope’s encounter with the princesses was developed primarily as surface-level promotion of female empowerment. The sequence sells a particular brand of girl power to contemporary audiences by suggesting that gender-dividing tropes—such as the distressed damsel and the heroic male—are dated constructions. Nonetheless, traces of tradition reappear during the makeover episode when the preoccupation falls on the female body.

The casual and comfortable clothing covering Vanellope’s body is a source of admiration for Cinderella. A group transformation produces a universal look for the princesses. Form-fitting gowns have been replaced with bomber jackets, leggings, and graphic tees. Choice and comfort, which were once out of reach for classic princesses, are now possible thanks to old-fashioned fairy-tale magic and consumer trends for the teen girl market. The

dressing room is also transformed. The addition of sofas and pillows invites the atypical behaviour of princesses (lounging). The focus on liberation and comfort in the makeover episode extends to the food consumed during casual conversation. Donuts, chips and dip, sodas, and iced drinks are backgrounded in this sequence. However, a modern princess persona is performed only temporarily and within the confines of a private setting (a dressing room exclusive to cast members). This respite from tradition is interrupted as the princesses are called to return to the stage to perform for their fans, who expect them to conform to convention.

By entering into a private space where princesses rest between their performances, Vanellope opens the door to an alternative universe in which convention is in tension with reinvention and where physical transformations inspired by trends enable the princesses to recuperate a sense of individuality and power. At first glance, it would appear as though the self-reflexive princesses are being released from tradition. Through self-directed makeovers, the princesses become active, controlling subjects rather than desiring objects for an imagined male gaze. The sequence's preoccupation with the female body as a source of individuality and empowerment, and as a canvas that can be recopied and reconstructed, is characteristic of Rosalind Gill's (2007) account of postfeminist media culture. Additionally, the self-reflective statements critiquing Disney's narrative conventions are presented as problems of the past—a strategy that might function to deflect future criticism. In this way, the sequence aligns with Angela McRobbie's (2009) assertion that “post-feminism positively draws on and invokes feminism...to suggest that equality has been achieved, in order to install a whole repertoire of new meaning which emphasizes that it is no longer needed” (12).

Postfeminism is a complex concept. Perhaps this is because its meaning has been variously interpreted since it entered the feminist lexicon in the 1990s (Banet-Weiser et al., 2020). Gill (2020) explains that some have used the term to refer to a period after the women's movement of the 1960s to 1980s (otherwise known as *second-wave feminism*). For others, postfeminism represents a different kind of feminism (a third-wave) associated with critical attitudes and approaches, such as [poststructuralism](#) and post-colonialism. Overall, however, there is consensus among scholars that postfeminism does not challenge but contributes to dominant capitalist [ideology](#) (Banet-Weiser et al., 2020).

The sequence reinforces the princesses' role as empowered consumers by linking liberation and comfort to contemporary products and consumption practices, while constraining their consumption choices to food and fashion (i.e., consumption is tied to their bodies). Disney also addresses multi-generational audiences as empowered consumers whenever it simultaneously promotes criticism and consumption of its films, merchandise, and theme parks.

Discussion Questions

- What makes a film or series postfeminist? What kinds of contradictions might you uncover in other postfeminist media texts?
- The Disney princess sequence continues as Ariel articulates her dream through song. Does Ariel's musical moment engage with some of the postfeminist themes

described in this vignette? If so, please identify the contradictions and paradoxes in the lyrics to Ariel's song. If not, please justify your response.

- Later in the film, the princesses return to rescue Ralph. It is the princesses who mastermind a male rescue mission. In your opinion, does this sequence represent a significant shift in the way Disney princess films will be scripted moving forward? Or is it simply promotion for the Princess Franchise, dressed up as a critique? Can it be both a promotional tool *and* a meaningful critique? Why or why not?

Exercise

In the last decade, Disney has changed the looks, qualities, and backstories of its classic princesses on several occasions, appealing to contemporary audiences that may be critical of the traditional tropes found in its early films, while also appealing to audiences who grew up watching these classics. *Cinderella* (2015) is a case in point. The studio's live-action retelling of the animated classic retains the image of the passive- and kind-natured girl, but with one unique twist—the Disney remake positions Ella (*Cinderella*) and Kit (*Prince Charming*) as equals. In all other aspects, the remake stays true to the animated classic. Is this also the case with the version of *Cinderella* introduced a year earlier, in the movie *Into the Woods* (2014)?

Watch the live-action musical before discussing whether Disney transforms the demure damsel into a postfeminist princess to appeal to a multi-generational audience.

Imagine you have been hired as a consultant to help Disney create another version of female empowerment for its next princess film. Your task is to develop a profile for a princess whose appearance, qualities, and backstory depart from past princesses. Please describe this new princess *without* resorting to themes common in postfeminist media culture.

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Poststructuralism

KIMBERLY QUIOGUE ANDREWS

[Kimberly Quiogue Andrews](#) is Assistant Professor of English at the University of Ottawa. She is a literary critic as well as a poet, and is the author of three books: *The Academic Avant-Garde*, *A Brief History of Fruit*, and *BETWEEN*.

Who's On First? Who's on First!

If you're like most people, you probably go through your day assuming that words mean things. For example, if you were to say the word "apple" to someone, they would picture roughly what you would picture: a piece of fruit, red or green, that grows on trees all over the world. But what if the person you said the word to had just been reading an issue of *People* magazine in which Gwyneth Paltrow had featured prominently? You might be talking about the fruit, but they might hear the name of Paltrow's child, which is "Apple." The

Poststructuralism refers to a way of thinking that emphasizes the radical uncertainty of knowledge (particularly knowledge in language) and posits that "truth" is not a fixed concept, but instead constantly changes based on your cultural, political, social, and economic [position](#) in the world.

word apple, then, refers to two very different things—the fruit and the child—and depending upon the situation, it might be impossible to tell which one you meant when you said “apple” without further context.

This radical indeterminacy—the impossibility mentioned above—is also the premise of the Abbott and Costello sketch, “Who’s on First.” This classic bit of comedy is a good way to try to wrap your brain around the definition of poststructuralism, which is one of the trickier ways of thinking within the humanities and social sciences. First, [watch the sketch here](#).

Now that you’ve gotten a dose of 1950’s comedy, you can see that the engine of this sketch is the fact that the word *who* has a dual function. For Costello, it has its normal function as an interrogative: *Who is on first base?* But for Abbott, it has a much different function, as “Who” is the name of the guy on first base. So he keeps saying: *Who is on first!* The meanings of *who*, here, are actually mutually exclusive. This is even wackier than the “apple” example above, and thus makes it better for comedy. Because Costello is asking a question, he cannot hear Abbott’s answer as anything other than a restatement of the question. Their communication breaks down, which is what makes it funny. The way that language works in this sketch draws our attention to how *arbitrary* it is: “Who” doesn’t naturally refer to the question-word, just as “apple” doesn’t naturally refer to the fruit. And this radical questioning of anything that seems ‘natural’ (that is, fixed, obviously true, etc.) is what poststructuralism is all about.

Poststructuralism, as you might have already gleaned from its name, is a reaction of sorts to a movement called *structuralism*. The linguist Ferdinand de Saussure and the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss are often credited with being the ‘fathers’ of structuralism. Structuralism’s basic argument is that if you look

at enough examples of something (e.g., a myth, a marriage ritual, a grammatical unit), you can discern general laws and principles that apply to all instances of that thing. By extension (says structuralism), human behavior and language all follow some basic, *structural* laws, regardless of where in the world you are or what language you speak. Poststructuralism argues, in contrast, that even the ‘general laws and principles’ that you think you’re extracting are themselves just other examples, not anything closer to the *truth* or to the *natural*. The nature of what we think we know, in other words—that “who” has a fixed meaning, for instance—could always be upended by some guy coming along whose name is “Who.”

A lot of people think that, if meaning is always indeterminate, and that there’s no such thing as a general principle or law, that poststructuralism must be saying that nothing means anything. Or even that ‘reality’ doesn’t exist! This is a bit of a misunderstanding. Poststructuralist thought doesn’t deny the existence of apples, nor does it say that the word “who” has no meaning. Quite the opposite: it says that the word “who” could have endlessly proliferating meanings, potentially, all coexisting in a sort of [epistemological](#) soup. Moreover, if all of this is true for language, it is also true for basically everything people think. Anything that you think is true—be it the naturalness of the nuclear family unit or the soundness of physics or the functioning of the stock market—has gone through *a long process of becoming ‘true’*, one that almost certainly has gaps or fissures in it that can allow other truths into the picture, if you look hard enough. Indeed, sometimes looking hard starts off a process in which an assumed truth becomes *untrue*. We’re starting to see that happening right now, for example, with the assumption that gender and biological sex are naturally linked.

Don't ever let looks deceive you: this is what poststructuralism tells us. Otherwise, you might never find out who's on first.

Discussion Questions

- Identify three things that you are pretty sure are true, but which aren't just "facts" (e.g., water is wet, the earth goes around the sun, etc.). Then ask yourself, how did you come to have that belief? How might you be persuaded otherwise? Note that this exercise does not ask you to figure out *whether or not your beliefs are true*. It only asks you to think hard about the process by which you came to think of something as true.
- Now try a corollary question/problem. One of the most revolutionary things about poststructuralist thinking is in the last paragraph of the text above. That is, the idea that what we think of as "true" or "natural" is actually anything but. Does this mean, however, that you can never say anything true? How might you leave room for "truth" if you are a poststructuralist? What might be the problem if you don't?
- What is the use of poststructuralism in disciplines like sociology or anthropology or law? What aspects of human society seem like they might benefit most from poststructuralist analysis?
- How might you apply this sort of thinking to the physical or biological sciences?

Additional Resources

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Prefiguration

JOSHUA MULLENITE

Prefiguration—sometimes referred to as “prefigurative politics”—denotes experimental practices that attempt to create the social, political, and/or economic conditions of the future through the direct action of individuals and collectives in the present.

Joshua Mullenite is Assistant Professor and Director of the Environmental Studies Program at Wagner College in Staten Island, NY. Their teaching and research focus on human-environment geographies and the racial politics of infrastructure in the Caribbean and the U.S. South.

Prefiguring Freedom in Caribbean Sugar Plantations

In November of 1839, five years after the end of slavery in the British colonies, a group of 83 laborers—including five women—from the East Coast

Demerara sugar plantations of Douchfour, Ann’s Grove, Hope, Paradise, and Enmore combined their meager resources and purchased 500 acres of land about 17 miles outside of Georgetown, Guyana (then British Guiana). With this act, they estab-

lished the first collectively owned free village in the country. The preceding years had seen several small pieces of land at the edges of sugar plantations sold to Black laborers to keep them as a reliable labor source for the sugar economy, but this moment marked something new. Rather than each of the 83 laborers holding a private title to a specific plot of land, the entirety of the former cotton plantation Northbrook was now owned by a collectivity of individuals. The new owners could do whatever they pleased with the land. The newly established village, called Victoria, was the beginning of a new moment in the history of the Caribbean, where non-white people owned land in the eyes of the colonial system of law. It would be decades before this happened elsewhere.

Prior to the establishment of these new villages, white plantation owners sought ways to undermine Black freedom and ensure that Black workers would remain reliant on them. On the small pieces of land in which the formerly enslaved lived, they were able to grow a small number of provisions (typically plantains, yams, and collards), raise livestock, and fish in the canals. As plantation owners' and overseers' fears over labor issues grew, these privileges were rapidly taken away, with the owners and their officers killing livestock, pulling up foodstuffs, and banning fishing, while simultaneously lowering wages (Ishmael 2005). In the year that followed, more villages would spring up along the coast, offering places of refuge for those who had been kicked out of their estate homes for defying new rules and for those who simply wanted to live in a different world, one outside the reconfigured structure of the slave plantation. By 1840, the free villages of Golden Grove (500 acres, 14 owners, West Coast Berbice), St. John (252 acres, 46 owners, West Coast Berbice), 250 acres of the plantation Perseverance (109 owners, West Coast Berbice), and Lichfield (500 acres, one owner who then subdivided the land,

West Coast Berbice) had all been settled. The result of this new period of mass Black land ownership was newfound political and economic independence.

The move by the plantation owners that forced Black Guyanese into their own villages backfired. In 1842, with thousands of workers now living in spaces completely independent of the sugar economy, the industry saw its first general strike since the abolition of slavery. With villages providing space to grow food for their own subsistence, workers no longer needed to accept the wage and provision deductions the sugar plantation owners saw as necessary for their continued profits. Villages created an opportunity for formerly enslaved people to prefigure a world in which they had political, economic, and social freedoms otherwise refused to non-white people in the colonial world.

This period was so significant that in 1853, John Brumel, a colonial magistrate and landowner, wrote a reflection on the transition away from an economy built on slavery. In this letter to then governor of British Guiana, Henry Barkly, Brumel laid out a position characteristic of the time, describing the newfound freedom afforded to villagers as “as the bane and ruin of the [sugar] estates; for the simple reason that the labourer who worked with a certain degree of regularity and industry, as indispensable conditions of occupying his employer’s cottage, no sooner becomes an independent householder, than he ceases to work, except when agreeable to himself” (Brumel 1853, p. 52). The colonial historian, James Rodway (1912), similarly and repeatedly cites the claims of plantation owners, that abolition would and did ruin the country’s sugar industry. Rodway argued specifically that the new financial options available to the formerly enslaved population meant that plantation owners could not afford the costs of free labor.

The reality of the situation was more complicated than Brumel and Rodway were willing to admit, with villagers maintaining lands for their own uses and colonizers actively creating and using flooding, taxation, and infrastructural neglect to force workers back into the sugar estates (see Mullenite, 2019). However, villagers' ability to grow their own food, and maintain their own access to housing and water, did create new opportunities to live in colonial society on more of their own terms. Their attempts to prefigure autonomy, in which they could grow their own food, work when they pleased, and live in a collective society with common ownership of the land failed. But the spirit of their movement continues today, in attempts to change Guyanese politics, with specific reference made to the worlds of autonomy and solidarity that these villages attempted to create (Chabrol, 2019; Williams, 2018).

Discussion Questions

- In the example above, villagers attempted to prefigure a society in which they had autonomy over their labor. Can you think of any recent examples of prefigurative politics in action?
- Prefiguration often fails in achieving its ultimate goals—formerly enslaved people did not gain freedom to the extent they sought, in part because of new laws and tax structures enacted in response to villages. Do you think prefiguration or prefigurative politics are useful despite these types of failures? Why or why not?
- Prefiguration tries to change future conditions by taking

direct action in the present. Do you think this requires a specific, shared vision of a future to work toward? Or is prefiguration a critique of the present that only requires a vague idea that another way of life is possible? Can it be both? Does it have to be either?

- How would you describe prefiguration to someone who knew nothing about it?

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Queer

DAVID SZANTO

***David Szanto** is a teacher, consultant, and artist taking an experimental approach to gastronomy and food systems. Past projects include meal performances about urban foodscapes, immersive sensory installations, and interventions involving food, microbes, humans, and digital technology. David has taught at several universities in Canada and Europe and has written extensively on food, art, and performance.*

Queer is a term that expresses the foundational difference between normative frameworks of understanding and those that enable alternative ways of thinking and being.

Twisting ‘Truth’

Take a letter-sized piece of paper and cut it into three roughly equal pieces, each about 2.8" x 11" (7.2cm x 18cm). Tape the short end of one piece to that of another piece, then tape on the third piece in the same way. Take the end of the third piece, give it a half twist, and then tape it to the start of the first piece. You now have what is called a *Moebius strip*, a loop in which that half-twist allows the ‘inside’ of the paper to be continuous with the ‘outside’. If you run a pencil along one side of the paper, you will eventually draw a continuous line that appears on ‘both sides’

of the strip. While this seems like an obvious effect of a twisted piece of paper, the Moebius strip is a useful way of understanding ‘truths’ in variable ways. The first of these truths is that the inside of something can be the same as its outside.

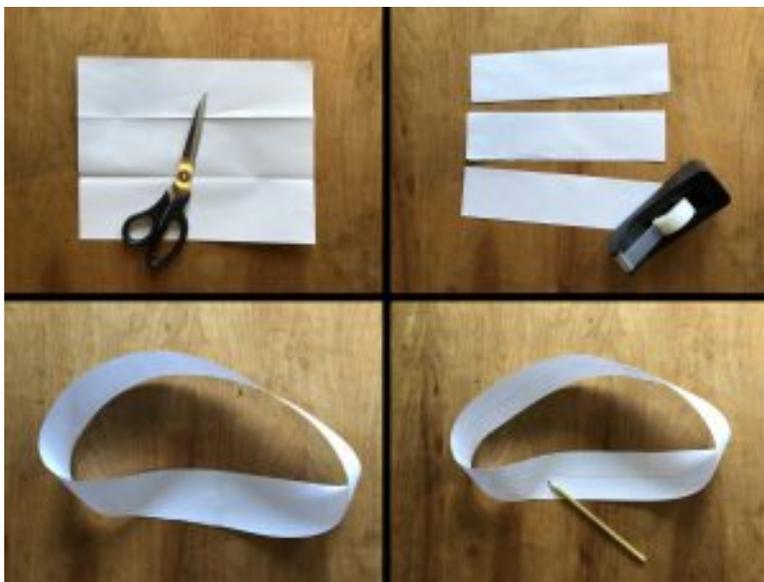


Figure 1: Making the Moebius strip.

Now take a pair of scissors, pierce the strip along the pencil line, and then keep cutting until you have divided the strip in two. But wait, it’s not “in two,” is it? Now you have a large loop of paper with two twists in it. You cut a whole thing into two pieces, but somehow it’s still just one piece. Where did the cut go?

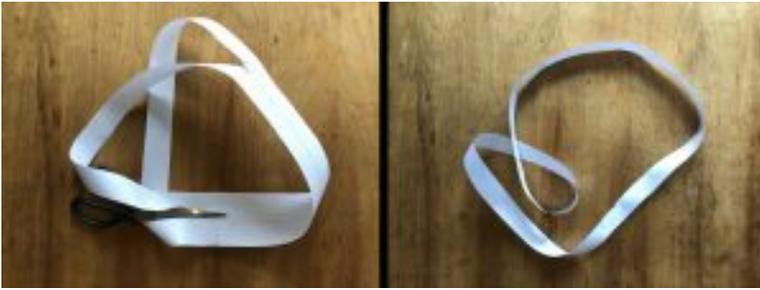


Figure 2: Cutting the Moebius strip.

You're not done yet! Pierce the strip again with the scissors, and cut down the length of it as you did the first time. (You don't need to draw the pencil line, but you can if you want, to sense the new loop's double twist.) Once you've cut the large loop down its center, what do you have? (You might want to ask a friend at this point to help you hold it up.) The new result is two loops that intersect each other, like two links in a chain. (The two loops also have their own twists, which can make it a little difficult to see that they are in fact separate.)



Figure 3: The Moebius strip after two cuts.

What's going on here?

The [mathematics of a Moebius strip are relatively straightforward](#), yet its properties are provocative, both in math and in more humanistic thinking. Conceptually, the strip exists in multiple states at once, and its behaviours (for example, when we draw on it or cut it up) don't *seem* to follow our expectations for 'normal' pieces of paper. Its inside is its outside, meaning it seems to have two sides, but it actually only has one. Divided, it remains whole, but when we cut it again, it links itself together. Is it a loop? Is it a single surface? Is it two loops disguised as one, or one loop disguised as two?

Again, mathematicians (or Wikipedia) can answer these questions pretty clearly, but when you leave some space in your mind to ponder them more philosophically, they help understand the concept of *queer*. This includes the ways that **queer theory** can

help us think about the world without necessarily relying on knowledge frameworks founded on ordering and categorization, or on ‘truths’ that are assumed to be universal.

What if we had a radically different way of understanding the world around us, including the ‘laws’ of science and the ‘reality’ of humanity? What if we could step out of our **normative** frameworks of seeing and interpreting things, and somehow perceive gravity, identity, math, beauty, language, or society in ways that were not dependent on the definitions of other people and the knowledge of experts? What if we could *twist* the world, just a bit, in order to think and feel and act in ways that we never have before?

These are some of the questions that queer theorists address. They are important questions in terms of moving ourselves forward as a species, while building greater justice and diversity into the ways in which we treat each other, understand reality, and find innovative solutions to complex problems. In some ways, thinking and doing things through queer-ness is about being provocative in order to provoke change.

The **etymological genealogy** of “queer” is also provocative. There seem to be a number of possible origins of the word, including Scottish and German roots from as early as the year 1500, [though some of these are contested](#). Terms such as *oblique*, *twisted*, *off-center*, and *odd* point to a history in which ‘non-square’ and ‘unusual’ were close to synonymous. This suggests normalcy and linearity were closely associated long before the advent of the technologies that have enabled humans to design precise edges and crisp shapes. As we have refined our abilities to engineer and measure and **define** things, normativity and straight-ness have also converged in meaning.

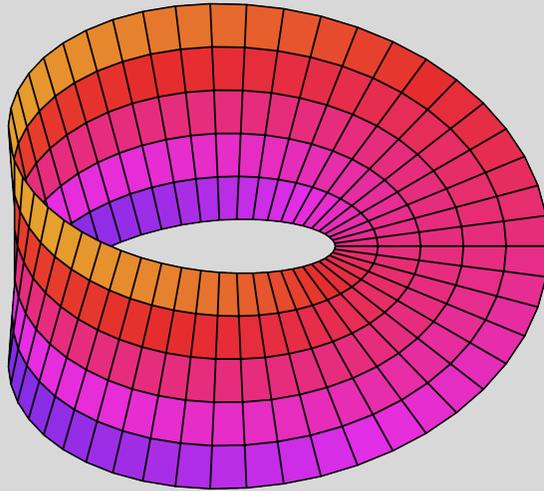
Today, one of our common uses of “queer” is to describe people who identify in ways that differ from normative heterosexuality. It thus becomes an umbrella term that says both ‘not straight’ and ‘open to alternative interpretations’. While some LGBTQIA2+ people do not identify as “queer,” many find it to be a useful way to encompass a range of diverse perspectives on humanness, including sex, sexuality, gender, body shape, ability, and world view.

Yet queer is also useful as a way to twist our basic assumptions, from a theoretical perspective, about what we understand to be true. A queer perspective on *family*, for example, interprets close human collectives in ways that move beyond a parental binary with offspring who are raised (fed, clothed, loved, educated, socialized) by those parents. This might include young people who care for their elders, multiple caregivers for a single individual, groups that are not genetically related, or more fluid combinations of people who come and go from a household (or who never are part of a household to begin with).

How can *queer* help us think differently about other social, environmental, artistic, economic, scientific, governance, philosophical, and gastronomic ‘realities’? If the ordinary, normal, and standard ways that we perceive the world were to be twisted and re-understood according to a loopy, two-sided, and entangled ‘logic’, what might we end up seeing? How might we end up doing, feeling, and *being* differently, both individually and collectively?

Discussion Questions

- In what ways are you queer? In what ways are you normative?
- In their book, *The Queer Art of Failure*, Judith (Jack) Halberstam reinterprets failure as a positive, alternate outcome of a situation, one that is not the opposite of success, nor a necessary step in reaching success. Instead, forgetting, being 'stupid' or accident prone, and not winning are all understood as good, useful, and creatively productive.
 - In your own life, imagine a time when you 'failed'. Is there a way to understand that failure as satisfying, joyful, or valuable? Can you do so *without* saying to yourself, "Well, at least that failure brought me closer to success...?"
 - Is this an easy challenge or a hard one? Why? What allows or prevents you from imagining failure as good? In your own experience, what shapes the way you understand failure and success?
 - [Watch the video "Failing"](#) and discuss what is depicted. Is this a queer representation of failure? of success? of something else?
- The image below of a Moebius strip helps make the topography of the surface(s) more apparent, as do the gradations in colour of the small trapezoidal segments that compose it. How does this 'clarity' help and/or hinder your understanding of the analogy made about queerness?



Möbius Strip, (cc) Krishnavedala, CC BY-SA 3.0, via [Wikimedia Commons](#)

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Racial Fragility

AJAY PARASRAM

Racial fragility refers to the feelings of defensiveness, frustration, anger, and grief experienced by people when confronted with the fact that they enjoy unfair/unearned privileges for nothing more than the way they were born.

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Racial Fragility: A problem of white

supremacy

Scientifically speaking, **race** isn't real. Science, for better or for worse, creates a taxonomy of life that sorts our species as such:

Kingdom: Animalia

Phylum: Chordata

Class: Mammalia

Order: Primates
Family: Hominidae
Genus: Homo
Species: Homo sapiens

All human beings alive today are biologically *Homo sapiens*, and as we move up the categories, our biological relationship with other life on Earth gets broader and broader. For example, at one level we are related to all primates; at the largest scale, we are related to all other animals. At the end of the day, we're all stardust anyway. Scientific taxonomy is just one way to understand all living things, but it has been presented over hundreds of years as the only 'real' way to understand the world. In this way, it can be more likened to looking at the world through a telescope. Whatever is within the parameters of the scope you can see quite clearly, but everything else is obscured.

Socially, politically, and historically, however, race has a lot of meaning. We know, for example, that people from the European continent engineered a massive industrial-level project to kidnap and enslave African people, forcing them to work on lands stolen from other Indigenous people across the Western Hemisphere between the late 15th and 19th centuries. During the period of formal colonialism, and especially in the late imperial stage from the 18th to 20th centuries, Europeans developed an understanding of a world loosely based on a flawed conception of 'science', in order to explain what they believed was a natural hierarchy of races and civilization in the world. For example, British plantation owners in 19th-century Sri Lanka believed their proximity to 'less-civilized' races in the tropics would lead to the moral degeneration of their supposedly superior Christian values (Duncan 2007). There was of course nothing at all natural about the application of science to race, but after hundreds of years of colonial violence (and resistance), by the late 19th cen-

tury, people from Europe had developed economically, militarily, and politically at the expense of colonized people from Africa, South and Southeast Asia, the Pacific Region, and the entire Western Hemisphere (Rodney 1972; Frank 1966; Escobar 1995; Rojas 2016).

Other-than-**white** people have been explaining that white supremacy was a problem since the beginning of colonialism, but the white domination of society rendered their voices less important (Cugoano 1787; Douglass 1881; Dubois 1903). White political leaders, who claimed to not understand the horrors of white supremacist institutions like Residential ‘schools’ or Apartheid, failed to listen to the multiple generations of racialized people who explained them over and over again. White ignorance of the problems, stemming from white supremacy, emerged because over many generations of unfettered white supremacy, it was considered ‘normal’ by white-dominated society to believe that white and European people and culture were more developed or sophisticated than the rest of the world; the material process of colonial expropriation and under-development was not part of the dominant narrative (Rodney 1972). This takes the form of explicit laws that excluded and punished non-white people while privileging white people (such as immigration law in 20th century settler-colonial societies), but also in more everyday ways such as making statutory holidays that are important to white, European-descended people and organizing the year around them (i.e., Christmas and Easter but not Ramadan, Diwali, or solstices).

By the mid-20th century, the belief amongst white-dominant society was that, since laws were written that proclaimed the ‘equality’ of everyone, the work of achieving racial equality was largely done. In the United States, this took the form of desegregating schools so Black and white children could in principle

study together. In Canada, this took the form of ending the practice of Residential ‘schools’ in 1996. In both cases, acting as if racial oppression ends because laws say that it has, utterly failed to create the conditions for equality. For example, in the United States, desegregation led to deepening racial divides, as white people with more resources set up schools (funded by their local areas) that continued to exclude African-Americans, unofficially anyway. In Canada, closing Residential ‘schools’ has done little to address the intergenerational and ongoing trauma of the racial violence. In short, even though legislation in theory presents a platform for equality, it systematically fails to deliver racial justice in practice. This can be seen by the disproportionately Black and Indigenous prison populations in settler-colonial countries like Canada and the United States (Maynard 2017).

While law was unabashedly on the side of structural white supremacy until the mid-20th century, it eventually became unfashionable to practice white supremacy because of the revelation of Nazi Germany’s genocide against Jewish people (Thobani 2007). To be clear, white people committed gross acts of violence and killing of populations throughout the colonial era, but seeing the violence that was previously contained to the colonies happen in Europe itself provided a wake-up call for the still dominantly white-led countries of the 1950s. The solution to this problem was to ignore race—to write laws that said race was no longer an issue, and that everyone was equal. The consequence of shunning discussions of race is that we now have close to three generations of white people with little comfort and familiarity with how to talk about race. Because [whiteness](#) is at the top of the racial hierarchy, the privileges of being white reside in never having to think about race. The idea that society operates as a ‘meritocracy’, where everyone is free to compete

equally for jobs and position in life (and from an equal starting point) fuels the racial fragility of white people in particular.

White privilege manifests in walking through an airport without being treated like a terrorist, shopping without being treated like a thief, and not being grotesquely over-represented in carceral institutions like foster care and prisons. When most white people who haven't had a chance to learn about race are confronted with non-white people who have always known themselves in racial terms, conflict is inevitable (Fanon 1986 [1952]). White people tend to get angry and deny that racism continues to be a structural component of life in the 21st century (DiAngelo 2011; 2018). They are racially fragile because, when confronted with the slightest bit of racial stress that challenges their worldview, they feel personally indicted. They make the bad feelings they experience into a problem for other-than-white people to deal with (*"How dare you call me racist!"*). As they move to present themselves as innocent, they may also shift the conversation away from the race-based violence they are enacting (DiAngelo 2011). Fragility does not need to take the form of lashing out—indeed, in most situations it takes the form of white people shying away from talking about race for fear of 'saying something wrong' or of being accused of being a racist. This manifestation of fragility is particularly harmful to building a just society, because it takes practice to develop racial resilience and racial competency (Parasram 2019).

Structural white supremacy takes the form of laws and court systems that believe a concept like 'property' is universally applicable, while failing to understand the premises of laws that exist (and have existed for millenia) in cultures that are not from Western Europe. For example, what European colonizers have understood as "waste land" or "empty nature," Anishnaabe have known to be deep webs of connection and relations that, as

Leanne Simpson (2020) explains, constantly bring into existence an Anishnaabe world. The idea of people relating with and having obligations to land is common across many Indigenous nations in what is called Canada in English, and it is fundamentally different from the idea of land ownership that has its roots in European law (Bernard, 2017; Corntassel 2021; Coulthard 2014; Coulthard & Simpson, 2016; Parasram 2018). Structural white supremacy is also reinforced when we decide that the only way to make political decisions is to elect politicians to a parliament modeled after medieval England. Although the law says that anyone can run for office, reality teaches us that only the most privileged and wealthy—predominantly white lawyers—are the ones who can muster the resources to win a campaign. It is further supported when we talk about “meritocracy,” as if generations of undeserved privilege afforded to white people have somehow had no impact on making boardrooms, universities, and other seats of power overwhelmingly white and male.

It is worth considering that if this *isn't* the function of undeserved privilege over generations, then the only logical explanation is that white men *are* somehow more intellectually gifted than everyone else, which should be easy for everyone (including white men) to see as ridiculous. It also exposes the insular and circular logic of structural white supremacy and racial fragility.

Discussion Questions

- What is your race, and how did you come to know about it? If you haven't, why not? If you don't fit into a category, what does this mean for the concept of race itself?
- Have you ever witnessed someone acting in a racially fragile way? How about a related form of fragility, like masculine fragility or caste fragility? What effect did it have on those who witnessed it?
- Thinking about your family and close community, would you describe it as racially diverse? Why or why not? What about your educational institution, or workplace?

Exercise

Separate your classroom by race. How weird is that? What can you learn and observe about structural forms of privilege as a result of simply organizing yourselves into race?

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Racial Passing

UCHENNA EMENAH AND NABEELA SIDDEEQUE

Uchenna Emenaha, PhD, is an educational researcher at the University of Texas at San Antonio whose research is centered in the use of culturally responsive teaching to bridge the gap between social issues and academic content. Her other research interests include social justice education and science education.

Racial Passing is when a person in one racial group is accepted as or perceived to be a member of another group.

Nabeela Siddeeqe is an undergraduate researcher at the University of Houston. Her research interests include equity and equality with a focus on marginalized groups.

Racial Passing and Blurred Color Lines: Exploring the social construct of race

William Henry Ellis, the son of Charles and Margaret, an enslaved couple, was only a toddler when Union soldiers arrived in Texas on June 19, 1865 (Jacoby, 2017). That day, Juneteenth, would eventually become an American holiday that commemorates the end of slavery in the United States. On this day, however, soldiers arrived on the southeast coast of Texas to announce that the enslaved people were now free, and that the

Civil War had ended. Charles and Margaret, now free, hoped that their family would no longer be treated as property because of their skin color.

Sadly, life was still very hard, because states in the U.S. South created harsh laws to maintain control over African Americans. This series of laws were known as Black Codes (Jacoby, 2017). Some Black Codes stated that African Americans in the South had to register to work every year. If they did not, they were fined and forced to work for minimum wage in very similar conditions to slavery.

Ellis Gets a Job

Ellis thought Black Codes were unfair and wanted a better life for himself and other formerly enslaved African Americans. He noticed that Black Codes did not apply to people of Mexican descent, and Mexican Americans were able to get better jobs that were not offered to African Americans. As a young boy in Victoria, Texas, he was able to learn Spanish from friends in his community.

In his late teens, Ellis decided to leave Victoria and move to San Antonio for better opportunities. Once he arrived in San Antonio, he changed his name to Enrique Eliseo so people in the town would think he was a Mexican native and not African American. By changing his name to racially pass as a Mexican, he got hired for jobs that African Americans in San Antonio were otherwise unable to get.

Passing was a difficult decision that many African Americans with lighter complexions practiced during the late 1800s and early 1900s. African Americans in the U.S. passed not because they wanted to, but rather as a survival strategy to avoid harsh

racist treatment. This was a difficult decision because many people who passed often curtailed contact with family and friends to maintain their new identity. Additionally, for African Americans who could not pass, they did not have an option to escape the prejudices and injustices they faced because of the color of their skin.

While in San Antonio, Ellis worked very hard and saved up enough money to start his own textile business. Although Ellis grew a successful business, he still wanted to help better the lives of African Americans who struggled to get well-paying jobs because of racism and unjust laws.

Ellis Runs for Office

Ellis created another plan—this time to go into politics. After significant financial success as a ‘Mexican’ businessman in San Antonio, he ran as an African American Republican for the Texas Senate in 1896. He had heard of a new plan to relocate African American Texans to the haciendas in Tlahualilo, Mexico, and was in support of it. He believed the plan would help promote racial justice. At the time, the Mexican government did not have harsh racial laws like the Black Codes in the United States. Ellis believed that moving to Mexico would give African Americans more equal opportunities.

Ellis gained popularity as the news of his political campaign spread in his bid for State Senator. Although Ellis made a name for himself as a politician, he did not win the office of State Senator. Notably, his rising popularity risked exposing his dual identity as an African American man running for Senate while also living as a Mexican businessman in San Antonio. If people found out that he had been lying about being Mexican, he could lose everything. Ellis decided to give up his dream of being a

politician, but he actively worked towards equality by supporting other African American politicians.

Ellis Travels Around the World

During the 1890s, the rail industry was rapidly growing, and a railroad was built that connected Texas to Mexico. Ellis viewed this as an opportunity to grow his business, so he traveled to Mexico. Ellis didn't want to disclose his identity as an African American, because he worried that it would be reported to authorities back in the United States—so he came up with another plan. This time Ellis told people his name was Guillermo Enrique, to pass as a Cuban-American businessman. His plan worked, and everyone believed him. Ellis used the money from his business to buy the largest furniture factory in Mexico City, eventually making him a millionaire.

In search of more opportunities in late 1899, Ellis decided to move to New York, where he continued to tell people he was Cuban and where his business continued to prosper. He married a white American woman and had children, to whom he gave Spanish names. Ellis died in 1923 while on a business trip in Mexico City.

Newspaper stories reporting his death revealed Ellis's true identity as the son of formerly enslaved African Americans. Some people were happy he was able to evade the color lines to become so successful. Some thought his actions made him a traitor, and others empathized and felt he was only doing what he needed to do to escape an oppressive life.

Ellis's story is not unique during this time—thousands of African Americans with light skin and wavy hair would pass as Mexican or White, to take advantage of better opportunities. Throughout

Ellis's life, he remained in contact with his family and even supported politicians in Texas working to make life better for African Americans. However, most people who were passing during this time lost family and friends to keep their new identities secret.

Discussion Questions

- If you were Ellis, would you make the same decision to racially pass? Why or why not?
- Do you think it was fair for Ellis to run for office as an African American Texan, but live in San Antonio as a Mexican businessman? Why or why not?
- Do you think the concept of racial justice is important? Why or why not?
- The term “color line” was originally discussed by a popular African American civil rights leader, W.E.B. Du Bois, in the early 1900s, to describe the mistreatment of African Americans because of the color of their skin. Du Bois predicted that the color line would divide the U.S. and lead to prejudice towards African Americans. If you could travel back in time and have a conversation with Du Bois, what would you tell him about the accuracy or inaccuracy of his prediction?

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“The Myth of Race, debunked in 3 minutes”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VnfKgffCZ7U&t=35s>

Racialization

HELEN BOND

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Racialization

refers to a process in which groups of people, including institutions, are categorized by race, resulting in systemic disadvantages for some, and power and privilege for others.

Fredi Washington: The Imitation of Race

Fredi Washington was born in 1903 as Fredericka Carolyn Washington to a postal worker and homemaker in Savannah, Georgia. As an actress and performance artist, her light skin and green eyes often made her not Black enough for some roles, and not White enough for others. Her story

epitomizes how we see and process race as a set of defined physical characteristics, such as skin color and facial features. The process of racialization involves grouping people into boxes or [racial categories](#) that have assigned meanings and expectations, often informed by history. The life of Fredi Washington demonstrates how multifaceted these categories are and how they shaped her life and legacy as an advocate for Blacks in the entertainment industry.

The fictional story of Peola Johnson, played by Fredi Washington, in the Universal film *Imitation of Life* (1934) also shows how arbitrary and fluid racial categories are in the process of racialization: Peola is portrayed as Black in some scenes and White in others. The process of racialization is dynamic, meaning the expectations and assumptions assigned to these racialized categories evolve over time and take on new meanings. As a contemporary illustration, the multiracial population in the United States accounted for most of the overall changes in the 2020 U.S. Census. Art often imitates life, making Washington's experience on and off screen a fitting example of the dynamism and complexity of racialization in the United States.

Washington played Peola in a story that echoed the actress's own experiences of racialization. In the film, mixed-race Peola abandons her grief-stricken mother, who is Black, to live her life as a White woman. Her mother dies of a broken heart with her weeping daughter by her side, begging for forgiveness for disowning her family to enjoy the benefits of Whiteness in a racially segregated society (Black, 2004). Director John M. Stahl adapted the

story of the tragic mulatto (mixed-race person) from Fannie Hurst's 1933 novel, *Imitation of Life*.

The film shows how processes of racialization can occur through multiple lenses, such as race, class, gender, and mixed race. In other words, the boxes or categories that people are placed in can have multiple sizes, shapes, and dimensions. Peola's story could not be more multidimensional, except for the original book's ending, which includes the portrayal of a near lynching. Universal discarded the book's conclusion for the more socially acceptable ending of the prodigal daughter returning to her roots. Peola—the White woman—accuses a Black man of flirting with her, and he is condemned to hang. As the gallows are readied, she cries out, "Don't, don't do it, I'm a ... too" (Lew, 2018, p. 109). Both endings—the lynching and reunification scenes—serve the same purpose of punishing Peola for daring to defy the racial order by [passing for White](#). The reunification scene at the funeral places the blame on Peola, whereas the lynching scene reveals the conditions that underlie the reasons for Peola's passing for White in the first place. Notably, and unlike Peola, Fredi did not deny her Black heritage, and emphasized that her role in the film did not reflect her off-screen life.

Racialization also involves maintaining a strict racial order. This order is enforced by certain codes and expectations for those placed in a racial category or box. Thinking (and being) outside the box is not allowed. In the production of "The Emperor Jones," in which Fredi co-starred with the Black actor, Paul Robeson, Fredi's skin was darkened so she would not appear to be a White woman and ruffle the sensibilities of White audiences. The racialization process has a strict code of behavior that requires

people that have Black ancestry to identify as Black. This self-identification is critical for White people to maintain their status, power, and associated privilege as the dominant group. Children born of Black and White unions challenge the Black/White notion of race. The ‘one drop rule’ that originated in slavery in the United States requires that anyone with Black ancestry to identify as Black (Saperstein, 2013). This rule is a tool of racialization to enforce who can identify as White.

Racialization is not just about race or maintaining strict racial boundaries and categories. Racialization is also about a set of expectations or meanings applied to those categories. For example, in the *Imitation of Life*, Aunt Jemima-like images of Peola’s mother affirmed for White viewers their stereotypes of Black women (Schudson, n.d.). The lynching scene was eliminated for a scene of reunion between mother and her repentant daughter, in the hope that it would deter race-mixing, which was then considered sexual misconduct. The film was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Picture and ranked among “The 25 Most Important Films on Race” by *Time* magazine in 2007, recognizing the legacy and artistry of Black Americans and the battles they waged on and off the screen (Corliss, 2008).

Racialization is the process of being assigned a race with all of its subtle and not so subtle meanings, expectations, and assumptions. The process changes over time and can take different pathways. It can take place through societal institutions such as laws, culture, and practices that are normalized in everyday life (Hochman, 2019). Fredi Washington was an actress deemed too light-skinned to play certain roles and too dark-skinned for others, and

appeared on screen as a tragic, mixed-race person, due to the strict racial codes of the day that would not allow her more complex roles. The character she portrayed, Peola Johnson, abandons her darker-skinned mother for the advantages of Whiteness for a season. These trajectories demonstrate the different paths that racialization can take.

At the same time, racially constructed categories and their socially constructed meanings are notoriously unstable (Omi & Winant 1986, p. 199). Some American immigrants, like the Irish and Italians, were initially considered non-white and faced discrimination in the United States. Meanwhile, Fredi Washington resisted the impositions of racialization, becoming one of the founders of the Negro Actors Guild in 1937. She used her voice as a theatrical columnist in the *People's Voice*—a Black newspaper that called on the film industry and Hollywood to take a stand against racism and discrimination. To the very end, Fredi resisted, urging actors and actresses everywhere to use their unique agency to combat injustice in the arts.

Discussion Questions

- This illustration of racialization uses the example of Fredi Washington and the film *Imitation of Life*. What are some other films or television shows that have made contributions (either negative or positive) to the discussion of race?
- Racialization is not just about race; it involves identity as

well. What role has racialization played in the development of your identity?

Exercise

Watch an extract of [Imitation of Life on YouTube](#). Then, as a group, discuss the merits of Time magazine's ranking of the film as one of "The 25 Most Important Films on Race" in 2007. Why do you think it was included? Does the film merit such inclusion?

As a group, discuss the ending of the film *Imitation of Life*. *On your own, or in groups, draft a revised ending to the script, so that it gives voice to Peola and her mother and their different experiences as Black women.*

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Reciprocity

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Reciprocity in bison dung pats

Plains Bison (*bison bison bison*) are a symbolic species of the North American West. Until the mid-1800s, more than 30 million bison roamed the grasslands of the places we now call Canada and the United States. Increased colonization of the West led to the large-scale slaughter of bison. Increasing numbers of white settler hunters and a growing market demand for hides and bones intensified the killing. Most herds were exterminated between 1850 and the late 1870s. By 1900, there were less than 1000 wild bison on the continent.

Bison made the prairies hospitable for many other communities, ranging from plains Indigenous nations to birds to beetles. As the largest land mammal on the continent, bison are not just massive in size, they are also a keystone species in the west,

Reciprocity is a way of maintaining balance in relationships and a principle for respecting relationships that are context-specific and ongoing.

meaning they have a dramatic influence on an ecosystem. If one of these species disappears, no other species can fill its ecological role, and the whole ecosystem changes as a result. The daily activities of a bison's life unfold in relation to the worlds of beetles, toads, and birds, as well as supporting those of wolves and humans. Reciprocal [relationships](#)—one that are complex and mutually beneficial—maintain balance in an ecosystem.

Drawn from the work of Indigenous scholars—such as Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg writer and theorist Leanne Betasamosake Simpson—and Indigenous research methodologies, the concept of reciprocity focuses on [how lives are related to one another](#). Reciprocity is how the lives of different beings (including plants, animals, and humans) make one another possible. Reciprocal relationships are unique to place and time. Reciprocity helps us understand the specific relationships that support bison life in the plains region, as well as the lives of other beings that bison make possible.

Bison eat a lot. As generalist browsers who primarily eat grasses and forbs (flowering plants), bison spend more than nine hours per day grazing. Every day, an adult male will eat 10kg to 14kg of vegetation to sustain a 900kg body, while 500kg adult females need 7kg to 10kg of greens. Moving up to 25km a day through open fields and wooded areas, along lakes and rivers, and sometimes into the mountains, bison move spores and pollen with them and help a wide variety of plants flourish (National Parks Service, 2016a). In this way, bison increase biodiversity. But a primary contribution to the lives of plants and other animals is the 11 to 13 litres of dung that bison excrete every day. Each excretion—often referred to as a dung pat—becomes a world of relations, supporting the lives of at least 300 species of insects and worms (National Parks Service, 2016b).

One relation whose livelihood is made possible by bison is *Onthophagus knausi*, a very small dung beetle, growing to just 5mm, which flourishes among bison (Barber et al., 2019, p. 425). The small black beetles are the first beings to arrive on a fresh dung pat, attracted to it by a keen sense of smell. An entire community of microbes are at work in bison stomachs, helping them convert plant cellulose to accessible carbohydrate energy (Lott, 2002, p. 48). Some of these microbes and bacteria, along with enzymes and minerals, are excreted along with indigestible plant matter, including seeds. All of this material makes dung pats a rich source of nutrients for insects, worms, birds, amphibians, and other small animals, as well as for the soil itself. However, these nutrients, enzymes, and seeds only become available to other beings through the work of *knausi* and other dung beetles. Unlike cattle dung, bison dung remains soft and is an anaerobic (oxygen-free) environment. *Knausi* tunnels into the dung and creates pathways, opening the pat to light and oxygen, and creating a hospitable environment for other insects. Dung beetles also bring the nitrogen-rich dung into contact with soil-dwelling microbes, which in turn transform the nitrogen into ammonia that can be absorbed by plants (National Parks Service, 2016b). By breaking down the dung, the beetles' work prevents it from becoming a host for parasites. In making nutrients accessible to other insects and the prairie soil, the beetles also keep bison and other animals safe from contracting parasites and disease.

Other insects, including other beetles and flies, as well as an abundance of earthworms, come to dwell in the dung pat in the few days before it is fully broken down or dried out. The flourishing of invertebrate life attracts insectivores, including frogs, turtles, bats, and birds—each of whom further disperse the nutrients and seeds in the dung, while supporting other ani-

mal communities. The flourishing of microbial and invertebrate life in bison dung pats was often a lifeline for migrating birds or for black-tailed prairie dogs, who find their first meals in bison dung before other food becomes available on snowy spring landscapes (Olson, 2016). After being a source of sustenance for so many, dried dung pats were collected and used to fuel fires by members of the Flathead, Blackfoot, and other plains Indigenous nations.

All of this life, reproduction, feeding, and sharing occurs on a single dung pat. As bison herds moved throughout the prairies in great numbers, such convergences of interconnected, complex, and mutually beneficial relations of reciprocity are repeated daily, across massive swaths of land. Some of these relations persist in the absence of herds, but bison grazing habits, migration patterns, and dung characteristics are unique and not readily replaced. While some dung beetles have adapted to cattle or deer dung, the little *Onthophagus knausi* disappears in the absence of bison.

Bison, beetles, and the other species inhabiting or using the dung pat live in relationships of reciprocity. That is, they are non-dominating and ongoing. Neither the bison or the beetle are in charge or in a position of power. Their lives are compromised without one another. Reciprocity is a way of understanding relationships by recognizing and respecting mutual dependence, as well as taking responsibility for maintaining balance in those relationships.

The lens of reciprocity at work in this account of bison and their relations is drawn from Indigenous research methodologies. Indigenous theorists identify reciprocity as a core principle and value, alongside respect, responsibility, relevance, and relationships. There are other ways of examining relationships, such as

a market-based analysis that focuses on exchange, which turn individuals (humans and non-humans) into [objects of consumption](#). The lens of reciprocity helps us see how relationships mutually sustain life. Reciprocity also considers humans as part of these relationships, whereas some ecosystem approaches see humans as separate from the functioning of their environments.

The videos included in the [Buffalo Digital Stories](#) show how bison have deeply affected the lives of Plains Indigenous Nations—both in the past and in the present. Reciprocal relationships of respect and responsibility continue today, as bison continue to provide sources of physical and cultural sustenance to Blackfoot, Cree, Flathead, Métis, and other Plains Nations. Similarly, these Nations are leaders in conserving bison and helping all relations flourish in the region.

Reciprocity extends beyond just human life and exists beyond the human motives of resource extraction and commercial exchange. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson argues that the “alternative to [extractivism](#) is deep reciprocity” (2017, p. 75). As Rochelle Johnston, Deborah McGregor, and Jean-Paul Restoule explain, reciprocity includes “literally all relations” (2018, p. 13). Reciprocity identifies relationships of mutual dependence that are place-based, emphasize respect and responsibility to all relations (human and non-human), and promote life in all its forms.

Discussion Questions

- How are bison and beetles living in a reciprocal relationship?
- How does the disruption of one life or relationship (such as the presence of bison) have an impact on other forms of reciprocity?
- Which relationships are necessary for maintaining balance in your life? Which human and non-human relations shape how you live? Which human and non-human relations does your life have an impact on? How can you practice respect and take responsibility in these relationships?

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Reflexivity

STEFANI BOUTELIER

Reflexivity refers to the cyclical process of self-reflection to progress towards a conclusion during any inquiry.

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Verse-ing Reflexivity

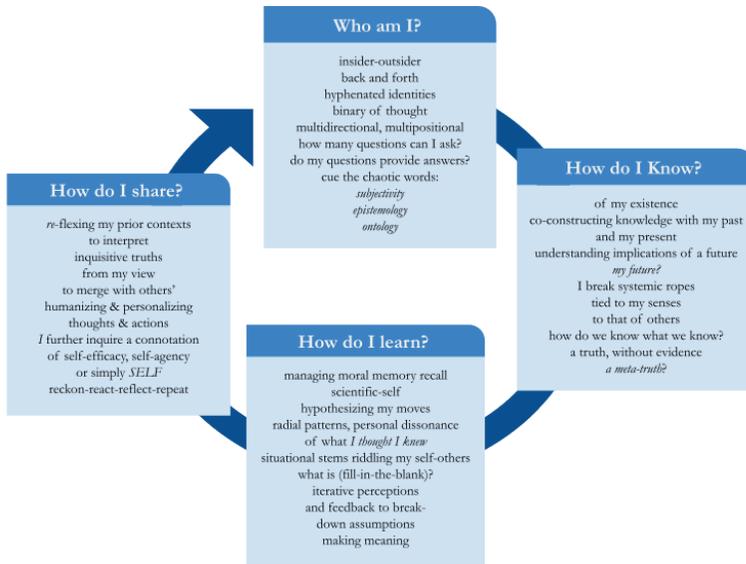


Figure 1: Versing Reflexivity

Who am I?

insider-outsider
back and forth
hyphenated identities
binary of thought
multidirectional, multipositional
how many questions can I ask?
do my questions provide answers?
cue the chaotic words:

subjectivity

epistemology

ontology

How do I know?

of my existence
co-constructing knowledge with my past
and my present
understanding implications of a future
my future?
I break systemic ropes
tied to my senses
to that of others
how do we know what we know?
a truth, without evidence
a meta-truth?

How do I learn?

managing moral memory recall
scientific-self
hypothesizing my moves
radial patterns, personal dissonance
of what *I thought I knew*
situational stems riddling my self-others
what is (fill-in-the-blank)?
iterative perceptions
and feedback to break-
down assumptions
making meaning

How do I share?

re-flexing my prior contexts
to interpret
inquisitive truths
from my view

to merge with others'
humanizing & personalizing
thoughts & actions
I further inquire a connotation
of self-efficacy, self-agency
or simply *SELF*
reckon-react-reflect-repeat

Discussion Questions

- What are your initial responses to the four main questions: *Who am I? How do I know? How do I learn? How do I share?* These answers are often personal and purposeful, and always changing.
- Think about the visual poem above. It demonstrates an image of an iterative, critical thinking process and the potential for contemplative questions to guide one through reflecting upon specificities of learning and research. In the *How do I learn?* stanza, consider what you might put in the “(fill-in-the-blank).”
- How do we critically reflect upon ourselves as learners and researchers (e.g., examining our biases, our subjectivities, our context, our histories), while continuing this iterative process for personal and professional growth?
- Why might understanding our role as insiders (e.g., specialists, experts, principle researchers) in the learning and research process bring out more authentic and valid outcomes?

Exercises

Emotional Response: Consider the different kinds of information (e.g., data points, interview recordings, field notes, literature, images) that are collected during research.

- Pick one, then reflect on it with all your senses. Are there sounds or textures associated with this kind of data? Does it bring about visuals in your mind? Other sensations?
- List words that represent your emotions as you respond to reading, interpreting, or viewing one set of data.
- Finally, informally analyze your emotional-response word list, in order to discover what this reflection might bring up and/or validate.

Poetic Response: Poetry invites us to use word choice to bring imagery and emotion to our audience. Like any writing, it is full of iteration and personalization.

- Try using poetry to help reflect on your learning and research processes. Use elements from the text above to interweave poetry into your work.

Go to bit.ly/Reflexivity to download a template of the diagram above. Then, try one of the following:

- write a poem of questions or any “list” poem
- write a “found” poem by selecting keywords from another text to summarize its meaning
- write a “golden shovel” poem by picking one key quote to use in a new poem.

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Relationality

VANESSA WIJNGAARDEN

Relationality refers to connectedness, a view of the world that underlines how no person or thing exists in isolation, because existence necessarily means being 'in relationship'.

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Paulo's concept of osotua:

A relational (life)world

For over eleven years, my life has been entangled with that of Paulo Ngulupa, a Kisongo Maasai from the North Tanzanian savannah. He has not only been my research assistant, but also my family and point of contrast, as we share food, homes, work, prayers, hardships, jokes, money, ideas, and dreams. Below I address the concept of relationality from his perspective. Of course, I cannot help seeing his worldview through my own eyes. However, I am drawing from an extensive body of written, audio-recorded and video-recorded ethnographic data of our

conversations and interviews. I added references to the academic perspectives that intersect with his views.

A single star and the earth connect us all. The soil links everyone on it, and the sun shines on all of us. The intertwining of earth and light causes the plants to grow, who feed us and the other animals, that is, if there is rain. We live in the rain shadow of Mount Meru, a volcano whose eruption created the fertile soil, but is also diverting the clouds. We have been pushed into this dry corner due to the rise of national parks and agricultural lands, by whites and the neighboring Meru people. Lately, climate change has brought extended droughts. The radio informs us that the weather changes are due to developments in Europe and Asia. Consequently, my generation has replaced cows with goats and sheep, but even those often don't survive the dry spells. Our women have resorted to cutting the trees to produce charcoal to sell, but the European NGOs advise that makes the environmental situation worse, and indeed the rain seems to come less and less.

So, we have started planting maize, which was first domesticated in the Americas, where Indigenous peoples pray to 'all my relations' (Manning 2017), expressing how they are connected not only to the human, but also to the animal, plant, and mineral nations. I see the truth of this, but as Maasai, we pray to *Enkai*—meaning God as well as rain—who we used to worship at Oldonyo Lengai, an active volcano you can see from here when skies are clear. Our language *Maa* was first written down (using an alphabet that has Semitic and Arab roots) by European missionaries who translated God as *Enkai*, and now we worship *Enkai* in the Lutheran church in our village. Our pastor is Meru, because it is only after my generation that our children have started going to school to read and write. When there are wars with the Meru over land and water resources, and houses are set

on fire on both sides, most of our warriors go out to fight, but I go to church to meet other Maasai and Meru to pray. I need to defend my wives and children, but I do not want to harm anyone, and I know that God can do miracles as well as speak into the hearts of people, so we can all have a good life.

We tried to further cooperate with the Meru people by organizing camel safaris together. A long time ago a white man brought some camels here from Somalia. He wanted to set up a tourism business but fled due to taxation issues with the Tanzanian government. We used the camels just to carry water until an Italian NGO set up routes using a GPS and built a tourist camp. Now there are no tourists anymore because of COVID. We used to take the visitors to Oldonyo Lengai and to our mud hut and thorny bush villages, hoping they would buy some beadwork (Wijngaarden, 2016). The glass beads we use are not fabricated in Africa, but imported from Europe, most often from the Czech Republic (Carey, 1998; Kratz & Pido, 2000), and more recently from China, just like the motorcycle tires we use as sandals. We only started using beads for jewelry when the colonial government prohibited our warriors from wearing our weapons in public, and we could not signify messages with colors on our shields anymore. Sometimes the absence of certain beads and colors was influenced by wars far away, for example when the Suez Canal closed during the third Arab-Israeli war, influencing that generation's Maasai fashion (Vierke, 2008). We create new beadwork fashions every generation, our jewelry designs referring to political parties, police sirens and helicopters, but the tourists like our beadwork because it represents traditional culture (Wijngaarden, 2018). If they give money for it, I can go to the little shop in the village. The woman owning it charges her mobile phone with a small solar panel so she can send my money into the account on the phone of my family members, several

days walk away. If the cellular network is working, the money arrives within seconds.

We share like this, as we live by the principle of *osotua*. *Oсотua* means ‘umbilical cord’, but also ‘relative’ (by blood or by marriage), ‘friend’ (especially if gift exchange is involved), and ‘peace’. It is the expression we use for an intimate, loving relationship, as between family; between a person and God; and between Maasai and our livestock (Wijngaarden, 2020). As I shake the trees during the dry season, so they drop their seeds for the goats to eat, who in turn can be milked to feed my young son, *osotua* connects us all. It is not only the relation between me and my child, but also with the goats who I know as personalities. I protect and take care of them, as they take care of me. Even the trees, the sun, and certainly God are involved. Although I live in a very remote area, largely without electricity or water, I can never be alone. Even what I consider to be my own body is made up of uncountable organisms, who co-constitute my aliveness. Everything in this world is dynamic and related, my action is always an *inter-action* that causes my being to be in a constant process of *co-becoming* (Haraway 2008). A commitment to *osotua* makes these relations symbiotic instead of parasitic. Accountability to relationships is of the highest importance, according to our Indigenous point of view, which holds that ‘relationships do not merely shape reality, they *are* reality’ (Wilson, 2008, p. 7).

Discussion Questions

- With what [non-human beings](#) (e.g., animals, plants, bacteria, or spirits) is your life entangled?
- How does Paulo's point of view change your perception of relationality?
- Do you think Indigenous perspectives can have value when thinking about social scientific concepts?

Additional Resources

[Goat Breakfast: Becoming-with God, volcanoes, livestock and trees](#) (Tanzania, 2021, 30 min). (use password: Relationality)

Synopsis: Due to climate change, the lands in the rain shadow of Tanzanian volcano Meru are increasingly affected by drought. Young Maasai Paulo must find creative ways to feed his firstborn son, who has just learned to walk. As his goats lack milk, even for their own babies, he sets out into the dust every morning in search of breakfast. This hopeful, tender film highlights the interspecies relationality and more-than-human entanglements involved, providing an entry into multisensual, multilingual, and multispecies ways of knowing. It illustrates the agencies and co-becomings of geological formations, Spirit, fauna, and flora in an audiovisual geopoetics of Maasailand.

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Resistance

SONIA DE LA CRUZ

Sonia De La Cruz is an Assistant Professor in Communication at the University of Washington, Tacoma. Her scholarship centers on the following areas and their intersections: media for social justice, international and development communication, and critical media practices. De La Cruz is also a documentary and activist media-maker who has produced social-cultural and ethnographic documentaries where she addresses various human rights issues and has produced digital video projects for non-profits and international NGOs.

Resistance, simply put, is the refusal to accept things as they are.

Resistance in storytelling

“Hear me and listen intently. That is all we have been asking for.”¹

“[I feel] abstracted, extracted, poorly disguised. Hidden behind another layer and presented as progress. Sewn into the fabric of society. Etched into the lens the world views Black people through.”²

These quotes express the frustration BIPOC (Black, Indigenous & People of Color) students feel as they share their stories of confronting or witnessing racial injustice in their everyday lives.

In the sharing of experiences that were part of our storytelling project, I was continually astonished to hear about the complex ways college students experience racism, and as a result, the ways this affects their physical and emotional well-being. Their sense of angst and grief had been further heightened by witnessing how COVID has disproportionately taken the lives of People of Color, and by the many forms of public protests we saw unfold in 2020. Namely, the Black Lives Matter³ (BLM) movement, which generated highly visible forms of collective action never seen before at local and global scales.

In feeling a need to be seen and heard, and driven by a desire to be a part of a larger fight toward racial justice, students engaged in a collective storytelling project to share their views and experiences on [race](#) and [racism](#). While producing their stories—which were conveyed through video, poetry, photography, music, and writing—students honored the collective grief and pain often experienced through racism, while others wished to articulate their commitment and hope for racial justice.

In clearly articulated and intricately nuanced ways, students shared their stories by centering their lived experience. They pointed to the multiple ways members of the Black community felt oppression and discrimination; they challenged narratives of racial privilege, and made clear their dissatisfaction toward racial injustice. In their words:

“We had all learned how to navigate White spaces at a young age. We had survived at elite colleges to find elite jobs. But if we are caught showing our

*Blackness, we risk losing our places. Still, we know that this is work more sacred than tenuous relationships built around ignoring the ignorance and silence of our white friends and colleagues: Black Lives Matter and so does Black Life.*⁴

*“What I felt and how I now reflect on the experiences of racism and hate because I am Black made me stronger... I hope that others who get to know my story don't question why Black lives matter, but question why racial injustice is still taking place.”*⁵

*“Now we must believe that we deserve the same attention in our fight for justice... we will get there, and our collective suffering will end.”*⁶

In the process of sharing their experiences, what emerged from this project were stories of resistance. Stories of resistance help present narratives that are frequently silenced or neglected, and that **refuse to accept inequality or injustice**. To resist is to enact one's own will or desire for change; resistance through storytelling, therefore, allows us to create new ways of seeing the world that have not been pre-established or normalized in society as irrefutable truths.

Stories of resistance became acts of **resilience** that provided students the opportunity to share diverse perspectives through which to understand Black experience. They created a space where they could make traditionally invisible stories visible, and in the process, students engaged in deep reflection about their **positionality** in relation to race and racism.

Resistance through this storytelling project was a change-oriented process that spoke to the multiple ways students questioned, pushed back, countered, or simply refused to accept things as they are. Resistance was treated as a practice for social change because students were able to center their knowledge,

experiences, and concerns in the process of producing and sharing their stories.

In the end, in the brave move to tell their own stories, students made clear their will to demand accountability where injustice is seen. They committed to engage in acts of racial justice for themselves and those around them, and wished that in the process of storytelling others may develop a sense of empathy about Black Lives.

Discussion Questions

- Where and when have you resisted oppression (whether related to race, class, gender, ability, legal status, etc.)? Explain what happened and how it made you feel.
- What do you believe is the value of resisting? Why may it be necessary?
- Why do you think it is necessary to tell stories as a form of resistance?

Exercise

Using the [video resource to the Black Lives Collective Storytelling Project](#), select a story to view, read or listen, and do the following:

While watching a video, reading, or listening to a story, note the various ways students express their resistance to a particular injustice. Write down the particular injustice(s) they are trying to make a sense of. How do they explain that particular injustice or wrongdoing?

Reflect on the story and write down how you might react to the particular situation if it was you who were in the student's shoes. What would you do differently, if anything?

Share your thoughts and feelings about the story with your group/class/peers and explain how the particular injustice may (or may not) relate to your own life and why.

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Notes

1. Excerpt from poem titled "A Reflection" by Asha Lorraine Richardson, student at the University of Washington-Tacoma.
2. Excerpt from a story titled "This Piece Doesn't End, I just Stop Writing Things Down" by LaKeisha Morris, student at the University of Washington-Tacoma.

3. Black Lives Matter is a social movement that was ignited by a hashtag #BlackLivesMatter in response to the 2013 acquittal of Trayvon Martin's murderer. As a global movement and organization, the broader goal of Black Lives Matter is to eradicate white supremacy and build local power to intervene in violence on Black communities ("Black Lives Matter," 2021).
4. Excerpt from poem titled "Theoretically, It Doesn't Matter" by Aiyanna Gutema, student at the University of Washington-Tacoma.
5. Excerpt from poem titled "Using My Voice" by Marian Abdirahman, student at the University of Washington-Tacoma.
6. Excerpt from poem titled "She Would've Been 27 today; I'm 18" by Lynese Cammack, student at the University of Washington-Tacoma.

Right to the City

JILL WIGLE AND LORENA ZÁRATE

Right to the City refers to a multi-dimensional process of using community-led action and social mobilization to reclaim and transform cities as democratic, just, and equitable.

[Jill Wigle](#) is an Associate Professor in the Department of Geography and Environmental Studies at Carleton University in Ottawa. Her research focuses on access to land and housing, the geographies of spatial regulation, and the governance of informality in Mexico City.

[Lorena Zárate](#) is a founding member of the [Global Platform for the Right to the City](#) and currently co-coordinator of its support team, actively involved in the negotiation of the UN New Urban Agenda (2016).

She is the former president of the [Habitat International Coalition](#) (2011–19) and was also the coordinator of the [HIC-Latin America](#) office (2003–11). During the past two decades, she has been involved in several international projects and multi-sectoral initiatives, including the elaboration and dissemination of the World Charter for the Right to the City (2005) and the Mexico City Charter for the Right to the City (2010).

Claiming the right to the city in Mexico City: From lived experience to mobilizing for change

The *right to the city* is a rallying slogan and movement for democratic, sustainable, and just cities around the world. It is also a multi-dimensional concept with the potential to unify different urban struggles. The term was coined by French academic Henri Lefebvre in a 1968 book by the same name (*Le droit à la ville*). Lefebvre described it as “a cry and a demand” for a city made *by* and *for* people, where the needs, rights, and aspirations of everyday life were prioritized over profit-making. Today, the concept is evoked in different ways by a range of social actors, from the United Nations to local governments to anti-capitalist activists. This text focuses on how the right to the city has been taken up and applied in Mexico City.

The way in which the concept is interpreted and put into action is undoubtedly influenced by political visions, lived experience, and urban context. In Latin America, the right to the city was first embraced by social movements in response to conditions of rapid urbanization, urban inequality, and opposition to authoritarian governments in the 1960s and 1970s. During this period, much of the urban growth in countries such as Mexico took place through incremental housing processes—the gradual construction of housing and neighbourhoods in consonance with household resources, community mobilization, and sometimes state support for urban services (i.e., electricity, water). The precarious nature of these settlement areas in the expanding peripheries of many Latin American cities, such as Mexico City, spurred residents and social movements to collectively oppose evictions, organize for better living conditions, claim the right to housing, and demand the right to participate in decisions concerning their neighbourhoods and cities.

Interestingly, what Lefebvre imagined as a city made *by* and *for* people in the late 1960s was already taking place in Latin America, albeit under arduous conditions of social struggle and collective [resistance](#). Given this common lived experience, it is perhaps easier to understand why the right to the city resonated so strongly—and continues to resonate—with social movements in Latin America that mobilize for more just and democratic cities.

Most housing and urban space in Latin America continues to be produced in this way, creating a “city always in the making” (Caldeira, 2017, p. 5) (see Figure 1). For example, over half of the built-up area of Mexico City is produced through incremental housing and settlement processes. In Spanish, this is referred to as *la producción social del habitat* (the social production of habitat). The social production of habitat emphasizes inhabitant-led strategies and practices to produce and manage housing, services, and infrastructure. It also emphasizes the social function of housing (i.e., housing for people, not for profit) and urban land (i.e., public community facilities, not privatized spaces) as well as the importance of participatory and democratic decision-making processes in producing neighbourhoods and claiming the right to the city (Ortiz Flores, 2012). The social production of habitat is also integral to how the right to the city concept has been mobilized for change in Mexico City, although other important elements are also involved.



Figure 1: Housing and neighbourhoods in-the-making, Mexico City. This photo shows how housing is an ongoing process in many Mexico City neighbourhoods, producing diverse housing forms accessible to a range of households and incomes. The photo also documents the availability of city services such as electricity (note the light pole in the street and overhead cables) and water (note the black water cistern on the roof behind the Mexican flag). In this neighbourhood, residents mobilized collectively to advocate for their installation. (photo: Wigle & Zárate, 2005)

As a concept, the right to the city started to gain greater attention after being featured at several high-profile events at World Social Forums in Brazil in the early 2000s. These forums were designed to counter the market-first focus of the annual World Economic Forums held in Davos, Switzerland. Regional forums in countries such as Brazil, Ecuador, and Mexico have helped to disseminate the concept both in Latin America and internationally. For example, when Mexico City hosted the 2008 World Social Forum, local activists organized a tent on the “right to the city and habitat” (see Figure 2). This organizing work helped to launch the *Mexico City Charter for the Right to the City* (2010), an initiative led by social movement proponents and signed by

the mayor of the city at the time. The struggle to realize the aspirational content of the Charter—with its emphasis on the social production of habitat—is ongoing. This draws our attention back to the fact that the transformative potential and meaning of the right to the city remains anchored in the work of social movements that advocate for more just and democratic cities.



Figure 2: The right to the city tent, World Social Forum, Mexico City (2008). The right to the city tent attracted more than 1,000 participants over several days. The tent's banner highlights the central themes discussed within this organizing space: "against dispossession of the commons, privatization, and evictions, and for housing rights and the social production of habitat." This event helped to launch the Mexico City Charter for the Right to the City (2010). (photo: Habitat International Coalition, Latin American Office. Used with permission.)

Discussion Questions

- What are three pressing social issues in your city that relate to the right to the city?
- Find an image that helps you to explain some key element(s) of the right to the city. How would you caption or describe this photo in an essay?
- What would need to change in your city to realize more fully the right to the city? As you contemplate these changes, consider for whom they would have the greatest impact.

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Science and Technology Studies

JONATHAN WALD

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Science and technology studies, or STS, is a multidisciplinary field within the social sciences that examines the context and practices of scientists and other experts.

Breaking the Cosmic Speed Limit? A Case Study for Science and Technology Studies

From 2009 to 2011, scientists working at CERN, one of the most prestigious and well-equipped physics labs in Europe, fired beams of subatomic neutrinos to an affiliated Italian lab buried under the Gran Sasso Mountain, 730 kilometers away. To the amazement of the world physics community, the lab reported that some of the neutrinos arrived 60.7 billionths of a second

earlier than expected. This tiny discrepancy had huge implications because it meant that the neutrinos were travelling faster than the speed of light. Since Einstein's time, the speed of light was believed to be the cosmic speed limit. Nothing can possibly move faster than light through a vacuum (299,792,458 meters per second), but the CERN experiment seemed to break that cosmic law. If the experiment was valid, everything contemporary physics knew about particles, energy, and even the passage of time itself would need to be reevaluated.

The global media was intrigued by the potential. Headlines announced "Roll Over Einstein" (Jordans & Borenstein, 2011) and that the new experiment would "Rewrite Physics" (Spotts, 2011). Yet many physicists remained skeptical. A huge claim like this needs evidence to support it, and one of the central features of the scientific method is that experiments can be recreated and checked. For example, when a science textbook states that "water freezes at 0 °C," you don't need to accept that on faith. You can put a thermometer in water, place it in a freezer, and check the temperature as it turns to ice. In principle, the CERN experiment should have been no different, just with much more sophisticated measuring equipment. If you had a timer that is accurate down to the billionth of a second and could track the movement of neutrinos, you could also replicate CERN's experiment. Until the experiment was replicated, however, the original results could not be considered certain.

At this point, CERN's exceptional prestige and funding started to work against it. The lab was so well-funded and well-equipped that few other labs had the equipment necessary to reproduce the CERN experiment. Two labs came close. The first was Fermilab in the United States, which had already reported faster-than-light neutrinos in 2007, but with lower-sensitivity equipment that made the results inconclusive. No one could be sure if the

particles were actually faster than light or if it was just a measurement error. Upgrading the equipment to the sensitivity required to check CERN's results was expensive and time consuming. It would take months before Fermilab was able to check CERN's research findings.

The second potential lab was the J-PARC particle lab in Japan. This lab was already conducting similar experiments with appropriately sensitive equipment and might have been able to provide a more immediate confirmation of CERN's results. Unfortunately, just a few months before the CERN team published their findings, a massive 9.0 magnitude earthquake struck seventy kilometers off the coast of Japan. It set off the enormous tsunami that devastated the east coast of Japan and triggered a meltdown at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant. Due to the environmental devastation and leaking radiation, the nearby J-PARC lab was temporarily shut down.

Between logistical challenges at Fermilab and environmental disasters at J-PARC, no lab was able to attempt replicating CERN's finding. Eventually, internal efforts to replicate the experiment uncovered two potential errors in the timing equipment that likely produced the tiny discrepancy in the neutrino's speed. The neutrinos did not actually travel faster than light. As of the time of this writing (2021), the speed of light remains a fixed constant and the maximum speed of the universe.

CERN's publication and then retraction of these findings might look like a story of scientific failure. In a certain sense, physicists did not learn anything new about light or neutrinos. But for scholars of Science and Technology Studies (STS), a field of social science that examines scientific practices and the processes by which scientists come to know about the world, the CERN case highlights some of the central features of scientific

research. First, the story of how CERN published a massive finding only to have it eventually overturned reminds us that science is a community practice. Without a community of other researchers and labs that can verify their experiment, the scientists who conducted the original experiment were not able to say that they had learned something new with absolute confidence. In other words, CERN's experiment was not complete without a community to confirm it.

Second, the struggles of both Fermilab and J-PARC highlight how science does not happen in a vacuum. Rather, discoveries about the world are dependent upon a wide range of factors. Funding limitations affect, among other things, what kind of equipment a lab can afford. Environmental events like an unpredictable seismic shift can set off a chain of events that in turn shape what kinds of experiments we can do and what can be known about the world. In other words, science happens in particular **positions**. Beyond the research community, the arrangements of institutions, finances, environments, and media have direct impacts on the practices of scientists. STS scholars study precisely how these economic, political, social, cultural, or environmental contexts shape science, whether in European experimental physics labs or **Indigenous knowledge** practices. Even if CERN didn't completely alter the way that we understand physics with this experiment, the story of the experiment's "failure" provides a clear illustration of the day-to-day challenges of conducting scientific research in today's world.

Discussion Questions

- Think about your own experiences as students at an academic institution. What kinds of social, cultural, environmental, economic, or political forces shape your experiences of learning?
- What can STS contribute to scientific research? What can it contribute to public discussions about science?

Exercise

Find a science news story in your preferred newspaper or news source. Write the title or keyword at the center of a sheet of paper. Then, think of the varied contexts, people, resources, environments, or objects which are involved in this story. Write them down connected to the central issue. Do any of these new elements also involve additional communities or contexts? Continue the exercise with the sub-elements until you have a complex web of the many different kinds of elements involved in the original scientific story.

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Situatedness

ALISSA OVEREND

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Situatedness is the notion that our lived experiences formatively shape the way we see, interpret, and respond to the world around us.

Seeing Thestrals, Understanding Social Marginalization

In the famed fantasy series *Harry Potter*, written by J.K. Rowling¹, thestrals are a type of horse, with bat-like wings, skeletal bodies, and reptilian faces. The narrator describes Harry Potter's first sighting of thestrals in the *Order of the Phoenix* as follows:

If he had to give them a name, he supposed he would have called them horses, though there was something reptilian about them, too. They were completely fleshless, their black coats clinging to their skeletons, of which every bone was visible. Their heads were dragonish, and their pupil-less eyes white and staring. Wings sprouted from each wither—vast, black leathery wings that looked as though they ought to belong to giant bats. (Rowling, 2014)

Despite their ominous appearance, thestrals are harmless. But what makes them special in the series, and central to this discussion on situatedness, is that thestrals can only be seen by people who have witnessed death. In a lesson on magical creatures, Rubeus Hagrid, the gamekeeper in the series, asks his pupils, “Who can tell me why some of you can see them and some can’t?” The book-smart heroine, Hermione Granger, responds: “The only people who can see thestrals are people who have seen death.” Harry Potter can see them because he witnessed the death of his parents. Likewise, Luna Lovegood, a friend of Harry’s, can also see them because she witnessed the death of her mother. But unlike Harry and Luna, Hermione and Ron, Harry’s closest friends, cannot see thestrals because they haven’t seen death.

Though thestrals are a fictional example, they effectively highlight how our lived experiences affect what we come to see as ‘real’ or ‘true’ in the world. Thestrals are simultaneously visible to some and invisible to others, as are some experiences of racism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, ageism, fat-phobia, classism, and sexism. Thestrals are also a powerful metaphor for those who have experienced loss, and how that loss changes our world.

For those reading this text who have witnessed death (like Harry and Luna), are there ways you experience the world differently because of it? Have celebratory days like Mother's Day or Father's Day changed? Has a specific material item, like a keepsake, a piece of clothing, or a photo, perhaps taken on a new meaning? Or maybe your overall outlook on life has shifted since that experience? Many of these are common experiences for those who have experienced loss, and like the thestral, may not be 'real' or 'visible' (at least in the same way) to those who have not.

Considering the concept of situatedness beyond the example of death can be useful in making sense of how other experiences shape our reality in profound and formative ways. Situatedness refers to the interconnectedness of meaning and our sociocultural, historical, and/or geographical contexts. Said simply, situatedness highlights the ways in which we see and live in the world differently based on our past experiences and understanding of social contexts.

In my own teaching, I've used the concept of situatedness to better understand the problematic use of Indigenous mascots and imagery in professional sports. Names such as "Chiefs," "Tomahawks," "Indians," "Eskimos," "Seminoles," and "Thunderbirds" (among others in circulation), have culturally and geographically specific—and sometimes sacred—meanings to members of distinct Indigenous communities. Many Indigenous peoples (and others) therefore feel these names should not be used by non-Indigenous groups or organizations. In short, they are offensive to many Indigenous peoples and groups because *they are situated* in broader contexts of cultural appropriation, colonialism, and cultural imperialism. For those who do not see these wider contexts, or who have not experienced the negative effects of Indigenous racism, cultural appropriation, or colonialism first-hand, the use of Indigenous mascots may be seen as 'not a big deal.'

For those who have, however, or who understand these wider social and historical contexts, they are seen as racially insensitive, derogatory, and discriminatory. Why is it problematic to have a team called the “Redskins”? It is only through understanding the concept of situatedness—and the socio-cultural, historical, and/or geographical contexts of these debates—that we can start to understand divergent experiences and perspectives.

The concept of situatedness can be applied to almost anything, given that our beliefs emerge from particular social locations. I find it is particularly useful when it comes to better understanding issues of social marginalization, which are typically more visible to those who have experienced them, compared to those who have not. How might experiences of sexism and sexual harassment in the workplace be more visible to women? How might inaccessible washrooms be more visible to those with mobility issues or to trans and non-binary people? How might medical encounters be more triggering for people who are overweight, Black, trans, and/or Indigenous? How might micro racial aggressions be more readily perceived by persons of colour and Indigenous folks? How might classism be experienced more acutely by those with lower income? And how might examples of ageism be more common to older individuals? Depending on our own social locations, we may not be able to experience these things in the same ways as other people. However, through an understanding of the concept of situatedness, we can acknowledge that thestrals—as a metaphor for social privilege and marginalization—are, indeed, all around us.

Discussion Questions

- How does the concept of situatedness help us understand experiences of sexism and sexual harassment in the workplace, inaccessible washrooms, fraught medical encounters, micro racial aggressions, cultural ageism, and class discrimination? If you are a member of a marginalized group directly affected by these experiences, how is your understanding of these experiences different than those who are not? Furthermore, how might members of the same marginalized group experience discrimination differently, and how might these inter-group differences be explained using the concept of situatedness?
- How have your own experiences shaped the way you see education, professional sport, religion, or some other feature of social life?

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Notes

1. The author does not support Rowling's transphobic views, which were made public on social media in 2020.

Social Identity

NOAH SCHWARTZ

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Social identity

refers to the ways in which human beings form a part of their identity through belonging to a group.

Listen to [the audio version of this text](#), performed by the author.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/showingthe-ory/?p=137#audio-137-1>

Social Identity and the Politics of Guns

“Who are you?” That can be a difficult question to answer. You might respond by giving the person asking the question your name or telling them that you are a student. But do either of these things fully describe you?

Human beings are complex, with many elements making up our identity. The term social identity was created by Tajfel and Turner (1979) to describe how human beings form our sense of who we are through belonging to a group. There are many groups that we can belong to, and these groups can be centered around different aspects of our identity: race, class, gender, sexuality, politics, etc. These identities are not political by nature, but can be politicized (brought into politics), especially when a group sees itself as threatened by an outside force (Mason and Wronski 2018). It is also important to note that just because someone objectively belongs to a certain social category—for example, they are a person of color—does not mean that it forms an important part of their social identity. Social identity is **subjective** (personal) and is navigated in different ways by different people.

Studying social identity is important because our understanding of the world is shaped by our identity. Understanding this can help to explain political phenomena like the left-right partisan

divide in Canada. In recent years, the division between left (Liberals & New Democrats) and right (Conservatives) seems to be getting wider. Some scholars think that the internet is to blame. Our political identities naturally lead us to search out and read information that fits our worldview, while rejecting facts that go against it (Druckman and Lupia 2016). The internet has allowed algorithms, complex computer programs, to do this for us.

In my research, I look at the political advocacy of gun owners in Canada and the United States. My research shows that gun ownership is an important part of the social identity of this group of Canadians (Schwartz 2021). That is because gun owners are deeply involved in activities like hunting or the shooting sports, often investing time, money, and personal energy into these activities. Some of the people I talked to in my research grew up with guns as a normal part of their life. They started hunting as children or teenagers, under the careful watch of their parents or grandparents. Some take part in the shooting sports, competing among friends or at high levels, even in the Olympics. For many of the gun owners I spoke to, hunting and shooting were an important part of their social life, and their social network was centered around these activities. When the government brings in new rules or laws to regulate firearms, gun owners therefore feel that it is not just their guns that are under attack, but their core identity.

This might seem strange to you if you grew up in a big city, or did not live in a house where guns were present. You might see guns as objects of fear. However, for gun owners, firearms are meaningful tools that allow them to participate in activities that they find fun, exciting, or relaxing. These activities become a part of who they are, shaping their identity, or how they see themselves. When they feel that their interests are threatened, for example by the recent changes made to Canada's gun control laws, they

are highly motivated to take part in political advocacy to oppose these changes.

Pro-gun advocacy groups understand this and help organize gun owners to do things like writing their Members of Parliament, signing petitions, donating money, or voting for the group's preferred candidate. This is just one example of how a person's identity can help us to explain or understand their social or political behavior.

So, I will ask you again, who are you? What you answer might say quite a bit about your politics.

Discussion Questions

- What elements of your identity are shaped by the groups you belong to? How does this have an impact on your political opinions?
- What are your political opinions on gun control? How have the groups you belong to shaped how you see the issue?
- Thinking of an important political issue, like climate change, race and policing, or healthcare. What elements of a person's identity might affect their opinions or actions on that issue?

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Social Nature

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Social nature refers to the social lens through which nature is interpreted and thus constructed—through language, imagery, and characterization.

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The American Bullfrog: Economic savior to monster to miracle cure

To understand the *social construction of nature*—a concept political ecologists Noel Castree and Bruce Braun shortened to just “social nature”—consider the myriad ways that humans have, over time, framed the American bullfrog.

In the 1930s, entrepreneurs introduced the American bullfrog (*Rana catesbeiana*) to western North America to farm them for frog legs—a delicacy in French cuisine—portraying the species as an economic savior. Over time, the American bullfrog reached mythic proportions in the West—in terms of its size, prevalence, and impact on local ecosystems. Journalists characterized this

species as a “monster”—a voracious predator that could grow to the size of a dinner plate, consume a duckling whole, and drag a small cat into a pond.



Figure 1: Drawing of an American bullfrog with a duckling’s feet sticking out of its mouth.

As an “invasive alien species,” the American bullfrog preyed on native frog species, dominated local ecosystems, and ultimately, threw them out of balance. A politician from Delta, British Columbia described the American bullfrog as a “fast-breeding carnivorous frog” (Georgia Strait, 2008) that thrived *despite* human development. In wet conditions, it can migrate to extend

its territorial range, travelling more than a kilometer in a single night. Ecologists understood this invasive “bully” as an ecosystem introduction gone awry (CKISS, 2021).

Fast forward to the mid-2000s, when scientists at St. Andrews University touted the American bullfrog as a potential “miracle cure” to the MRSA bacterium—a superbug blighting hospital wards (Moss, 2007). Similarly, researchers at the University of British Columbia used the American bullfrog to perfect breeding techniques to re-establish the native frogs that, ironically, the American bullfrog helped push to the brink of extinction. In both these cases, scientists framed the species for its utility in solving other problems.

Portrayals of species can be *made* and *re-made* in multiple, competing, and widely varying ways. Like the bullfrog, other species (such as sharks and milkweed) oscillate in our cultural imagination between good and evil. Producers of the 1978 film *Jaws* characterized Great White Sharks as terrifying apex predators, while Rob Stewart, filmmaker of the 2007 *Sharkwater*, portrayed sharks as critical to marine ecosystems and worthy of protection. For decades, gardeners viewed milkweed as an invasive, noxious weed, while more recently, ecologists have stressed its important role as host plant for the endangered Monarch butterfly.

Humans ascribe meaning to everything—through language, imagery, and characterization—making it impossible to discuss anything without acknowledging this process of social construction.

Discussion Questions

- The concept of **social nature** is demonstrated above using the example of the American bullfrog. What are some other examples that we humans *make* and *re-make*—or socially construct—through language, imagery and characterization?
- How would you explain the concept of social nature to someone else?
- Can you elaborate on why this concept might be significant?

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Sovereignty

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Sovereignty refers to the claim of countries to exercise full autonomy over its geographic territory.

Sovereignty Beyond Eurocentricity

Sovereignty is one of the most important concepts in international relations theory and political studies more generally, but its history is poorly understood and often assumed to be an uncontroversial part of being a state or country (Brighenti, 2010; Agnew, 1994, 2010). Part of the problem with sovereign claims in the contemporary sense is that they take current state/country borders as a given, rather than social and political constructions that have history (Tayler 1994, Agnew 1994; Parasram 2014).

The most common story told about sovereignty comes from Europe, and it has been largely assumed to be true everywhere, even though every part of the world has its own history of sovereignty. The European story is connected to the Peace Treaties at Westphalia in the year 1648, situating it as a culmination point where developing European states came to decisions about borders, principles of non-interference in the affairs of other sovereign states—building on centuries of European philosophical development (Elden, 2013; Onuf, 1991; Maratain, 1969; Walker and Medelovitz, 1990). This is not a consensus position in the discipline, and others have convincingly argued that interpreting the Treaties at Westphalia as the “beginning” of the modern state exaggerates the significance of the moment for modern sovereignty, in large part because state sovereignty and the international system arises through imperial politics, or the colonial relationship between European states and much of the rest of the world in the last few hundred years (Osiander, 2001; Kayaoglu, 2010). The modern state system, and with it, the idea of state sovereignty in the European and imperial way of understanding it—a state with borders that has total authority within its borders, whose authority is recognized by similar states outside of its borders—is fundamentally related to Europe’s attempt to colonize and control the world (Bhambra, 2015; Parasram 2014; Anghie, 2005; Rojas, 2016). In other words, the formation of colonial empires introduced a new need from the perspective of Europe to order the world based on imperial state sovereignty, which in turn created a set of rules for white countries and different rules for Brown and Black countries (Grovogui, 2002; Branch, 2011; Anderson 1983).

What we call “sovereignty” in English and other imperial languages does not adequately describe the history of organizing social and political life in most of the world. For example, sover-

eignty in South Asia has a complex history that draws its influence from Buddhist, Hindu, and Islamic philosophy and history. Indigenous sovereignties around the world are all different as well, and across much of what we call “Canada” in English, Indigenous peoples have long histories of relating to land that cannot be reduced to “sovereignty” in a strictly political sense. Mi’kmaw sovereignty, for example, is influenced by relationships and solidarity with land and water (Bernard, 2017). The Mi’kmaw word, *Netukulimk*, or “natural law” is translated by M’sit No’kmaq et al. (2021, p. 846) to explain that “‘man and nature are one’, ‘everything comes from the land’, and ‘all that the earth holds is sacred.’ These values and belief systems are at the core of how we should govern and conduct ourselves on the lands and waters. Understanding natural laws can give us the power to act in a good way.”

Note how the definition, arising from the language itself, positions *Netukulimk* as a living and evolving practice rather than a static or historical event like the Westphalian treaties. As Mi’kmaw lawyer and scholar Pam Palmater explains, Mi’kmaw sovereignty is a living practice that resists settler-colonial desire to redefine land as a resource or property (Palmater, 2019). This conflict between Mi’kmaw sovereignty and Canadian sovereignty is especially visible in terms of how it plays out on the issue of lobster fisheries.

In September 2020, Mi’kmaq fishers from Sipekne’katik (one of seven districts in Mi’kma’ki, the Mi’kmaw homeland) opened a lobster fishery. Doing so was perfectly lawful—not only from a Mi’kmaw legal position, but also from a Canadian legal position—because of the Marshall decision 20 years ago that reaffirmed Mi’kmaw fishing rights, as opposed to the settler-Canadian fishing “privileges” that are subject to other kinds of regulations (Metallic & MacIntosh, 2020; APTN, 2020).

Rather than being seen by the Canadian state as a fine example of reconciliation in practice, mobs of white fishers violently attacked Mi'kmaq fishers, making a variety of different kinds of arguments that completely failed to engage the core question of Mi'kmaq sovereignty as distinct from Canadian sovereignty. Instead, the Department of Fisheries saw this conflict as one of “conservation” of lobster stock and the white fishers saw it as unfair because the Mi'kmaq could fish outside of the designated fishing season for a “moderate livelihood.”

The internal and external requirements of state sovereignty suggest that within its territories, state governments are the only ones who can legitimately use violence to maintain the peace. External sovereignty implies that a sovereign state will respect other sovereign states by not interfering in their “internal” affairs. This of course doesn't happen in practice, and some international relations scholars have explained that the reason why wars break out between states is because there is no sovereign authority higher than the state. In other words, no international government controls sovereignty as a state might (Waltz 1959, 1979; Mearshiemer 2001; Weber 1918). The complexities of sovereignty are much deeper than considerations of “internal” or “external” applications, because treating sovereignty in these terms assumes that “countries” are natural, rather than historical.

The ongoing conflict between Canada and the Mi'kmaq fishers highlights how colonial law continues to contaminate and stymie decolonization. From a colonial perspective then, Canadian sovereignty is the only one that matters in concrete terms, and Mi'kmaq sovereignty must be negotiated within that frame. This makes no sense, however, when Mi'kmaq sovereignty is understood on its own terms rather than forced through a colonial sieve. Explained in the mass media as a conflict over “con-

servation” of lobster stocks and unfairness to settler fishers who are obligated to fish only within a particular season, Mi’*maw* sovereignty becomes inconceivable to much of the Canadian public. Rather than expecting Mi’*kmaq* fishers to articulate *their* case in the colonial legal system, Canada ought to explain *its* case within a Mi’*kmaq* legal system, one that has been developed over thousands of years (Bernard, 2021; Bernard 2017).

Discussion Question

- If Canada respected Indigenous sovereignty, should Indigenous nations be able to manage their own fisheries? Explain with reference to the Mi’*kmaq* lobster fishery. Is sovereignty a good thing? What are the pros and cons? Think carefully about the difference between sovereignty in practice and sovereignty in theory.

Exercise

Cultures are always evolving and changing. When ideas of sovereignty come into contact, they change one another in many different ways. Divide yourselves into groups of three or four and develop a set of five rules that are important to your society. Now “meet” another group and see if you can devise a new set of rules that are agreeable to others. If you succeed, move on to another group of. Were you successful

again? If not, what impeded your efforts? If so, what helped you to find agreement?

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Structural Power

SHADIYA AIDID

[*Shadiya Aidid*](#) is a spoken word artist and scholar-activist. She has been writing, teaching, and performing poetry for over seven years and her work has been featured on CBC, Audible, and at multiple arts festivals. As a first-generation Black Muslim Canadian, her identity has often been silenced or exploited. Through the power of storytelling, Shadiya reclaims her narrative and gradually unravels the apathy and ignorance that uphold injustice.

Listen to [the audio version of this text](#), performed by the author.

Structural Power

refers to the ways in which power (such as authority, wealth, and other privileges) is arranged in order to influence the norms of society, institutions, and our interpersonal relationships.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/showingthe-ory/?p=47#audio-47-1>

Butterflies

A list of things that gives you butterflies:

- When you finally apply for that dream job.
- When you join the bandwagon and invest in your first stock.
- When your friends hype you up in the comments on your new selfie.
- When you get off a plane just before reuniting with your family.
- When you're "randomly" selected at the airport. They tell you to pat your hijab, then swab for bomb residue on your hands.
- When you cross the border, and they say that you look like a refugee. They're unsure about your documents. You could be sneaking into their country.
- When a cop car comes along, and despite being innocent you trace back your steps. Analyze where you might have gone wrong.
- When you enter a store, and you feel this hot heat on the back of your neck. The clerk watches you. For a while you can't breathe.

- When you tell a guy you're married but he doesn't see a ring. Ignores the hint. Says you're a tease.
- When you enter an elevator and the man who was following you does too. The doors close. You can't leave.

But then the butterflies fly away.

Almost as soon as they came.
As soon as the cop car moves forward.
And you leave the store.
And you get your luggage back.
You safely make it to your floor.

Hyper-surveillance is something that I wish I could opt out of.
But it's a part of every day.
Like eating lunch at noon.
Like forgetting to unmute on Zoom.
It's just a minor inconvenience.
It's just a part of the Black Muslim girl experience.

For some, stares prompt questions like:
Is there something in my teeth? Is he into me?
For us, it's more like:
Is it my Blackness today?
Or my Muslim-ness?
Or how easy it would be to take advantage of me?

Fear is a sharp knife that travels up your body until it settles somewhere deep.
Leaving a trail of scars from anxiety.
Like a parasite feeding off negative energy.
Doesn't hesitate to make everyone your enemy.

Fear is the most abusive warden.
It keeps you caged.
Dares you to escape and then reminds you of your place.

Fear wants to be heard.
Wants to be consoled.
Wants to believe the story that it was told.

And although you're no criminal.
You're no victim.
You internalize these roles.
You're the one that doesn't belong. Misplaced.
You're the glitch in the algorithm. A mistake.

So, in order to placate those with more power over you,
You step into respectability.
Minimize anything and everything.
You apologize for your existence.
Take it as betrayal or a survival mechanism.

Conform to the behaviour that *they* feel entitled to.
That helps *them* feel safe.
While simultaneously being and feeling unsafe.

But hey, at least the butterflies *eventually* fly away.

Discussion Questions

- How does the fear of [those in power](#) contrast (and interre-

late) with the fears expressed by the author?

- When have you felt powerless?
 - Write a list of things that have given you “butterflies.”
 - Did existing power dynamics (race, gender, class etc.) exacerbate this powerlessness?
 - Did institutions (the education system, the carceral system, the healthcare system, etc.) exacerbate this powerlessness?
- While power itself is not necessarily problematic, the ways in which it is *structured* tend to advance the privileges of one group of people, while devaluing and subjugating others. Can you think of a form of power that is benign in its ‘neutral state’, but problematic when it becomes structured? What enables this structuring to take place?

Additional Resources

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Subjectivity

PAULA NUNEZ DE VILLAVICENCIO

***Paula Nunez de Villavicencio** is a doctoral candidate in the Faculty of Information at the University of Toronto. Her research focuses on the historical and political dimensions of media technology used for the governance, subjectivation, and surveillance of select populations. Specifically, her work looks at optical media and their role in shaping human conduct in visual information systems. Paula is a SSHRC Doctoral Fellow and the co-author of the book, *Prisonhouse of the Circuit: A Media Genealogy*.*

Subjectivity is a term that refers to the individual perception or experience of reality.

Colour or Greyscale: A photographer's dilemma

The photographer is faced with a dilemma. Having recently been hired to photograph Kakapos (a species of large, flightless birds) in New Zealand for conservation purposes, they know that they are expected to submit colour photographs to their client. Their dilemma stems from the contrast between the objective truth that Kakapos are colourful birds, and the subjective truth that, to the photographer, the birds are an array of shades of grey.

The photographer has *monochromacy*, a condition in which retinal processing produces a visual experience with no colour, only shades of black, grey, and white. In the past, the photographer only published images in greyscale, to ensure that the result was a clear replication of how they saw the world. To the photographer, greyscale is the reality of the world, because of the ways that their rods and cones (the light-sensing receptors in the human retina) operate.

Similar to [positionality](#), subjectivity refers to the reality experienced by the individual and how their perception of the world affects their approach to knowledge and [objective truth](#). The photographer cannot identify the colour green, or any other colour for that matter, but they are aware that colours exist, and that, objectively, reality is a colourful thing. That Kakapos are colourful is considered an objective truth because an overwhelming majority of humans—and especially experts and the technologies deemed to produce repeatable truth—all agree that they have colourful plumage. The photographer's individual experience of shades of grey is a subjective truth. By producing photographs in greyscale, the photographer invites others to experience reality from their perspective. If they submit the photographs as they were captured, developed, and edited, the photographer would have to rely on the objective truth produced by the technology and agreed upon by the general population. Yet this would not be their own truth.

Subjectivity is not repeatable, not reproducible in lab settings, and comes from individual experience. It is often conflated with *bias* or *prejudice*, both of which carry heavy and frequently negative connotations. Subjectivity, however, is more nuanced. It identifies the very personal experience individuals share with reality.

The dilemma of subjectivity is further exacerbated by the ways in which the photographer's client might use and describe the images they receive. If the photos were used in a journalism piece about conservation efforts, skeptics might dismiss the article by arguing that the image shows a bias or a subjective position. Similarly, academic researchers might completely disregard the greyscale image, by arguing that demonstrating a subjective perspective of the colour of the animal lacks the objective (repeatable, technologically reproducible, expert-produced) truth necessary. In other words, the greyscale image indicates a dramatization or personal bias that skews expected, repeatable results. The photographer might be concerned that, by publishing these images in greyscale, they will be labelled a subjective representation of reality, and will not be acknowledged as truthful by experts in fields such as law, journalism, or science. As art, the photographs might be accepted in their subjectivity, but as representations of truth, they must be objective. In this dichotomy, objectivity refers not to the inherent quality of an object or people, but rather to an ethos or professional code for the representation of the world.

A first understanding of subjectivity is the individual perception or experience of reality that a person has. Now, if we bring in another person without monochromacy, and one who holds a position of power over the monochromatic photographer (such as their client), the meaning of subjectivity becomes even more nuanced. In this case, it also expresses how power relations produce subjectivity—that is, in the sense that an individual can be actively *subject* to someone else.

The photographer with monochromacy, who has always published images in greyscale, decides to continue with their practice and sends the conservation images in greyscale to their client. The client has their own perception of reality, including

the subjective belief that the conservation images should be published in colour. They therefore contact the photographer and ask for colour images instead. The photographer reminds the client that they perceive the world in greyscale and have always produced images in greyscale to reflect their subjective experience. The client, while understanding, is insistent that the images for this project must be in colour, to produce a more persuasive publication and not to detract from the conservation organization's desire to communicate 'objective' truth.

Recognizing that they are not in a position to challenge their client's wishes (i.e., without potentially losing the contract), and that they are subject to the expectations of those in positions of power, the photographer alters their own expectations, and agrees to have the images produced in colour. To ensure that the final images of the Kakapos show the objective colours, the photographer asks experts in their field without monochromacy to review their work for validity, reliability, and reproducibility. Assured that the images are objectively correct, the photographer is able to meet the expectations of the client.

Subjectivity can thus refer to a range of notions: the individual perception of reality of a person; the negative connotations of bias, when considered in tandem with objectivity or truth; and an individual's position in relation to something or someone else that affects their behaviour, attitudes, choices, or perceptions.

Discussion Questions

- The concept of subjectivity is illustrated above using the example of a photographer with monochromacy in a power relationship with their client. Based on this interpretation, what are some examples of subjectivity that you have experienced?
- When might the dichotomy between subjectivity and objectivity be detrimental to our understanding of the world?
- Why do you think any of the above interpretations of subjectivity might be important? Consider biological, social, or cultural cases.

Exercise

Working in pairs, look at two copies of the same image—one in black and white and the other in colour. Ask each other to describe what you see differently in each image, and what might be visible in the black and white image that is not noticeable in the coloured version, or vice versa.

Additional Resources

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Sustainability

ADEDOTUN BABAJIDE

[Adedotun Babajide](#) holds a master's degree in English Language and Literature from Queen's University. He has worked with the Laurier Centre for Sustainable Food Systems for two years, helping with their podcast, [Handpicked: Stories from the Field](#).

Some words in the poem below may not be familiar to all readers. A word bank with explanations follows.

Sustainability is about meeting the needs of the present without jeopardizing the future; it is a balance between society, the economy, and the environment.

Three to Tangle: Sustainability and its Complexity

I

Sustainability is one
for all, and all for one.
One for now, and all
for now. Now
for later, and later for now.
a meal equally set

A tango of three
bedfellows: Society, Environment, and Economy.
A tough task for partners
with tangled tusks,
with needs dug deep
into greedy skins. Society
must sway Economy
one way but cannot step
on Environment's gown.

What is good for goose,
is bad for gander.
Society: man and kind, must find manna
in the des[s]ert with five oases:
a drink
from Population Engagement,
before a dive into Local
Economic Dynamism. Rest
at Health and Wellbeing.
At Social Justice, look further
to Ecological Regeneration.

Sustainability is
One foot forward, then, the other.
The other foot forward, and the first foot
over the other. Hips swaying
to the tune of the típica.

the murmur of yearning

What is good for goose, is goose for the good
of another. One recycled can.
To make farming easier
for large-scale farmers, machineries
pounce on farms. Licenses incense lies
to keep farmers

hooked to corporations. Rights
to seed varieties are bought, man
owns genetics, food
sovereignty is attacked. Ganders
gather together way over
yonder. Ogonis, a Shell
of former self. Oil
spills give birth
to destroyed farmlands.

Sustainability is Change
for improvement, improvement for change.
Change to improve improvement and change
Because change leads to change.

some intricate purpose?

Loose change to the local
vendor at the farmer's market
might trump the big
don with same day delivery.
Homeostasis—a balance
between products
of industrialization and community
farms. Food-related diseases crush
2 billion, 800 million bow at the feet
of food insecurity. Right foot back
left foot back. Circle 'round
feet together. Sustainability is born.

II

An axolotl replenishes a lost limb
similar to a starfish.
Sustainability is growth, growing
without loss.

A knot, firmly tied,
though pressed down
by Capitalism—the fellow
with the big gut. Government
policies whirl it around and toss it
to international relations. Man
is on mars. Masses, kin, amass under
Survival. The air burns, polar
ice caps melt. Elsewhere, the vihuela
is the goje; agbadas cannot
fit under winter coats. Pound
pounds the Naira, cut each sari
according to size.
Yin, yang.

To stop the oil
production, is to save
the environment, but it is also to take
the livelihood of many.
Around the fire, man dances, naked.
Sustainability is understanding.
Culture and history dictate under
each climate.

Left foot back and to the left,
to the right, right foot back
Lunge back on the left
and *corte*.
Three to tangle.
Au revoir to covetousness,
Alas, change *tout d'un coup*?
No.
Communities must remain
together: leave no one behind.

One giant step for man, another
step for biodiversity
and human rights. It is only right
if the end is the process,
and the process is the end.
A Brave New World
of rethinking
metrics and international agreements.

The finish line moves
with the runner.
The left follows
the right, forward,
back, side, around,
a dance.

***Indented phrases in italics are taken from the 19th section of Walt Whitman's "Song of Myself."*

Word Bank

Típica: *Orquesta típica*, an ensemble or band playing popular music. In some countries it is synonymous to bands playing tango music.

Ogonis: the Ogoni people are located in Rivers State, Niger Delta region of southern Nigeria. For decades they have had problems with the Royal Dutch Shell oil and gas company over issues such as the pollution of their farmlands caused by oil spills.

Axolotl: an amphibian, a neotenic salamander.

Vihuela: a Spanish string instrument. Shaped like a guitar, it is fretted plucked and has five strings.

Goje: a bowed string instrument indigenous to West Africa.

Agbadas: commonly worn in West Africa, it is a fitted wide-sleeved robe.

Naira: the currency of Nigeria.

Sari: a garment worn by women of South Asia. Yards of either silk or cotton is draped in a manner that forms a skirt and a shoulder or head covering.

Corte: a type of lunge in Tango.

“Tout d’un coup” is a French term which translates to “at once.”

Discussion questions

- What challenges and opportunities for acting sustainably are apparent in the poem above?
- Pick two examples from your life experience that illustrate the complexities of sustainability. Explain them to someone else, either out loud, in prose, or as a poem.
- Some people talk about sustainability as a *process* and not as a final destination, a *practice* rather than a conclusion. Do you think sustainability is achievable?

Additional Resources

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Tacit Knowledge

BRIGITTE CHAMPAIGNE-KLASSEN

Tacit knowledge refers to implicit knowledge that is difficult to share and express in words, such as personal wisdom, experience, insight, and intuition.

***Brigitte Champaigne-Klassen** is a Master of Health Sciences student at Lakehead University specializing in Social-Ecological Systems, Sustainability & Health. With a background in environmental science field work, STEM education and interdisciplinary art, she is interested in exploring and re-conceptualizing different narratives of health through environmental justice, equity and creative expression.*

Woven Threads, Woven Knowledge

Sunlight gently streams through the small oval window on your right. The cedars sway audibly outside as a spring storm brews over the lake. A mug of steaming coffee is perched on the windowsill. Your well-worn bench creaks as you sit down, almost like a sigh of relief that you are back.

Before you is your loom, prepped and ready to start weaving. You have already set up the warp—the vertical threads held under tension on the loom. The yarns have been methodically and

evenly tied to the back of the loom, forming a blank canvas of thread for you.

If you tried to remember, you could probably think of most of the mentors who have helped you learn how to weave. Yet, there is no one grand moment of learning—this knowledge lives within you in a way that is unyielding to linear timelines and is impossible to chronicle fully in words. Instead, it is a circular and **relational type of knowledge**. Every time you sit down in front of your loom, you return to and build upon this knowledge. It comes together whenever you hold your threads. It is embodied within your mind, hands, body, and heart.

You reach for the green-coloured spool beside you without calculated thought. You don't think about why you choose this one spool, nor do you anticipate how you'll use it. You just pick it up and start weaving. You guide the spool between the intermeshed yarns that form the warp, change the shafts, and repeat. Slowly, line by line, the fabric before you builds into what will be a piece of cloth.

You start to reminisce about your grandmother and how she used to weave. You would wake up to the smell of freshly baked bread and the rhythmic thud of her loom. Her hands, smooth and wrinkled, seemed to gracefully fly across the loom as they painted the colourful threads into a woven fabric. Your eyes grew wide as you witnessed this magic silently from the doorframe, not wanting to disturb this woven rhythm. Once she noticed you, the sweet smell of cedar smoke would envelop you warmly as her long and strong arms pulled you close.



Figure 1. Weaving knowledge

A faint aroma of cedar smoke seems to envelop you now as you remember her, and as the tapestry continues to grow before you, thread by thread. A rhythm builds and you feel connected to this process of making, of weaving, that is deeply formed by tacit knowledge. Words cannot easily express or codify how this piece of cloth you are creating came to be.

How can you express in words the context that guides your hands, memory, and body while you weave? Tacit knowledge, a compounding of wisdom, experience, feeling, intuition, and embodied experience, deeply directs how the fabric is made, given that “we can know more than we can tell” (Polanyi, 1966, p. 4).

Soon, the tacit knowledge that embeds and shapes your weaving will manifest into a long tapestry as the warp intertwines with the weft—the threads woven from side to side between the warp.

When your weaving is complete, you will unfurl the totality of your creation, cut the yarns at the end of your loom, and watch your tapestry drape before you.

You will share this with a friend, a partner, a community elder. They will hold the tapestry and see this creation. The weight and the softness of the woven threads will be felt between their hands. They will hold an explicit product of knowledge of your weaving, an output. Yet, while they might hold the fabric, they will never know all that has directed its creation. All they might see and feel is the explicit piece of cloth. This fabric expresses tacit knowledge in a material way that you can hold, see, touch, and smell, yet never fully know.

As you watch the person hold your woven creation, you know more than you can tell. You cannot fully express the array of tacit knowledge that directed the making of this woven piece that has involved so much more than technical skill. Yet, it does not mean that the tacit knowledge you embody exists any less.

Weaving is a canvas on which tacit knowledge is woven into thread, where your current ways of being and knowing form the woven fabric in front of you. This includes all the accumulated contexts that have led to your experience, intuition, ancestral knowledge, wisdom... Tacit knowledge lies within the weft and warp of your threads, a material representation of your own embodied making.

Discussion Questions

- This vignette uses weaving to explore tacit knowledge. What are other examples or forms of tacit knowledge? How does tacit knowledge have an impact in your life today?
- Given that tacit knowledge cannot fully be described in words, is tacit knowledge a less valid form of knowledge than more explicit forms? Why or why not?
- Could you prove tacit knowledge exists, and does proving the existence of tacit knowledge matter? How and why is tacit knowledge valuable?

Additional Resources

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Transdisciplinarity

EBRU USTUNDAG

***Ebru Ustundag** is a critical feminist geographer interested in intersections of health/care and social justice as these relations unfold in various urban spaces. She is an Associate Professor of Geography at Brock University. In St. Catharines, Ontario, she collaborates with various community partners and social agencies to facilitate radical collective action by building solidarities and alliances. Ebru is also a member of the executive board of the Graphic Medicine International Collective.*

Transdisciplinarity refers to a holistic research approach that crosses several disciplinary boundaries by fostering active collaboration and communication to address current problems and facilitate social action.

Comics: From underground culture to health care facilitation

Once considered underground media, comics, manga, and zines have more recently been shown to be dynamic tools for conveying complex socio-economic and environmental challenges, by contesting singular understandings. By re-orienting time and space in novel ways, comics ask the reader to actively engage with the material in front of them. These narrative possibilities

invite readers to imagine temporal and spatial ‘realities’ in unique ways that other forms of textual consumption do not support. Over the last decade, comics, zines, and graphic novels have played increasingly prominent roles in communicating complexities that are not divided, linear, or discipline-specific. For example, the comic titled “[Climate Changes Health](#)” provides a multidimensional and holistic approach to understanding the impacts of climate on our physical and mental health, as well as on our natural environment. It was created by the *Climate Health Action Team of Seattle and King County’s (WA-SA) Public Health*, with artwork by Mita Mahato and writing by Meredith Li-Vollmer. For readers who might not be familiar with the multi-dimensional impacts of the climate crisis on our everyday lives, the comic offers a novel opportunity to critically examine the social, political, and environmental implications.. It provokes its readers to make meaning by relating climate change to various standpoints.

Located in faculties including business, arts and humanities, natural and applied sciences, medical sciences, and social sciences, academic disciplines like biology, mathematics, geography, sociology, and psychology emerged almost two centuries ago to advance understandings of the natural, physical, and social environments. While the inquiries of these disciplines are often quite similar, they differ in contextualization (area of investigation), theories (systematic frameworks), [research methods](#) (practical approaches), and [epistemologies](#) (models of knowledge production). Building on their specific discipline’s previous body of research, scholars in these disciplines accumulate a particular body of knowledge (new ideas, research, and findings) with domain-specific theoretical, methodological, and conceptual frameworks.

Discipline-specific knowledge production has been dominant in Western, masculine, and colonial scholarship for three centuries, though it has been contested by [feminist](#), anti-racist, [queer](#), Indigenous, and decolonial scholars, as well as activists and communities within and outside of academia over the last couple of decades. To address the complexities of the social, economic, political, and medical crises of our times calls for pushing the boundaries of discipline-specific approaches to assemble sustainable and equitable solutions. This is what transdisciplinarity offers. By producing knowledge across and beyond academic disciplines, transdisciplinary research can provide new conceptual, theoretical, and methodological approaches to bridge disciplines and tackle challenging problems by fostering collaboration, co-operation, and collective knowledge dissemination. Despite the individual and institutional barriers, there have been increasing initiatives to foster knowledge mobilization to support transdisciplinary research and teaching within and outside of academic institutions.

For example, arts and humanities-based transdisciplinary approaches to health, health care, and well-being have been widely used in medicine and medical education. Recently, comics have been used to engage patients, family members, caregivers, physicians, and other health professionals through literary and visual representations of complex challenges of health (Czerwiec et al. 2015). Educators, librarians, and scholars have also incorporated comics into the dissemination of complex medical information. These novel approaches aim to present a unique and nuanced understanding of our complicated experiences of illness by fostering empathy, compassion, and altruism in medical education and practice. In 2012, physician and comic artist Ian Williams coined the term “[graphic medi-](#)

[cine](#)” to refer to the intersection between the medium of comics and the discourses of health, illness, disability, and caregiving.

Discussion Questions

- What are the benefits and limitations of earning your degree in a particular discipline?
- Why do you think our current socio-political and environmental challenges require transdisciplinary approaches? Identify one specific challenge, and consider the benefits of addressing it through a transdisciplinary lens.
- In what ways do you think comics can reduce barriers to accessing information?
- Read the comic [Toxic Inheritance](#) and discuss how comics convey a different form of meaning making, compared to other media (i.e., text, photographs, videos).

Exercise

Graphic Medicine International Collective's [Drawing Together archive](#) provides several examples and prompts to claim your inner artist. You can try these by yourself, friends, and family members.

Additional Resources

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Transparency

MICHELLE SALAMON

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The Assumption of Transparency

In the field of optics, transparency is a physical property that expresses how light passes through a material with varying degrees of absorption. The opposite to transparency is opacity, which describes the degree to which a material (or context) resists the transmission of light (or information). The aim of this example is to align some of the properties of optical transparency with those of the transparency that occurs in the social sciences. The text explores the degree to which a particular context may resist the transmission of information in the many areas of our lives where we expect the institutions with which we engage (e.g., governance, healthcare, economy) to communicate

Transparency is a term that refers to openness, communication, and accountability, and is used as a means to establish trust in democratic systems, public persons, and institutions.

transparently and openly with us, in order to permit us to hold them to account.

While we might understand why transparency is considered important for accountability, further examination suggests that full transparency is complex and nuanced, and as such may not fulfil the functions society expects or gains from it.

The following diorama images help illustrate the complexity of transparency using optics. We see objects when light waves bounce off their surfaces and travel toward our eyes. This is called *reflection*. When light waves pass through a transparent (or partially transparent) substance, this is called *refraction*, which changes the direction of the path the light waves were taking. This occurs with such devices as prisms and lenses. Refraction can cause objects to look different and/or appear to be in a different place than they actually are.

In the diorama, the three-dimensional object at left represents “facts.” It is situated within a constructed environment that includes a series of filters, masks, and lenses, each of which affect the way that the viewer (at right) perceives the object (or facts). These optical devices parallel the ways in which institutional information and communication of that information may appear to be transparent, but are in fact subject to multiple layers that alter the reality of the information.

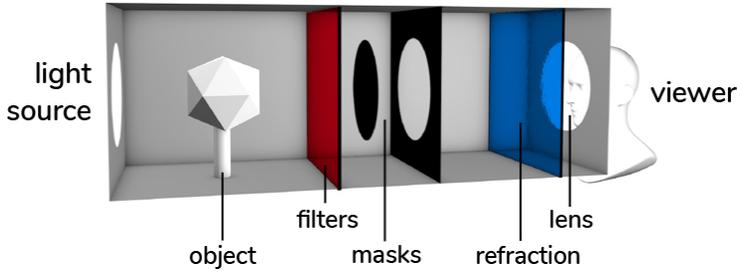


Figure 1: The Assumption of Transparency. The viewer perceives the images as a composite; each of the transparent filers or masks tempers how the facts are perceived. From left to right: the many faceted Object represents “facts,” with certain areas highlighted as light hits the surfaces; Filters can transmit some wavelengths of light and block others (e.g., infrared), make all wavelengths less intense (e.g., neutral density), or block some parts of the spectrum that cause reflection and create better visibility (e.g., polarizing); Masks are a means of closing or opening the field of view, and can draw focus on an important element in the frame; Refraction takes place when light enters a transparent substance and bends the path of transmission, causing objects to look different when viewed; Lenses offer various properties that can affect how the viewer sees the object.

In the same way the diorama shows us that optical transparency is nuanced, so is political transparency equally complex. Political transparency can take three forms: *informational transparency* (public statements and disclosure of information); *participatory transparency* (being able to take part in decision making through fair representation); and *accountability transparency* (holding officials responsible when laws are violated). Perversely, politicians often use the very concept of transparency to manipulate the presentation of information.

Journalists can also adapt their rhetoric to defend their own investigative practices. For example, political media coverage often focuses more on the personal lives of politicians rather than their policies.

Returning to the diorama, we can see how transparency—often understood as synonymous with openness and disclosure—can be manipulated. Relied on as a principle for enabling the public to gain information about the operations and structures of a given entity, it can in fact both help and hinder political relationships. While some political information may be transmitted without alteration, other communications may be filtered, distorted, refocused, or obscured through the use of the rhetorical equivalents of projection, refraction, reflection, and masking.

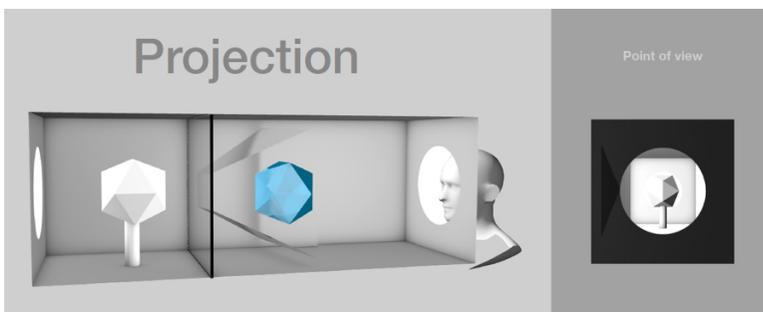


Figure 2: Projection. The image the viewer sees in this example is a 3D projection. It is not the true image of the facts, but is instead a projected simulation.

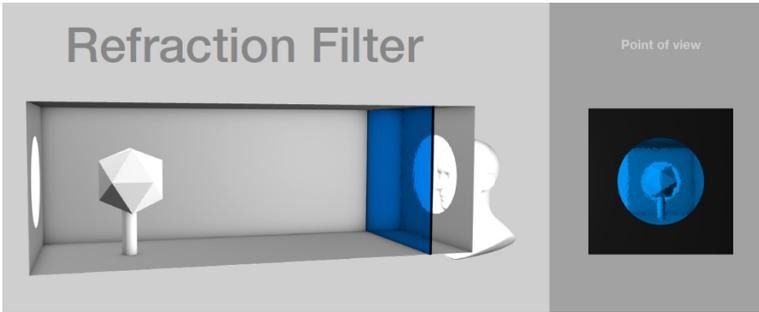


Figure 3: Refraction Filter. A refraction filter or obscure glass allows a limited amount of information to pass through it. The viewer is able to see the object but the image is distorted and unclear. There are methods for seeing through it using deblurring techniques. Those with access to these techniques are able to gain a greater level of transparency.

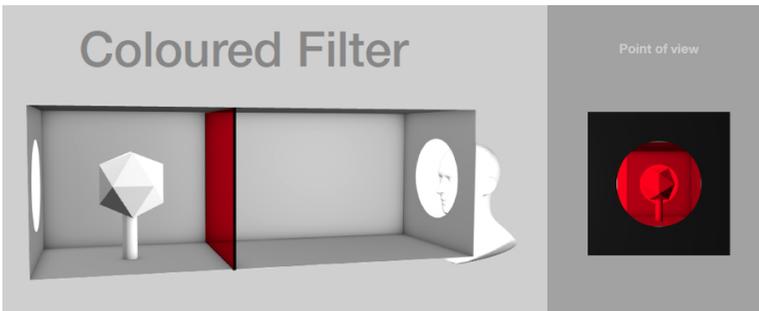


Figure 4: Coloured Filter. Coloured filters allow the viewer to see the object tempered with a particular tint. This can bias the way the viewer perceives and feels about the object. Colour psychology may vary greatly across different cultures. Filtering occurs when there is a proliferation of materials available, both in terms of what media decide to cover and what individuals decide to watch.

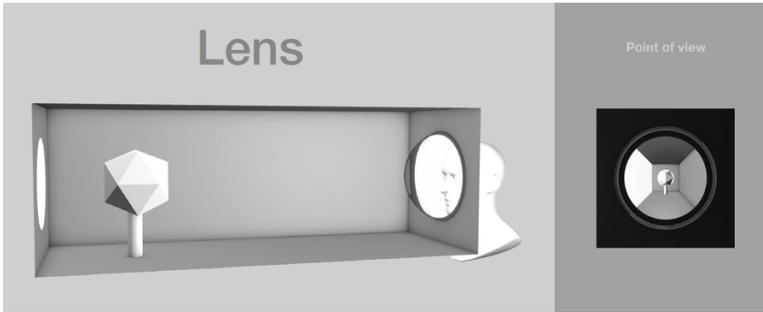


Figure 5: Lens. The lens through which we view a fact can distort how we see it. A wide-angle lens expands space, making objects look farther apart and more distant than normal. This allows greater opportunity to focus on specific elements within a scene. A lens can draw focus to or defocus a specific area.

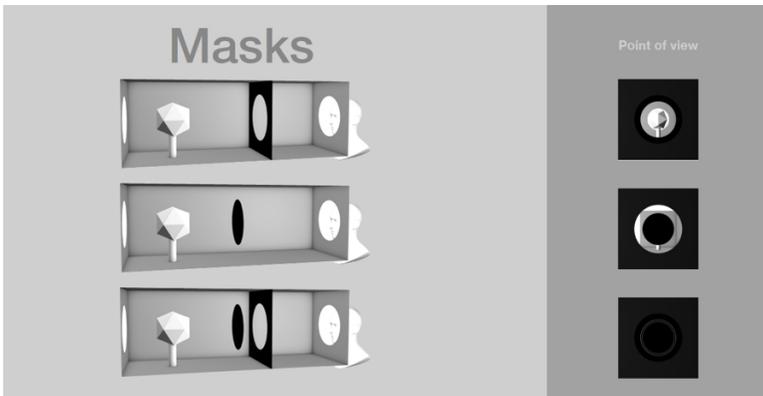


Figure 6: Masks. Masks lead the viewer to focus on particular designated areas of the facts. They may act as a veil to obscure specific areas. The example above shows how two masks, used individually, can allow the viewer to see certain aspects of the facts, whereas when used together, they mask the facts completely.

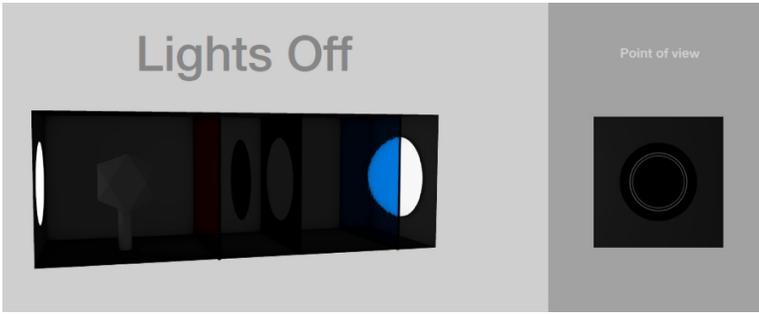


Figure 7: Lights Off. Transparency requires light. The facts are in place and viewable when those responsible for the facts permit the light to be switched on.

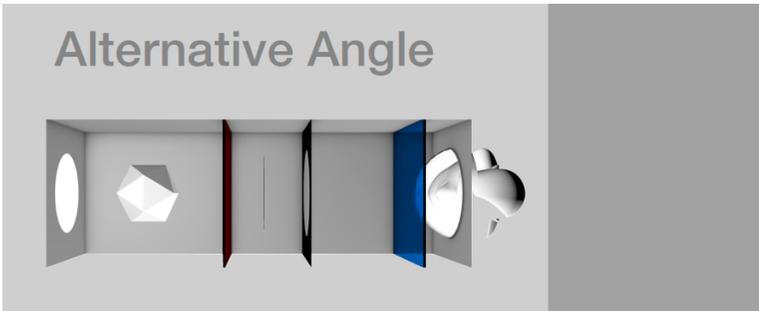


Figure 8: Alternative Angle. This view offers an alternative perspective to that of the viewer, representing another angle on the facts. In this view, the filters have no effect on the facts. The position of the viewer has an impact on how the facts are received.

Discussion Questions

- How can transparency be understood as an overvalued concept?
- What methods used by politicians and mass media might be noted as forms of projection, filtering, and masking?

- Provide examples of ways in which media and communications can be used to divert audience attention, supplementing politicians with new realities that crowd out and eventually displace other political realities and political issues.

Exercise

Create your own version of the diorama to expand your understanding of transparency in other areas of social science. You can construct it in different physical spaces, such as a hallway or a cardboard box, or you can sketch it out on paper or using graphic design software. Consider alternative views and perspectives, and the impact they have on transparency.

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[International colour symbolism diagram](#)

[What are the different types of optical filters?](#)

[Optical filters explained](#)

[How different lenses form images by refracting light](#)

[Transparency International](#): a global organisation against corruption

Triangulation

SUSAN MACHUM

Triangulation is a term that refers to the collection and use of multiple data sources, research methods, theories, and/or investigator perspectives to verify and corroborate research findings.

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Corroborating Evidence: The Value of Multiple Viewpoints and Perspectives

When police officers try to reconstruct what happened during a traffic accident, they ask all the passengers who were in the vehicles and witnesses to the accident to tell them the details of what happened. But they don't just rely on eyewitness accounts, they also measure skid marks, how far the vehicles and debris scattered from the point of collision, and the angles of impact. They

take photographs of the scene, check if airbags were deployed, and evaluate the extent of damage to each vehicle, especially when the accident involves a fatality. As Weiss notes, “the collision reconstruction may include pre-impact speed, and change of velocity... The principal direction of force, collision duration, and peak or average vehicle acceleration may also be evaluated” (2007, p. 2). Armed with varying accounts, measurements, photographic evidence, and follow-up research and analysis, the accident reconstructionist will establish who was at fault, and potentially lay charges. This method relies on multiple sources of evidence to draw a reliable and valid conclusion about what transpired.

Using multiple vantage points, data sets, and methods of inquiry is at the heart of triangulation. As the name suggests, triangulation is built on the laws of trigonometry and our measurement of triangles. That is, if we know one side and two angles of a triangle, we can use mathematical formulas to accurately calculate the other angle. Surveyors—and modern-day GPS technology—have long used three or more known points to identify the position of particular locations. By considering multiple vantage points, there is less likelihood of error, meaning that findings are more valid and reliable than if we had used only one or two points.

Triangulation was introduced into social science research in 1959 (Fiske & Campbell), with the agenda of building the most comprehensive and coherent pictures of the social situations under investigation. Since then, many researchers have built research projects that include multiple data sources and methods of data collection; in fact, triangulation is considered the cornerstone of mixed methods research. Denzin was an early adopter and he identified four key types of triangulation (2015):

Data triangulation involves collecting information from multiple sources to establish what occurred from different angles. In the example of an accident reconstruction, investigators interview passengers, witnesses, and car mechanics.

Methodological triangulation refers to using different research methods such as interviews, surveys, participant observation, photography, video, and ethnography, among others, to collect data in a variety of ways and for differing forms of analysis. In a car accident reconstruction, this could mean collecting witness statements, deposition transcripts, photographs, videos, debris, and collision measurements.

Theory triangulation requires researchers to look at the material from different explanatory perspectives and frameworks. Accident reconstructionists would review all the data collected to determine the velocity, acceleration, energy, and momentum of the vehicles at the time of impact, in order to explain the principal direction of force that occurred at the time of the collision.

Investigator triangulation occurs when more than one person takes part in the research, such as when multiple police officers examine a traffic accident or help analyze the data that was collected. When investigators come from different disciplines, the process and results are described as multi- or interdisciplinary.

Even though triangulation can be an imperfect process, taking multiple vantage points, sources of information, and theoretical frameworks to measure and evaluate the social world is a powerful social science strategy. Not only are the findings of triangu-

lated research likely to be more sound, those who conduct their research in this way are considered more credible. Whether the investigation involves human social dynamics or the reconstruction of a traffic accident, triangulation is a tactic and strategy that helps achieve more reliable and valid outcomes.



Figure 1: Re-creating an accident scene

Discussion Questions

- Have you ever been asked to describe what caused the eruption of a major argument between you and a friend, or

what happened during an accident, robbery, or other crime that you witnessed? How confident were you about your recall? Were there aspects of the event that were very clear and easy to recount, and others that were hazier in your memory? If so, what do you think made some details clearer and others vaguer and more distorted?

- Triangulation implies the need for at least three vantage points. Do you think that three data sources are too many? When would one or two sources be enough? And are there instances when we should be looking for even more data points and frameworks than three?
- Do you agree with the idea that there is no single 'correct' theoretical framework for understanding a context, and that multiple theories support better findings? Why or why not?

Exercise

Sitting in a circle with your colleagues in a room, identify an item that everyone can see, such as a door (it is best to pick an item that does not exist in multiple versions).

- Have several people describe the physical location of the object in relation to where they are sitting. For example, the door may be located directly in front of one person, but to the left of another.
- After several answers have been collected, discuss who is right.
- Given that all of the answers are correct, in terms of where the individual person is sitting, go on to discuss the different value of the information from each of the vantage points. Does this give you a

more precise account of where the door (window, desk, blackboard, screen, etc.) is located in the room?

- With the group, consider the effect using multiple methods (photography, sketches, measurements, participant observation, etc.) in collecting the information about the door (or other object).
- Discuss how our worldviews and experiences affect what we see and report in our descriptions of things (and even our ability to recognize the item we are asked to find and describe).

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Visualization

DAVID SZANTO

***David Szanto** is a teacher, consultant, and artist taking an experimental approach to gastronomy and food systems. Past projects include meal performances about urban foodscapes, immersive sensory installations, and interventions involving food, microbes, humans, and digital technology. David has taught at several universities in Canada and Europe and has written extensively on food, art, and performance.*

A **visualization** is a graphic representation that is intended to help communicate complex information in variable ways, without settling on a final, singular understanding.

This is (not) a food system: What visualizations do (and don't)

What is a *food system*? Many definitions exist, including this one drafted by the Scientific Group of the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit:

Food systems encompass the entire range of actors and their inter-linked value-adding activities involved in the production, aggregation, processing, distribution, consumption and disposal of food

products that originate from agriculture, forestry or fisheries, and food industries, and the broader economic, societal and natural environments in which they are embedded. (von Braun et al., 2020)

Definitions like this can make complex concepts relatively simple to apprehend, which in turn can be useful in learning contexts. At the same time, definitions that only use words can tend to make it seem that such concepts can be understood simply, or that there is only one way to understand them. Yet concepts such as food systems are necessarily complex, which means that they *can* and *should* be understood in many ways. Moreover, creating stable definitions of complex concepts often ignores what makes them interesting and unpredictable. One way to (partially) understand complexity is through the creation of visualizations.

The image below is a visualization of a food system (one that I created for a food studies project a few years ago). Unlike the textual definition above, it is messy and hard to understand. In making it, however, I had to think about what often isn't shown in straightforward definitions of food systems. This included things like the tools we use for documentation and writing, the abstract ideas we mobilize to express [relationships](#) and [complexity](#), and the scaling we choose when trying to express the limits and extents of a large-scale system. As I was making the visualization, I also realized how much it came out of my own perspective, and that my personal biases about food systems were baked into it. I therefore decided to try to leave a degree of confusion in the minds of those who looked at the visualization. By doing so, I believed it would invite people to ask questions, to wonder, to dig deeper, and to push back on my own interpretation of food systems.



Figure 1: A messy, hard-to-understand visualization of a food system.

In this sense, my visualization shows how the representation of something is always tied to the [positionality](#) of the person who makes it. Similarly, it shows that a visualization is, like a textual definition, a kind of translation of lived experience. That is, a visualization of a food system is not a food system itself—it’s a representation of one.

At the bottom of my visualization, I added the caption, “ceci n’est pas un système alimentaire” (*this is not a food system*). This is a riff on a painting by surrealist artist René Magritte called [La Trahison des images](#) (*The Treachery of Images*) (Wikipedia, 2021). Magritte’s painting features a wooden pipe on a pale background, with the words “Ceci n’est pas une pipe” (*This is not a pipe*) written below the image of the pipe. Magritte was making the point that a painting of an object is not a physical, three-dimensional thing, but is instead a two-dimensional, visual representation. While the image shown is indeed a pipe, it is *an image* of a pipe, and

not *an actual* pipe. In the same way, my visualization is not a food system, but a messy collage of pieces that I used to try to imagine how messy food systems are themselves.

In the social sciences, many types of visualization are used for making complex information more ‘readable’. Simple examples include bar graphs and pie charts, which turn numbers and percentages into different sized and coloured shapes that communicate proportional relationships within the data. More complex sets of data can also be visualized, sometimes in ways that draw attention to qualitative or quantitative details that might otherwise go unnoticed. In my food systems visualization, I tried to get at the idea of representing *relationships*, rather than what is usually considered *data*. I also tried to make a visual representation that explicitly shows my own [subjectivity](#) and positionality. In this way, the visualization is meant to shout out “*David made this from his own perspective and experience! It’s not an actual food system—it’s a collage he made and photographed in his studio! Now tell him what you think about it. Does it look like a food system to you? Do you understand food systems better now? Worse? What are you going to think about next?*” In other words, a visualization is meant to invite critical reading—not just the acceptance of one person’s perspective, data, or definition.

My food system visualization is an attempt to help people understand food systems, as well as an attempt to help people understand that food systems are sometimes *not so understandable*. Visualizations can therefore do double duty—clarifying and simplifying, as well as confusing and complexifying (Cadieux et al., 2016). Looking back at the image now, what do you get from it? Does it say *food system* to you, or something else? Collage? Mess? Pile of notes? Accident?

Discussion Questions

- Why is it important to differentiate between a thing (like a pipe or a food system) and the representation of a thing (like a painting or a visualization)?
- Data visualizations such as infographics are increasingly popular in mainstream media and science communications. How do they help explain what the data mean? How do they create additional challenges for understanding the data?
- A map is a visualization of a geographic terrain. What do city maps generally include and exclude? How are maps of the countryside different from city maps? Who makes these maps, and what is the intention (or context) behind their being made?

Exercise

Imagine your 'personal food system'. If you were to make a visualization of it, what would you include? What would you leave out?

- Think about the places, people, technologies, techniques, resources, media, and times of day/week/year that are significant to you and your foodways.
- Think about the relationships and interactions among these things, and how you might choose to represent them visually.
- How would you decide what your visualization includes, and what you would leave out? In other words, what are your 'translation' criteria?

ria?

- How would your visualization differ if you were making it for your friends and family, versus making it for a course assignment? How would it differ if you were drawing it with pen and paper, versus creating it digitally?

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Whiteness

KIP HOLLEY AND JILL CLARK

Dwight (Kip) Holley is a Research Associate with the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity at Ohio State University. His primary area of focus is using community engagement, cultural humility and civic leadership strategies to promote racial equity. Kip is the author of *The Principles for Equitable and Inclusive Civic Engagement: A Guide to Transformative Change*, Kirwan's keystone publication regarding civic engagement.

Whiteness refers to the way daily life is conducted that gives and reinforces the privilege and power of being “White.”

Jill K. Clark is an Associate Professor with the John Glenn College of Public Affairs at Ohio State University. Her research, public service, and teaching are in the areas of public participation design, deliberation, and local governance. Most of her work centers on the interface between civil society and the public sector in community food system development, focusing on issues of social equity.

The Civic Association—If you're not at the table, you might be on the menu

Six decades ago, the construction of a new highway cut off a predominantly Black neighborhood from the thriving downtown. Afterwards, the neighborhood suffered years of neglect and disinvestment. However, a branch of the local medical center later opened, which began to change the neighborhood's fortunes. New residents moved in—mostly young, middle-class, and White employees of the medical center.

A few of the neighborhood's new residents, led by newcomer Timothy, launched an effort to reconstitute the civic association, which had been all but forgotten in the intervening years. (A civic association is a group of residents who join together to plan for and have a voice in the development of their neighborhood.) Timothy and the new residents were aided by several longtime Black residents in the neighborhood, led by neighborhood leader Mary. While Mary was happy to see renewed interest and investment in her neighborhood, she was worried that her and her neighbors' voices might be drowned out by the newcomers.

To ensure that the association represented residents with a vested interest in the neighborhood, the association's executive committee decided that members must either be homeowners or else renters who have lived in the same home in the neighborhood for five years. The association also decided to adopt *Robert's Rules of Order* in their meetings. (*Robert's Rules* are standardized procedures on how to run a meeting to ensure that meetings run orderly and free of overly emotional debates and 'dramatic scenes.')

Due to connections that some of the new residents had with important local community members through their work at

the hospital, the association quickly gained clout within the city. Soon the association found itself in a position to influence neighborhood developments and attract investment. The association lobbied for tax abatements so that new homes built on vacant lots wouldn't be subject to property taxes, and for design regulations to make sure that new buildings and renovations of existing homes contributed to the neighborhood's historic curb appeal. Speaking for a small group of Black association members, Mary tried to voice concerns during the development of the regulations. She argued that the regulations regarding approved materials for windows, siding, and roofing might prove cost prohibitive for the few longtime Black residents who own homes, and for those that don't, it might raise their rents. Mary was assured by an executive committee member (who was also a planner) that the rules are best practices for historic neighborhoods, developed by a professional society of planners, to ensure new homes and renovations fit the neighborhood to protect everyone's investments.

The association's work paid off, attracting more young affluent families, artists, and small businesses. However, crime remained a problem, particularly property crime. Many association members began to complain about car break-ins and packages stolen off porches; they looked to the association to do something about it. In response, the association's president, Timothy, began to lobby the city police for more officers and neighborhood surveillance. He led the creation of an active and vigorous block watch that regularly posted safety updates on a neighborhood website.

Posts increased on the block watch page with descriptions of criminals, which prominently pointed out race and contained descriptions such as "thuggish" and "gangbanger." Some association members, particularly the few Black members, began to

complain. They said that some commenters seemed to stereotype the neighborhood's young Black men as criminals, casting suspicion on some of the Black members of the neighborhood, many of whom were not in the association.

The lack of Black representation in the association had been a sore spot among some members for a while. The residency rules tended to favor the wealthier newcomers who owned their homes. Many of the Black residents, who did meet the residency requirements, didn't bother coming to meetings because they felt that their voices wouldn't be listened to anyway. None of the existing older Black association members were on the executive committee and they often complained that the meeting rules were rigid and off-putting.

Like many of the new residents, Timothy felt that some of the older Black residents in the association complained too much and weren't willing to try to learn the association rules, despite efforts to help them out. This frustration boiled over as the block watch became more heated, with many White residents accusing Black association members of slowing down efforts and being "apologists for criminals," while Black board members accused the association of racism. Timothy was angered by the accusation, denying that the association never excluded anyone on the basis of race and pointing to the Black association members as proof.

* * * * *

This illustration shows one way in which Whiteness gives and reinforces privilege, in this case through the structure, rules, and foundations of a civic association. Whiteness, as a system of privilege, is invisible and rarely acknowledged. Yet all racial categories are socially constructed. In other words, all racial cate-

gories are products of human definition at a particular time and societal context. White and Whiteness only exist alongside other created racial concepts, such as Black and Blackness.

So, what does Whiteness look like in practice? Okum (2021) suggests that characteristics of Whiteness include: thinking there is only “one right way” of doing things; focusing on individualism, efficiency, and market-based solutions; exhibiting paternalism; promoting objectivity; fearing conflict; denying or being defensive about any White privilege; and for educated and middle-and owning-class White people, believing that they are ‘qualified’ to help the less fortunate fix their problems.

When citizens engage in public processes, more equitable outcomes are produced if both representation and processes themselves are inclusive and equitable. Yet decision-making tables often reflect those that have historically held power. This case of the civic association flips the script. Instead of asking, “How can we get diverse interests at the decision-making table?” a focus on Whiteness calls into question the identity and practices of the dominant group at the table. By understanding Whiteness, we can begin to dismantle White supremacy.

Discussion Questions

- What is your response to this vignette? How does it make you feel?
- How has this civic association been constructed as a “White space?” Which themes and characteristics of

Whiteness were you able to identify?

- What alternative approaches could the newcomers have taken that would not have reinforced their White privilege?
- Can you see Whiteness in other aspects of your daily life? How do these play out, and to what effect?

Additional Resources

[White Supremacy Culture](#), a website that offer a contemporary take on the characteristics of White Supremacy

[Racial Equality Tools](#), a site that offers tools, research, tips, curricula, and ideas for people who want to increase their own understanding and to help those working for racial justice at every level.

[Organizing Engagement](#), an online publication dedicated to advancing knowledge, understanding, and practice at the intersection of education organizing, engagement, and equity.

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