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**Creating, Negotiating,
and Transcending Social
Boundaries in Everyday Life**

by

Dawne Clarke

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and Transcending Social Boundaries in
Everyday Life*

edited by
Dawne Clarke



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An Introduction to the Special Issue from 2018's Qualitative Analysis Conference: *Creating, Negotiating, and Transcending Social Boundaries in Everyday Life*

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In May 2018, qualitative researchers from all over the world met in Fredericton, New Brunswick to participate in the 35th annual Qualitative Analysis Conference. This conference brings together undergraduate and graduate students, novice and established researchers in an open and collegial forum to explore the intricacies of qualitative research.

Coming together under the auspices of *Creating, Negotiating, and Transcending Social Boundaries in Everyday Life*, participants explored boundaries as a key concept in the social science tool-kit. Boundaries are a rich site of exploration, even more so now as we find ourselves establishing and challenging

taken-for-granted boundaries in health, political, social, and economic contexts and what they mean in a COVID-19 world. For example, in New Brunswick, there have been reported instances of “plate shaming” emerged as a practice that is a direct response to boundary “violations.” Out of province travelers, visible because of their out-of-province license plates, are shamed and humiliated, even punitively sanctioned for travelling from another province or state, violating provincial and/or federal boundaries. What was once an accepted, welcomed, and encouraging practice, especially for provinces heavily-reliant on tourism, travelling is now a boundary-violation.

The three papers in this special issue appear to have little in common, however, the critical examination of boundaries in multiple social contexts speaks how boundaries shape, sustain, create, deter, prohibit all kinds of social, political, and economic facets of our everyday world. Physical, social, temporal, spatial, virtual, and relational; boundaries provide a critical analysis space to examine the everyday world. At the other end of the spectrum is transcending those boundaries.

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This allows the exploration of new and emerging spaces deepening our understanding of boundaries as various shades of gray. Consider again plate shaming; we cannot assume the boundary violation is just that of the driver wanting access to the province. That boundary is maintained, or not, at the discretion of peace officers stationed at the border. How does discretionary authority reinforce or violate those state-sanctioned boundaries?

The following papers challenge boundary-making activities in a variety of contexts. To begin, we enter a world where the boundaries of what it means to be human are questioned. *Exploring Other-Than-Human Identity: A Narrative Approach to Otherkin, Therianthropes, and Vampires*, by Clive Baldwin and Lauren Ripley, explores transgressing identity boundaries by investigating and acknowledging the gray-area boundaries between human and non-human. Interviews with *Otherkin*, people with marginal, concealable identities who believe themselves to be something other than human; dragons, vampires, werewolves or other creatures not-of-this-world, or non-biological entities like androids, and *Therians*, people who identify in varying degrees as other-than-humans; dogs, wolves, dolphins, bears, cats, et cetera. Otherkin and Therians, then, illustrate human-non-human boundary transgression at the most basic level, our sense of self. Exploring the reshaping of identity boundaries creates an opening to understand a community who engage in constant boundary negotiations in a social world characterized by marginalization.

Stella Čapek's paper, *Trees as Dialogue: Negotiating Boundaries with the Anne Frank Sapling Project*, asks us to consider how a small tree sapling grafted from the chestnut tree that stood outside of Anne Frank's attic window while she wrote her famous diary can link the tree to dialogue about past and present social justice issues. The sapling, installed at the Clinton Presidential Center in Little Rock, Arkansas, acquires meaning as a "significant other" and crosses social, political, historical, and social justice boundaries, reinforcing social science commitment to challenging the taken-for-granted understandings of the social world, in this case, a tree is so much more than a tree and it can transcend boundaries, creating a bridge between the past and the present.

Finally, Lynne Gouliquer, Carmen Poulin, and Jennifer McWilliams question the othering of female firefighters and how they transcend multiple taken-for-granted boundaries relating to gender, physicality, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age. Othering manifests in discrimination, hostile work environments, and undermining of firefighter identity as women continue to push forward in a traditionally male-dominated occupation.

Each of the above papers represents the quality of empirical investigation and analysis that serves as the hallmark of the Qualitative Analysis Conference. While the 2020 Qualitative Conference was postponed by COVID-19, plans for the Qualitatives 2021, at Brescia College in London, Ontario, are underway. Details can be found at www.qualitatives.ca, and I hope you will consider submitting an abstract and/or attending.

Citation

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Exploring Other-Than-Human Identity: A Narrative Approach to Otherkin, Therianthropes, and Vampires

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Keywords:

Otherkin; Therians;
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Identity; Spiritual
Identity

Abstract: Drawing on in-depth, narrative interviews with 24 self-identified Otherkin, Therianthropes, and Vampires, we explore how members of these communities navigate Bamberg's three "dilemmatic spaces" or tensions of continuity/change, similarity/difference, and person-to-world/world-to-person fit. With regard to the first, we identify four aetiological narratives (walk-ins, reincarnation, trapped soul, and evolutionary soul), and discuss stories of shifts and awakening. For the second, we discuss how participants manage the similarity/difference tension with regard to themselves and humans, and explore categorical and renunciatory othering within the communities. Finally, we explore the ways in which members of the communities experience a barren narrative environment, and ways they seek to construct storyworlds and narrative resources as frames for establishing their identities.

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The concept of narrative identity has gained traction over the last 20 years, with contributions from psychology (e.g., Schechtman 1996), sociology (Somers 1994; Ezzy 1998), philosophy (Dennett 1992; Ricoeur 1992), social work (Baldwin 2013; Baldwin and Estey 2014), and literary theory (de Peuter 1998) to give an indicative, not comprehensive list. One of the more applied approaches in this area is Bamberg's (2004; 2010) conception of narrative identity, which consists of navigating three "dilemmatic spaces" or tensions: that of continuity/change in which the individual must make sense of her-/himself in terms of to what degree is s/he the same as s/he was, and to what degree different; that of similarity/difference in which the individual makes claims to being the same as others and claims to being different; and person-to-world/world to person fit, in which the individual has to account for, accommodate, or change her/his stories in the light of the stories told about her/him by others, and/or have the world account for, accommodate, or change its stories about the individual. In this article, which is based on and extends a paper presented at the Qualitatives 2018 conference at St. Thomas University, Fredericton, NB, we utilize Bamberg's model of narrative identity to develop our understanding of multiple non-standard identities, those of spiritually-oriented Otherkin, Therianthropes, and Vampires. Drawing on qualitative interviews with a range of Otherkin and Therianthropes, as well as Vampires, we will explore how such individuals construct their identities through narrative techniques. In so doing, we will argue that individuals identifying as other-than-human are simply deploying the same techniques as those with more standard identities.

We will proceed in the following manner. After some initial comments about the three communities which form the focus of this study, a note on Otherkin and Therianthropes, and a brief survey of the (somewhat scant) academic literature, we will lay out some of the narrative concepts required to understand the process of constructing and maintaining a viable and stable narrative identity. Following this, we will provide some detail about the study, the participants, and the methods. Turning to the body of the paper, we will explore how participants navigate Bamberg's three dilemmatic spaces, paralleling participant approaches to this with the construction of a more mainstream spiritual identity on the part of one of the authors [CB]. In conclusion, we will suggest that individuals identifying in part or completely as other-than-human are engaging in the same process of narrativizing identity as those with more standard identities, though are doing so with far fewer narrative resources. Ways in which Otherkin and Therian communities are addressing this will be discussed.

A Note on Three Communities

Given the lack of recognition and understanding of the three communities in this study, a note on those communities may be necessary in order to locate the individual experiences of participants in a wider narrative of Otherkinity, Therianthropy, and Vampirism. The development of collective narrative resources, and the experience of individuals who "awaken" to their otherness (see below), are intertwined, and to understand one, it is necessary to understand the other.

The Otherkin Community

The most detailed history of the Otherkin community can be found in Scribner's (2012) *Otherkin*

Timeline. The community has its origins in the early 1970s when a group identifying themselves as elves came together as the Elf Queen's Daughters (EQD). Throughout the '70s and '80s the EQD published information and resources concerning the elfin life and seems to have been the main source of elfin activity. The first use of the term "Otherkind" (with a final d) was in 1990 in the *Elfkind Digest*, with the appearance of "Otherkin" later that year in a list-serv as a way of including non-elves in the developing community. Since then, the Otherkin community, while not solely an Internet-based community, has certainly grown up alongside advances in Internet technology (Shane 2014). The Otherkin community, however, is loosely organized and appears as somewhat of a "loose and baggy monster," with all the creativity, openness, and messiness that implies. Although there are several websites for Otherkin (the most notable currently being Otherkin.net and Kinmunity.com), these are the projects of individuals rather than the result of any collective or organization. Such sites provide opportunities for Otherkin of all kin-types to discuss, share, and debate individuals and community issues, and as a repository for the growing self-understandings of the community.

The Therian Community

According to theriantimeline.com, the modern Therian community is a product of the last decade of the 20th century, with the term "therian" becoming more commonplace after 2000 (see: http://theriantimeline.com/therianthropy/history_of_therianthropy_and_the_therian_community). The online Therian community emerged from horror media discussion boards such as Alt Horror: Werewolf, where in the early '90s discussions of real Werewolves arose. While the Therian community has

grown and strengthened through the Internet, it is important to note that there are older Therians, born before the advent of the Internet, who form a stable, offline community. Many Therians, it appears, initially were members of Otherkin communities (and, of course, some still identify as both), but there has been an emergent categorical distinction between the two over the years. Some communities, such as Kinmunity.com, provide a home for Therians, while there are Therian-specific communities such as therian-guide.com and <http://therian-wilderness.proboards.com/>.

The Vampire Community

As with the Otherkin and Therian communities, the Vampire community grew and strengthened in the '90s, though there had been, according to Browning (2014), a disjointed network of self-identifying real vampires for a couple of decades prior to this, connecting through fan clubs, Goth clubs, conventions, and fetish sites. By the '70s Vampirism became the focus of bodies such as the Vampire Research in Britain (1970), the Vampire Research Center in New York (1971), and the Vampire Studies Society (1977). In 1978, Eric Held formed the Vampire Information Exchange and published a newsletter from then until the mid-2000s. The first indication that this loose network constituted a form of community came in 1997 on Sanguinarius' Vampire Support Page (<http://www.sanguinarius.org/>). Of the three communities, it seems that the Vampire community has the strongest offline presence, with organized groups in many places. Compared with the Otherkin community, the Vampire community appears relatively well-organized with recognizable "leaders" (in the sense of established and respected individuals) and some degree of structure (for example, these vampire "leaders" gather to discuss issues facing the

community)—though the robustness of this organization should not be overstated. Unlike the other two communities, the Vampire community has been the subject of a large research study, undertaken by Suscitatio Enterprises, the results of which are available at: <http://www.suscitatio.com/>.

A Note on Otherkin and Therians

Although we will present further detail on the multiple distinctions to be made among Otherkin and Therians, and between Otherkin and Therians and other non-human identities; at the outset, it may be helpful to provide at least some basic definitions. Otherkin are those who identify, in whole or in part, as other-than-human. There are many different “kin” who fall under the Otherkin umbrella—dragonkin, angelkin, elvenkin, unicornkin, and so on. Therians are those who identify, in whole or in part, as other-than-human, but as Earth animals such as wolves, dogs, cats, cheetahs, and so on. For some, Therianthropy may be seen as a subset of Otherkinity, though, for others, there is a substantive distinction to be made between those who identify as mythical or fictional creatures and those who identify as earthly ones.

A further distinction pertinent to this paper is that between Otherkin and Therians, who identify as such from a spiritual basis—that is, those who view themselves as having the soul of an other-than-human being albeit within a human body (“You get a lot of [uh] Otherkin who talk about, you know, what the, the soul that’s Otherkin the meat suit that’s human” Participant F05)—and those whose identification is purely psychological.

Otherkin and Therians do not consciously create the identity, rather it is something present at birth,

eventually realized as they “awaken” to their true identities. In this way, some participants compare it to transgender identity, where one feels and identifies with the gender opposite to that which they were designated at birth (see: Grivell, Clegg. And Roxburgh 2014). However, instead of identifying with a different gender, one identifies with a species other than *Homo sapiens*. The animal, or creature, that one establishes as a part of their soul is referred to as the kin type, or theriotype.

The Otherkin/Therian communities are distinctive in their heterogeneity. The Otherkin community itself expresses this through “categorical othering”—non-judgmental categorization of individuals into kin type (see: Bricker 2016) with separate kin-types for and listings for members to join and, hopefully, gain support. Similarly, there are many explanations provided for Otherkinity/Therianthropy—of which later—ranging from genetics to reincarnation. The two communities are also very diverse in terms of age—the participants in our study ranging from 17-71. This diversity in age is not always apparent in the literature where it is often younger Otherkin/Therians who are the subject of study.

Finally, for the most part, these communities have not had a place within mainstream society, are subject to ridicule and “trolling” on their community websites, and thus often prefer to remain anonymous, being wary of the attention of researchers. Thus, the experience of being Otherkin or Therian remains in great part unknown.

A Note on the Literature

The literature on Otherkin, Therians, and Vampires is relatively sparse. Much of the literature focuses on the phenomena of Otherkinity and Therianthro-

py (see, for example, Shane 2014; Cusack 2016) with only a handful focusing on the experience of Otherkin and Therians themselves (see: Grivell et al. 2014; Bricker 2016; Gagliardi 2016). While these studies are, to some degree, helpful in their descriptions of such processes as “awakening” and “shifting” (see later), the authors of these studies of experience acknowledge methodological limitations, whether in sampling or in data collection. Even Grivell and colleagues’ (2014) informative and important study focused on only five participants, a sample within the parameters of their chosen approach of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) and one that met the requirements of IPA, which is that the sample should be homogeneous (Therian, relatively close age-range, theriotype), but in doing so is, we think, too small to encompass the diversity of the Therian community. Similarly, Bricker (2016) interviewed only seven participants and Gagliardi (2016) relied on vlogs rather than directly interviewing Otherkin and Therians. Laycock’s (2012) analysis of secondary data taken from “The Vampire and Energy Work Research Study” (VEWRS), undertaken between 2006-2009, provides a useful background and information about Otherkin and Therians based on qualitative responses of 70 participants. From this data, Laycock explores the heterogeneity of the Otherkin community. However, the data from these 70 participants amounted to only 81 pages, a relatively small dataset given that these were responses to a five-part question, and thus, perhaps, lacks the rich, nuanced data required for in-depth analysis of identity-work.

In addition to some of the methodological limitations of studies of Otherkin and Therians, there are several misconceptions or understandings evident in the literature. The first of these is that of the distinction between Otherkin and Therians who view

their “otherness” as having a spiritual basis and those who see it as a psychological identification. Some authors (see: Johnston 2013) do recognize this but, others seem to view Otherkin as a new, invented, or fictional religion or falling almost exclusively within a spiritual framework (see: Kirby 2005; 2008 [updated 2012]; 2009; Robertson 2013; O’Callaghan 2015; Cusack and Kosnak 2016). Laycock (2012) is less inclined to categorize Otherkin as a New Religious Movement, and, indeed, indicates that some Otherkin do not identify as spiritual individuals. But, he states that it is clear that they form what Bainbridge and Stark (1980) call an “audience cult,” a “movement which supports novel beliefs and practices, but without a discernible organization” (Laycock 2012:73) which competes, albeit obliquely, with religious traditions. In contrast, in recruiting for the study reported here, it became apparent that those Otherkin and Therians identifying as such on a spiritual basis are, in fact, in the minority in their respective communities, confirming White Wolf’s (2014) informal survey that indicated only about 1/3 of Therians identified as such on the basis of spirituality.

A second misconception, reported by the participants in our study, is that the Otherkin and Therian communities are primarily online communities (see, for example, Robertson 2013; Shane 2014). This is understandable when the Internet is the primary method of recruiting for studies of Otherkin/Therians, but, while there is indeed a lot of online activity, especially among younger members of the communities, older Otherkin/Therians reported that they rarely participate in the online community, preferring to maintain personal social contact with others. To view Otherkinity/Therianthropology then as an Internet phenomenon is thus somewhat misleading.

A third misconception is to bracket together Otherkin and Therians with Furrines or Bronies. The misconception here is two-fold: first, while Otherkinity and Therianthropy are involuntary identifications, Furriness is a voluntary choice; second, Furs do not see their Furriness in the ontological way Otherkin and Therians do—they see their Furriness as an assumed identity (for whatever purposes). There is, of course, some overlap for some members of each community, and some members of the Otherkin/Therian communities have been members of the Fandom at times, in particular when they are seeking to make sense of their experience of being Other. However, in general terms the Otherkin/Therian communities separate themselves from the Fandom.

The Current Study

The data presented here on Otherkin, Therians, and Vampires form a subset of data gathered for a wider study on spiritual identity. The study has recently received funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council under the Insight Development Grant program and has been reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Board of St. Thomas University.

The purpose of the study is to explore how individuals see and express their spiritual identity through the stories they tell, and the stories that are told about them, with a view to not only understanding the experience of non-traditional or non-mainstream spirituality (terminology is very difficult here as all currently accepted terms seem to carry with them some tendency to marginalize these experiences), but also to explore how these experiences can be brought into the wider discourse of spirituality through inter-faith activity.

Otherkin, Therians, and Vampires were sought via postings and contacts on multiple websites and Facebook pages, with others being recruited by word of mouth from earlier participants. Inclusion criteria were that participants should have capacity to provide consent, be over the age of 16 (or 18 for participants coming from one particular community—a requirement of being permitted to post to that community), define themselves as Otherkin, Therian or Vampire on the basis of spirituality, or that being Otherkin, Therian or Vampire was an important aspect of their spirituality.

Narrative-based interviews (see: Mishler 1986; Anderson and Kirkpatrick 2016) were undertaken. Most interviews were conducted via Skype or telephone with a few being conducted via Discord. A few interviews were conducted via text chat at the behest of the participants who indicated that they felt more comfortable and more able to express themselves properly this way. Interviews focused on the participants' spiritual journeys, their relationships, their engagement with the Otherkin/Therian and other communities, representations of those communities in the wider world, and their thoughts and experiences of common spiritual concepts such as fate, serendipity, mystery, the afterlife, and so on. The interview schedule was designed so as to elicit data on sense and meaning making, identity formation over time, and the interaction between personal stories and those circulating in the wider world.

Narrative methods for understanding identity have developed over the two decades or so—with major contributions from authors in the field of psychology such as Schechtman (1996), Bamberg (2004; 2010), and, more philosophically, Ricoeur (1992) and Dennett (1992). The usefulness of narrative in

the study of identity lies in its ability to encompass the inner stories of individuals as they seek to make sense of experience, and bring meaning to that experience (see, for example, Crites [1971] and Carr [1991] who argue that experience in and of itself bears a narrative quality), the outer stories of others that help shape experience and inner stories (see: Kenyon and Randall 1997), and meta-narratives—stories circulating in society that facilitate or hinder the construction of viable, acceptable, and stable narrative identities (see: Nelson 2001). In this paper, we explore the stories told by participants utilizing Bamberg's model of narrative identity which focuses on how individuals navigate three "dilemmatic spaces." The first of these addresses the dynamic of continuity and change in which the individual must make sense of her-/himself in terms of to what degree is s/he the same as s/he was and to what degree different. The second focuses on how an individual positions her-/himself as similar to and/or different from others. The third dilemmatic space refers to the person-to-world/world-to-person fit, in which the individual has to account for, accommodate, or change her/his stories in the light of the stories told about her/him by others and/or have the world account for, accommodate, or change its stories about the individual. This model thus encapsulates both inside-out and outside-in stories (Kenyon and Randall 1997) in that it allows for the exploration and integration of internal and external storytelling (and the dynamic between them) and how identity is formed or negotiated personally and socially (see: de Peuter 1998), and an appreciation of the "narrative environment," the stories which surround us in our everyday lives (Randall and McKim 2008) which "impel, pervade, and mediate our understandings of our everyday, experiential worlds" (Parsons 2009) and within which we orient ourselves.

Participants

Here we draw on interviews with participants in the wider study who self-identify as Otherkin, Therian, or Vampire. To date (the study is ongoing) there are 24 participants included in this part of the study. As can be seen, there is a fairly even split between male and female participants, and between those identifying as Otherkin and those as Therian. The age range of participants was 17-71, with, again, reasonably even representation from younger and older generation members of the communities.

Continuity/Change

The shift from a human to a non-human identity would seem to be one that is fundamental to one's sense of self, an almost complete leaving behind of one's old identity and the immersion in another, radically different one. For Otherkin, Therians, and Vampires, however, this break with the past is less radical than it might appear as the new, authentic, identity is accommodated into a life story of past, present, and future in ways that create a sense of continuity.

First, there is the establishment of a narrative aetiology—the construction of a story that explains the origin of something, in this case, the experiences of being "other-than human." In this study, four aetiological narratives were identified: walk-in narratives, reincarnation, trapped soul, and evolving soul.

In the event of a walk-in soul, the original soul of the body is said to have departed, and thus a new soul has come in to take its place. In the case of Otherkin, and Therianthropes, this soul would be that of the animal or creature with which they identify:

Participant code*	Gender	Identity	Community	Self-identified as older generation
N42	Female	Dragon	Otherkin	
N43	Male	Mexican Wolf	Therian	Yes
N44	Male	Wolf	Therian	
N45	Female	Lioness/Canine	Therian	
N46	Female	Dragon/Coyote	Otherkin	
N47	Male	Dragon	Otherkin	Yes
N48	Male	Coastal Brown Bear	Therian	Yes
N49	Male	Medieval character	Otherkin	Yes
N50	Female	Dragon	Otherkin	
N51	Female	Unicorn	Otherkin	
N53	Female	Cheetah	Therian	
N54	Male	Dragon	Otherkin	Yes
N55	Female	Angel	Otherkin	
N56	Male	Medieval knight	Otherkin	
N57	Male	Werewolf	Therian	Yes
N58	Female	Werewolf	Therian	
N59	Female	Wolf/Siberian Husky	Therian	
N60	Male	Werewolf	Therian	Yes
N61	Male	Elf	Otherkin	Yes
N62	Female	Elf	Otherkin	Yes
F05	Male	Elf	Otherkin	Yes
F11	Female	Elf	Otherkin	
F12	Female	Vampire	Vampire	
F13	Female	Vampire	Vampire	Yes

* Participant codes are those used in the wider project.

I consider myself a walk-in, in that I'm not the original spirit in the body...for most people who identify that way, the spirit previously in the body left or didn't want to be there anymore. That's what happened to me. [Participant N55 Angel]

...there was a host that had been born in this body along with me and she left at nineteen, so essentially I'm kind of a walk-in... [F11 Elf]

In the case of reincarnation an individual believes that her/his past life was lived out as the animal or

creature with which they identify and that following their death, s/he was reincarnated in a human body:

...but, spiritually, I believe this is like a complete reincarnation [uh] my thoughts for when I die is that God will then take my body and put it back into the body of a Mexican wolf where I can live out my life as I felt this life should have been. [Participant N43 Mexican wolf]

I also think that [um] personally as for [like] my own belief I think that [um] there are paths or we have all

lived past lives of a sort and that [um] that affects my otherkin [um] identity. And then I believe that this particular fragment has followed me throughout [um] my lives I guess, so based on that logic I've come to conclude that there is some type of soul that gets reincarnated. [Participant N50 Dragon]

A further aetiological narrative was that of the trapped soul. This explanation discusses how an individual has accidentally been given the soul of an animal, or other non-human creature, instead of that of a human: "for whatever reason instead of receiving a human soul I got the soul of a coastal brown bear for whatever reason" (Participant N48 Coastal Brown Bear).

The final explanation which arises from a spiritual stand-point is that of evolving souls. This account expresses that the non-human soul was allocated to the human body for evolutionary purposes. An individual who ascribes to this narrative believes that in their next life s/he will live as the animal or creature with which they identify, therefore the placement of a non-human soul is used primarily for preparation. One participant stated:

...in this life and in the past life I was a human so I came back this way, but in this life I'm learning how...the qualities needed to be, to grow into what they want me to be, this is going to sound so weird [um] in the next life. [Participant N47 Dragon]

While these aetiological narratives might appear quite different, they have in common the establishment of otherness as being continuous over time—either through previous lives or as pre-existing souls. The break from human to non-human is thus ameliorated significantly (if not removed altogether). Indeed, the process of "awakening"—

the process whereby individuals become aware of their other-ness—is experienced as one of authenticity.

Aetiological narratives are, however, based on prior story formulations as a means of making sense of bodily, mental, and emotional experiences. These stories are stories of "awakening"—the move from non-recognition to recognition of one's true or authentic identity. Otherkin, Therians, and Vampires, prior to awakening, are confronted with experiences for which there are few, if any, social or cultural narrative resources on which to draw in order to make sense of the experience. These experiences might be physical, such as experiencing the sensation of having a tail, or being larger than one's body:

But, feeling suddenly as though one is somewhere in the neighborhood of twenty-two feet tall can be concerning, especially if one is in a small area or driving in a car... [Participant N54 Dragon]

...for example, tail or ears that are on top of my head instead of on the side [uh] I feel routinely paw pads where my palms are, I feel them where my toes are on my feet... [Participant N44 Wolf]

I used to have phantom feelings of [like] fur on the back of my neck or ears, or a tail, but I haven't had them in a while. [Participant N53 Cheetah]

These physical experiences are framed as "phantom shifts," experiences recounted by almost all participants. It is important to note, however, that all participants emphasized that they understand these shifts as phantom—no-one subscribing to the notion of shape-shifting (a notion that is rejected on the whole in both the Otherkin and Therian com-

munities). Thus, the continuity of the human body is maintained alongside the continuity of being Otherkin or Therian.

A second form of shift also relating to the body are what are termed “sensory shifts.” These are times in which the senses become heightened, and resemble that of the kin/theriotype, these shifts usually occur alongside a mental shift. An example of this would be a wolf-kin suddenly having an increased sense of smell or hearing:

...especially it happens when I'm outside, you know, I just [um] I'll have instances where I'll be talking to someone or just in my own little world, and then suddenly I'll kind of just focus in on hearing birds and, [um] for, I'll be passing by somewhere and the, the smell will really catch me [laugh]. [Um] Just things like that. [Participant N58 Werewolf]

In addition to phantom and sensory shifts, Otherkin and Therians may experience moving into the mind-space of the kin/theriotype with whom s/he identifies, and thus s/he will begin to act, and respond to the environment, as though s/he were that animal or creature. Such shifts are called “mental shifts” and are experienced as both desire, as in the following quotes,

I felt this yesterday, I felt the urge just to want to run on all fours, and just [uh] just become a wolf. [Participant N43 Mexican wolf]

I would have, I don't know, I would just have different moments where I would want to [like] bark or do things that canines do. [Participant N58 Werewolf]

or in focus of attention, as reported by the following participants:

I start sniffing the air and I start [uh] really observing what is around me. I start listening really close if something is around me I might start growling, whining [um] if I get depressed I might start howling [um] I, I just I begin to act more wolf like than, than human... [Participant N43 Mexican wolf]

The human aspects of me fade into the background, and the wolf aspects of me come into the foreground, so when I'm in a deep shift, I can quite literally start acting like a wolf and, and that includes things from the way my mind works, I feel like my mind takes on a completely different form, I think differently I, I interact with the world differently [um] depending on the strength of the shift. [Participant N44 Wolf]

One of the biggest problems with dragonkin is that when we're immature, we definitely let our emotions get the best of us and this can push past well into adulthood and until we learn to recognize it, it really does stifle our connections with other people because, while we think we're being rational, they see that we are clearly not. [Participant N46 Dragon/Coyote]

Another form of shifting, albeit less noted within our interviews, is emotional shifts, which occurs when an individual experiences a move towards feeling more as the kin/theriotype whilst in a particular emotional state. For instance, during times of sadness or anger, or more generally—in times of high emotions. These shifts are usually accompanied by other types of shifts, commonly mental shifts.

Eventually I began to feel [um] horns when I was [like] in certain moods, as well as a, a tail and eventually I got to feel wings... [Participant N50 Dragon]

Finally, dream shifts are described as happening while an individual is asleep. During this time the kin/theriotype will stimulate the brain, which results in the person dreaming as if they were that kin/theriotype, many participants also mention dream shifts bringing about past life recall.

I'm just able to be a wolf in my dreams, and [um] it kind of helps with, [uh] you know, my day life, you know, like obviously can't shift into a wolf so that's kind of like my, my fun time [laughing]. [Participant N58 Werewolf]

Some participants narrativize these experiences through developing a notion of identity in which they view their nature not as dual, but as a human-kin/theriotype blend with characteristics of one or the other being foregrounded at certain times and in certain circumstances. Several participants reported that following their awakening they were able to increase their control over their shifts—intentionally willing them at times:

I can voluntarily trigger them as well, [um] but it requires concentration and time, and a meditative state, and it's sort of like [um] we used to call it getting small like [uh] there was a group of us who would get together for spiritual practices, you know, we'd, we'd get together and meditate and, you know, talking about our Therianthropy and how, you know, a group of us who were spiritual Therians, [uh] our spiritual practices and why we felt we were the way we were, and it was during those [uh] meditative practices that I kind of figured out how to get into that bear headspace... [Participant N48 Coastal Brown Bear]

So, when I am alone, my mind shifts from my human mind to my wolf mind. Since my distracting human thoughts get in the way, I sometimes have to medi-

tate first. Then I just forget what it's like to be human. When this happens, I often run around on all fours and will even chase things or bite things. It hurts to run on all fours, but it feels natural. [Participant N59 Wolf/Siberian Husky]

Sometimes, I can, I can use meditation and [uh] mindfulness to induce a shift, if I want to have one I, I can make it happen, but I also have involuntary shifts, so sometimes I will get shifts and there might not be an obvious trigger or an obvious why, it just kind of happens. [Participant N44 Wolf]

Thus, while Otherkin/Therians report shifts as more or less continuous experiences, these experiences are made sense of retrospectively through the process of awakening, the stories of which serve to facilitate the transition or change in self-identity. The experiences of awakening lend some support to Boje's (2000; 2009) concept of ante-narrative, a pre-narrativized experience that requires integration into a sense-making narrative, rather than the notion from Crites (1971) and Carr (1991) that experience is narrative in nature. Participants reported wrestling with peculiar experiences for which they had few cultural narrative resources prior to finding the Otherkin/Therian communities which provided a framework for understanding their experiences, namely, stories of shifts. We shall return to the subject of the lack of cultural narrative resources for the development of non-human identities later, when we discuss Fricker's (2007) notion of hermeneutical injustice and Partridge's (2004; 2005; 2014) concept of occulture.

Similarity and Difference

Bamberg's (2010) second dilemmatic space relates to how individuals (or groups) position themselves

as similar to, or different from, others. This space it seems is key to understanding the experience of Otherkin, Therians, and Vampires.

The first, and most obvious, tension in this space is that of involving the similarity and difference of Otherkin, Therians, and Vampires to and from humans. By definition Otherkin, Therians, and Vampires are those who identify in whole or in part as other-than-human. Nevertheless, they accept their bodies as human—for example, they do not generally accept the notion of shape shifting as a possibility and are very skeptical of those who claim to be able to do so

...teeth and the claws are a thing that I always had, but didn't [um] and they were there, they were so real and, you know, and for a while I had to close my mouth in a particular way, otherwise I was afraid, I was afraid I'd bite myself. *But it, it, you know, it's not there because you're still human, you're still physically a human being* as much as it, for whatever reason, might not feel that way... [Participant N42 Dragon, authors' emphasis]

and that they are required to enact their lives in a human world:

...and I am perfectly, you know, capable of, minus my anxiety and the panic attacks, capable of holding down jobs [uh] managing financial affairs, managing my life, managing friends, family, managing a very professional and [uh] human life... [Participant N43 Mexican Wolf]

...we're, [um] you know, we're members of society just like everybody else. We all have jobs and lives and families and, [um] you know, we're, we're normal, but we're not normal, but we are normal... We're just like, you know, everyday people just living our lives, just

trying to survive, you know [um], having fun, just, just like everybody else, and that's what I want people being able to see, you know. [Participant N58 Werewolf]

Turning to similarities and differences between and within other-than-human communities, almost all participants referred in some way or other to those they experienced from others. Getzler (2013) discusses two forms of othering: categorical othering, that is, the demarcation of categories indicating difference without judgment or denigration and renunciatory othering, othering that excludes individuals from the group.

In participant interviews, both forms of othering were evident. Categorical othering was evident in the plethora of kin-types (and within-kin types) and theriotypes referred to, and in the Vampire community a distinction was made between sanguinarian and psychic vampires (see: Laycock 2010 for an excellent exposition of the Vampire community). This process of categorical othering is demonstrated by the general acceptance of all kin- or theriotypes, and many participants commented on the welcoming nature of the community:

...overall it's, unless you manage to get on the bad side of the community or garner a bad name for yourself through whatever your actions happen to be that deserve it are, generally pretty accepting because they know what it's like to not be accepted... so they are welcoming so long as you don't hurt them and [uh] I should hope that most people would be welcoming so long as you don't hurt them. [Participant N42 Dragon]

So the knowledge that's in the community, and the understanding and acceptance and the willingness of so many of these people to help you, yourself because they're feeling the same things they felt, the

same things you're feeling [um] and they just want to help you gain that understanding... [Participant N42 Dragon]

This process of categorical othering is useful in that it allows for an acknowledgement of difference, and indeed individual uniqueness, within a community. However, the very identification of uniqueness in some ways might limit the support able to be provided by the community:

It's definitely, that's one of the biggest challenges with Otherkin is that we can help each other immensely, but at the same time some of us just have really different goals, and that means that we are bound to be divergent eventually. [Participant N46 Dragon/Coyote]

One participant, for example, stated:

...it's a very strong pull as I said, like there's definitely people out there that where they are I have no clue I have not been in [uh] every, I'm in virtually every Otherkin Discord, so, I'm on a lot of forums, I'm in a couple of groups on Facebook, et cetera... I look, and I look, and I look, and there's some very intense Google searching quite often [uh], but [uh] I've just never been able to find anyone, but even after a year and a half of just straight working out my life every day at least once a week...it, it's quite, it's quite lonely... 'cause no one's really in my situation. [Participant N56 Medieval knight]

Renunciatory othering was evident in some participants' comments when discussing the nature of Otherkinity/Therianthropy/Vampirism in that they made a distinction between "real" or "true" other-than-human identities and "lifestyle" identities, that is, identities assumed rather than experienced as ontological:

...now there's a lot of teenagers, and some folks age out like it's a phase [uh] [uh] it's been jokingly said the same as like [uh] Therian until graduation, you know, as a play on the, the lesbian until graduation [uh] thing [um]... [Participant N46 Dragon/Coyote]

Living Vampires I've commonly seen associated with the thought that if you buy fangs, then you're a vampire, which is, frankly, bullshit. If buying fangs makes you a vampire, then putting feathers in your hair makes you a chicken. I personally regard a vampire as being someone who needs energy and/or blood to remain physically healthy, where there is a marked improvement in their physical and mental aspects after feeding, through either of the two channels. [Participant F12 Vampire]

And, I mean, it's, it's part of the seeking of identity to whether it's, you know, there are a lot of [um] folk in, you know, people that take the identity because it's cool, it's different, it makes them unique, it makes them individual [um] and it's something that will go away in time because they're not Otherkin. They're, you know, they're putting on the, the goth outfit to fit with the tribe, dance to the music and then when they turn thirty, they'll go work for an accounting firm and, you know, everything goes back to normal... [Participant F05 Elf]

While renunciatory othering might appear as undermining the openness and acceptance within the communities, it does serve, we think, a positive function in that it helps protect the community from external criticism by focusing on the essentialist nature of the identity. Other-than-human communities have been the target of hostile and malicious attacks due to the attackers' perception of those communities and identities as being absurd. It is our opinion that focusing on the essence of other-than-human

identities by attempting to distance oneself from transitory, assumed, or lifestyle Others this might help those whose experience of otherness is ontological in the stabilization of their identities in the face of a hostile world.

What is clear from the data is that there are multiple and nuanced variations in the experience of navigating the dilemmatic space of similarity and difference. On the one hand, similarity may help with both offering and receiving support from community members, on the other, difference is rooted in one's deep experience and cannot, and should not, be sacrificed to communal understandings. This, however, we would suggest, in a post-modern, identity-oriented world is the experience of us all.

Person-to-World and World-to-Person Fit

The third of Bamberg's dilemmatic spaces addresses the interplay between the stories of individuals and those circulating in the wider world. For most of us, while there is a certain degree of incongruence—for example, while I [CB], being Catholic, need to reconcile, or at least live with, the notion of a living God with immersion in the Enlightenment meta-narrative of progress and Reason (or postmodern relativism), being Catholic is a generally acceptable formulation of one's identity—for Otherkin and Therians, this tension is difficult to navigate as the narrative resources available to help one navigate this tension are extremely limited. For example, unlike Catholicism the Otherkin and Therian communities do not have canonical texts that lend substance and tradition to their members. Canonical texts in religious and spiritual traditions can serve the function of establishing and maintaining a stable identity in a world that does not share the same views as the religious group (see: Hammer and Rothstein

[2012:120] regarding Jehovah's Witnesses where, "The text reaches beyond mere doctrinal issues and becomes the prime marker of social and religious identity").

Canonical, para-canonical, and other community texts help establish a storyworld in which being a member of the group makes sense and is supported. For me [CB] as a Catholic, I have recourse to scripture, the Church Fathers, the Catholic tradition, and a multitude of spiritual and theological texts and other resources to draw in as I navigate my individual Catholic journey in the modern world. And because these resources are long-established, drawn on by millions of believers, and are within generally recognizable human experiences, being Catholic is relatively unproblematic both for myself and for others. For Otherkin, Therians, and Vampires, however, such resources do not exist or are so limited that understanding the experience of Otherkinity/Therianthropy/Vampirism becomes distorted, rejected, or recuperated into socially and culturally available stories such as those of mental illness, pretending, or an extreme version of egoistic attention-seeking.

This being so, Otherkin, Therians, and Vampires fall subject to what Fricker (2007:155) calls hermeneutic injustice, that is, "the injustice of having some significant area of one's social experience obscured from collective understanding owing to a structural identity prejudice in the collective hermeneutic resource." As one participant stated:

[Otherkinity is]...a mix of everything really, it's, it's a, it's a Gestalt all of this stuff a melange kind of thing [um] the problem with looking into the science of things is that [uh] humankind is wonderfully arrogant and self-centered... so if you, for example, were

able to [um] find the, the gene that caused what's it called polydactylism the, the webbing between fingers... and say, "This, this happens here in only these people, this might be an indication of them being Otherkin," medical science would go, "No, no, no it's just a variation on human. Everything it is a variation on human." [Participant F05 Elf]

Given the lack of a collective hermeneutic resource for Otherkin, Therians, and Vampires to draw on to understand their experience, many are forced to live with doubts about the truth of their identity:

And you know what self, self, self-doubt and self-questioning is a big one for a lot of Otherkin. We all go through periods, I mean, I, I identify as an elf for, you know, probably as far as I can think, you know, I had the label for forty-five plus years, I've known I was something different from over fifty, but there are still days I look in the mirror and think, "OK. Really? What are you on? This is this nonsense. It's, dude, you're fifty-six, stop being a twelve-year-old, you know, get, get on with life, we need to make the rent, pay the bills, you know, do the adult thing..." [Participant F05 Elf]

I want to understand myself better and I want to find, one day if it's ever possible, some true affirmation that all of this is completely real and legitimate and not something that my mind just made up in a fever dream. But, that is not something I plan on ever happening. It's not a luxury that I am likely to receive, as nice as it would be." [Participant N46 Dragon/Coyote]

In response to the lack of social and cultural resources readily available to them, some Otherkin, Therians, and Vampires draw on fragments, piecing them together into a more or less coherent storyworld, which then provides a framework within which their experiences make sense. One highly

articulated expression of this would be the Silver Elves, Zardoa, and Silver Flame (Participants N61 and N62), who, over decades of living as elves, and over the course of multiple publications (43 books to date, see, for example, *The Silver Elves* 2014; 2015) have drawn on Jungian psychology, literature, history, mythology, shamanism, and a range of other occult resources. The result is, to our minds, as coherent a storyworld as one finds. Similarly, Participant N54, constructed a dragon-focused religion (to which he has attracted a small number of followers) complete with rituals, rules of living, a calendar establishing sacred time, and so on. Failing to find sustaining resources in the "real" world, some Otherkin turn to fiction. For example, Participant N51 (Unicorn) found support for her identity through *The Last Unicorn* (Beagle 1968):

That might be one of the reasons why *The Last Unicorn* [the movie, and the book, which I read later in my life] resonates so strongly with me. "These days it takes a cheap carnival trick to make folks recognize a real unicorn"—that quote from *The Last Unicorn* illustrates how I feel when I walk in my city in winter with my unicorn winter hat [it is fake white fur with a horn, ears, and a rainbow mane, and it's pretty and I love it]. When I wear this hat, people call me "unicorn" and a girl once stopped me in the streets to hug me. It was nice, but also so sad and lonely, because she hugged a hat on a human, and nothing more.

Similarly, *The Silver Elves* (N61 and N62) draw on Tolkien's (1977) *The Silmarillion*; and N56, a Medieval knight, lives in the world of Malory's (1999) *Le Morte d'Arthur*.

Participants also drew on art, history, anthropology, and archaeology to embed the experience of Other-

kin in a much longer story. For example, Participant N54 (Dragon):

I mean, I've found in my own research depictions of [uh] cultural depictions of dragons as far back as [uh] ten thousand years ago...I mean, the terminology that we're, we're using now is new, but the cultural idea seems to be much, much older...Well, and I don't even know if it's necessarily hidden so much as not looked at in that way. I mean, if you look at, for example, [uh] tribal or native American [societies] and some of their practices of wearing the, the skins or, you know, claws or what have you of an animal to take on that creature's traits could be seen as somewhat similar or someone, you know, born blessed by this particular animal or this particular spirit. Things like that go back in dozens if not most primitive cultures all the way up through certain modern cultures.

This process would seem to be reflective of what Partridge (2004; 2005; 2014) refers to as "occulture," that is, how everyday life and popular culture are drawn upon in order to re-enchant the world, and thus help us understand contemporary non-secular lifeworlds. The concept of occulture has been applied to Otherkin/Therian/Vampire communities by authors such as O'Callaghan (2015) and Robertson (2013). It would be interesting to explore the impact of an emerging Otherkin/Therian/Vampire fiction on the respective communities. Laycock's (2012) contribution here is important, though it is an area that would serve further, detailed, empirical exploration.

As communities, also, Otherkin, Therians, and Vampires are generating a pool of narrative resources for others to draw upon in their own meaning-making process (see, for example, the Otherkin experiences reported on sites such as <https://www.wattpad.com>). Although the tendency towards emphasizing

uniqueness (see section on similarity and difference) may mitigate against the development of templated story-frames into which individuals might insert their personal experiences, the sharing of stories, the development of a lexicon through which to express one's experience, and the gathering of ideas, insights, and connections related to the experiences that being other-than-human have started, albeit slowly and in a small way, to change the narrative environment in which Otherkin and Therians can understand, develop, and articulate their identities.

Limitations of the Study

As indicated at the outset, the data presented here form part of a wider, ongoing study of spiritual identity—not just among Otherkin, Therians, and Vampires, but among followers and practitioners of alternative spiritualities. As such, it is a work in progress and findings are still emerging, though those presented here have been recurrent over several or more interviews. While the current study size (N=24) is larger than other studies reported in the literature, it is still relatively small for such diverse communities, and there are some kin-types with whom we are still to gain contact, such as otaku-kin, other fictionkin, griffin-kin, demonkin, and so on. Thus, the findings here can only be provisional if generalized to the wider Otherkin/Therian/Vampire communities.

A second limitation lies in the recruitment methods for the study. If, as some older generation community members say, there are many older generation members of the communities who do not engage with the Internet, then there is a potential research population yet to be accessed—and a population that would be important in understanding the complexity and development of Otherkinity, Therianthro-

py, and Vampirism. Participants in this study have offered to distribute materials to those they know, but have said that many older generation members simply want to live their lives and do not want to engage with the communities or researchers.

A third limitation is that the study, by necessity, is reliant on self-selecting volunteers, and we cannot know how representative the views of such are of the wider communities. Standard qualitative methods—such as working towards data saturation—help here, but cannot thoroughly ameliorate the potential problem.

Final Thoughts

In this paper, we have attempted to make headway in understanding the process of narrative identity formation among members of other-than-human communities. Although identification as Otherkin, Therian, or Vampire may appear strange to the human community, the process whereby individuals

awaken to their identities seems to be very similar, if not identical, to the process by which human identities are formed—that is, in seeking to make sense of experience, we explore potential narrative frames (see: Boje 2000; 2009). In so doing, we bring together elements of our physical, mental, emotional, cultural, and social environments. Our emergent narrative identity is tested and shaped in interaction with those environments. For those identifying as other-than-human this process is, to be sure, far more difficult in that there are not ready-made, socially acceptable identity templates to adopt. The other-than-human communities, however, are contributing to the general narrative environment through blogs, websites, chat rooms, publications, and so on, thus extending the narrative resources available to those who are exploring but have not yet stabilized their other-than-human identity. Whether the growth of these other-than-human resources will have a major impact on the acceptability of such identities awaits to be seen.

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Trees as Dialogue: Negotiating Boundaries with the Anne Frank Sapling Project

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Abstract: My qualitative research paper focuses on the Anne Frank sapling installation at the Clinton Presidential Museum and Library in Little Rock, Arkansas. Saplings grafted from the tree that grew outside Anne Frank's window in Amsterdam while she wrote her famous diary are provided by the Anne Frank Center for Mutual Respect to organizations that will link the tree to dialogues about past and present social justice issues. Building on Thomas Gieryn's recent work on "truth-spots," I explore the sapling installation as a possible "truth-spot," and reflect on what kind of truth is supported there. From a symbolic interactionist perspective, I consider the sapling as a boundary-crossing entity that, together with other elements of the installation, stimulates reflection and inclusive dialogue, and fosters hope without shunning complexity. I discuss the sapling's ecological needs and material agency, since it is not a passive recipient of human meanings and orchestrations. I also comment on the changing role of museum installations and exhibit space in the context of social justice.

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Deep currents of meaning swirl around our culture(s) and brush through the branches of any tree or tree-place which is being encountered, experienced, narrated, or imagined at any given time. [Jones and Cloke 2002:19]

Why do human beings attach so much significance to trees? We do not fully know the answer, but there is a rich collection of cultural evidence about social relationships with trees (MacNaghten and Urry 2000; Rival 2001; Jones and Cloke 2002). My paper focuses on one tree in particular, a sapling installed at the Clinton Presidential Library and Museum in Little Rock, Arkansas (hereafter referred to as the Clinton Center).¹ The tree sapling was derived from the horse chestnut tree that grew outside the “secret annex” where Anne Frank hid with her family in Amsterdam and wrote her famous diary. It is one of eleven saplings at selected sites in the U.S., including the iconic Liberty Park which commemorates the events of 9/11, and the West Front Lawn at the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C. The New York based non-profit Anne Frank Center USA (now renamed the Anne Frank Center for Mutual Respect [AFCMR]) has overseen the dispersal of the saplings, distributing them to “organizations with a demonstrated commitment to upholding Anne’s vision for a peaceful, more tolerant world, as well as the capacity to properly care for the sapling and tree.”² The Clinton Center

submitted a successful site proposal, and received a sapling in 2015.

A key aspiration shaping the sapling project seems to be that a “survivor” tree, representing new life and carrying a big story from the past into the present, can gently invite thoughtful discussion and education about difficult but important subjects—for example, the Holocaust, and links to present and past injustices in the sapling’s new location. Of course, the tree does not “work” alone—once it is planted, the AFCMR and the Clinton Center collaborate on educational programs that stem from its presence. Rooted in a new, socially significant setting, the sapling embodies a relationship between its point of origin (the Anne Frank tree in Amsterdam) and a new place (in this case, Little Rock, with its own history of injustices, and the Clinton Center with its connection to a former U.S. President). For this project, place is important. As Thomas Gieryn (2018:3) points out in his research on “truth-spots,”

...place matters mightily for what people believe to be true. We can better understand why some assertions or propositions or ideas become, for some people, credible and believable by locating them somewhere on the skin of the earth—and by asking what things are to be experienced at that spot and how this place is culturally understood.

My paper focuses on the sapling as an interactional “presence” that is both material and symbolic. In symbolic interactionist parlance, the sapling is a meaningful object to which human beings attribute symbolic significance (Blumer 1969). In that

inspire the next generation to build a world based on mutual respect.” The website <https://www.annefrank.com> continues to undergo changes.

¹ The Clinton Center includes the William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum, the University of Arkansas Clinton School of Public Service, and the Little Rock offices of the Clinton Foundation. See: <https://www.clintonfoundation.org/clinton-presidential-center/about/overview>.

² This quote is from an earlier Anne Frank Center website. In 2016, the organization was renamed the Anne Frank Center for Mutual Respect. According to the AFCMR mission statement, the organization “uses the diary and spirit of Anne Frank as unique tools to advance her legacy, to educate young people and communities in the U.S. and Canada about the dangers of intolerance, anti-Semitism, racism, and discrimination; and to

capacity, it may serve as a “mnemonic device” to foster collective memory (Zerubavel 2003), and as a springboard for imagining a better future. The sapling may also serve as a “boundary object,” an object about which different groups share common knowledge (the Anne Frank story), but also have unique, socially inflected perspectives on its meaning (Fox 2011; Bowker et al. 2016). This invites conversations from many angles and fosters the possibility of new discoveries about the world and about oneself.

But, the sapling is much more than an object upon which humans project symbolic meaning. Its materiality both constrains and enables human agendas. It is a living entity with its own needs, facing specific challenges (transplantation, and surviving in an ecologically unfamiliar climate zone). Alive and able to grow and change with the seasons, and capable of attracting birds and other creatures, it not only provides ecological lessons, but “calls out” to human beings aesthetically. In some cases, it may even take on the role of a non-human “significant other” in George Herbert Mead’s sense (Čapek 2006). But, however engaging it may be, a tree sapling grows slowly in a world that increasingly craves speed and spectacle. Later in the paper, I discuss how the Sapling Project fits into changing ideas about “performance” expected from museum exhibits and installations in a fast-paced world linked to globalization, new understandings of leisure and entertainment, participatory approaches to discovering truth, and what some would call a postmodern desire for a personalized crafting of identity. Taking a cue from Gieryn’s work, I also explore the sapling installation as a possible “truth-spot.”

My paper is organized as follows. I begin with a brief discussion of the broader context of my proj-

ect and research methods. Next, I review some key anthropological and sociological ideas about the “social life of trees” (MacNaghten and Urry 2000; Rival 2001). Following that, I briefly touch on the sapling’s origins in Amsterdam, and then focus on its presence at the Clinton Center site, and how its role and agency are enmeshed in material and symbolic relations. Finally, I look at how this particular installation fits into a larger discussion about the changing role of museum/exhibit spaces in the 21st century.

Framework and Research Methods

My qualitative research project began as an exploration of the social “afterlife” of two culturally significant trees which, after they died, were transformed into a symbol for bringing diverse communities together. One, a 175-year-old elm in Grand-Pré, Nova Scotia, was transformed into a sculpture, carved by three artists representing social groups that had claimed the same highly contested piece of land where the tree grew, and where the Acadian Deportation took place.³ The other, the approximately 170-year-old Anne Frank tree, lives on through carefully germinated and relocated saplings. My research project developed with both trees in mind, since both are used to simultaneously mark—and also to move beyond—past tragedies. This paper focuses on the second tree, but in my experience as a researcher and writer, the two trees (and settings) continue to dialogue with each other. My ongoing research project is part of a broader exploration of

³ The three groups included the French Acadians who were expelled from Grand-Pré in 1755, the “New England planters” who replaced them and were given their land, and the First Nations indigenous and original residents, the Mi’kmaq. I wrote about the Nova Scotia tree in a creative nonfiction essay presented at the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment [ASLE] in 2012 (Čapek 2012).

relationships between trees, human beings, social justice, and place. The most recent addition is climate change, which brings severe storms and new types of infestations that undermine the health and survival of many trees, including some of the oldest and most storied.

I began to research the Little Rock sapling in 2016, after reading about the installation in November 2015. I conducted targeted interviews with people knowledgeable about the project from a variety of angles, including those who first envisioned the project and its design, a site proposal author, Educational Programs staff at the Clinton Foundation and Clinton Presidential Library, and caretakers of the sapling. I also engaged in participant observation at the Clinton Center—attending talks, presentations, and performances (for example, the one-act play “A Conversation with Anne” based on Anne Frank’s diaries that incorporates a dialogue with the audience), and a workshop for teachers brought by the AFCMR in June 2016. In 2017, I attended AFCMR former Executive Director Steven Goldstein’s presentation on World Refugee Day at the Clinton Center, which linked the tree sapling with an expanding social justice agenda. I have also followed the development of the educational programs, and visit the sapling site regularly. In addition, I draw on a variety of documents and artifacts relating to the sapling project, such as newspaper articles, committee notes, the sapling proposal, photographs, workshop handouts, Clinton Center and AFCMR publications, and websites, among other sources.

Tree Beings and Human Beings

Although circumstances vary across time and space, human relationships to trees have been materially and culturally significant. Laura Rival, in her intro-

duction to *The Social Life of Trees* (2001:1), notes that “trees provide some of the most visible and potent symbols of social process and collective identity.” Trees are living beings, but as Brosse (1998) points out, they are alive in a different way from human beings, and this mysterious, ambiguous quality makes them intriguing. Materially, we depend on them to make our lives possible—they provide shade, fuel, food, raw materials for human projects, and—as we are increasingly aware—cleaner air and a brake on climate change. Human beings have endowed trees with cultural meaning, attributing to them qualities of wisdom, strength, longevity, innocence, power, rebirth, and enlisting them as witnesses and memory-keepers (Rival 2001; MacNaghten and Urry 2000; Jones and Cloke 2002; Schama 2004; Čapek 2006). Jones and Cloke (2002:214) note that “[t]rees are imagined according to a plethora of cultural constructs, circulating on different scales.” In some traditions, birth placentas are planted under trees, to provide “roots” for a child in a specific place. Trees are planted ceremonially as international symbols of future goodwill. Trees may also be sacred guardians of numinous spaces reserved for ritual or initiatory occasions. MacNaghten and Urry (2000:168) conclude that despite “[p]owerfully different social myths...[m]any seem to feel particular affinities with trees since, like the upright human body, they appear majestically defenseless against progress, the modern and the scientific.” Rooted, sheltering, yet vulnerable, trees are non-human agents that interact with human beings to “co-constitute” places. In doing so, they reveal a “bewildering range of creative capacities” (Jones and Cloke 2002:5).

This co-constitutive language emerges from scholarship that increasingly recognizes non-human as well as human agency, and their complex interactions and entanglements (Latour 1993; 2004; Ingold

2011). In actor network theory (ANT), non-human “nature,” including a tree, is agentic. Among other things, its material reality makes certain outcomes possible. Poet Genaro K̄y L̄y Smith (2014:78) captures just such an image in his poem “A Museum of Trees” about censorship during the Cultural Revolution in China. A tree hides an artist’s forbidden paintings by day and reveals them at night: “He [the artist] and I know they are there, hidden during the day/ when the tight-fisted buds are afire in full yellow blooms/ and at night, they close their fingers to expose the paintings...” However, this imagined collaboration between a creative human being and a living tree is undermined by an oppressive social structure, since “no one looks up anymore.” In another of K̄y L̄y Smith’s poems (2014:16), trees at a re-education (prison) camp “speak” through attached megaphones that serve as a voice of God/authority, telling internees when they might live or die. This serves as a reminder that trees are not only agents of life and beauty, but may be transformed by human agendas into messengers of hate and death. The United States has its own sad topography of lynching trees, as portrayed in the recently constructed National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery, Alabama.

I find Jones and Cloke’s concept of “arbori-culture” (2002: 21) especially useful. The authors point out that “nature-society relations are continually unfolding in the contexts of specific places, in which meanings will arise from particular interactions between different assemblages of social, cultural, and natural elements” (Jones and Cloke 2002:1). Trees, they insist, must be seen as “both social constructions and as real dynamic material entities” (Jones and Cloke 2002:4). They interact in complex ways with place and human practices—like the trees in Norway that were recently found to have no tree rings for years,

after being exposed to a chemical fog that the German navy used to hide its ships in Norwegian fjords during World War II (Amos 2018). Like Gieryn, Jones and Cloke (2002:3) strongly affirm the continued significance of place, critiquing a theoretical trend towards what they call “dematerialized nature”—for example ANT’s overemphasis on “topographically fluid networks” that gloss over the distinctiveness of actual places (not to mention the rooted nature of trees). In arbori-culture, materiality and culture are intertwined in ways that are partially unique to each situation, but also expressed through broader social and ecological patterns that shape what *human beings* and *tree beings* do in each other’s presence. Additionally, Gary Alan Fine’s (2003) concept of “naturework” captures the ongoing interpretive process that unfolds as human beings try to make cultural sense out of non-human nature. One form of naturework gives culturally significant trees a post-life, a chance to “live on” and connect with future generations. In this socio-ecological space, we can locate the Anne Frank Sapling Project.

Trees in Motion. Origins of the Anne Frank Sapling Project

To locate an account is to return it to a place where it was discovered or manufactured, where it is displayed and celebrated, where it gets enacted and reproduced, where it is contested or obscured. Such places may become truth-spots. [Gieryn 2018:3]

In her diaries, Anne Frank wrote about how the beauty and the presence of the chestnut tree growing outside her window inspired her with hope. After her death, the tree became significant to others who read her published diary. They wanted the tree to be cared for as a valued living being, and as a testament to the ongoing impact of Anne Frank’s life.

Since the tree was on private property, various constituencies interacted around the question of how to care for the tree—the city of Amsterdam, local residents, the Support Anne Frank Tree Foundation, the Anne Frank House, and the owner of the garden where the tree stood. By 2005, the tree was found to be seriously diseased. The Anne Frank House asked permission to collect its chestnuts to germinate saplings from the tree. Saplings were provided to a park in Amsterdam and also donated to schools and organizations around the world that had a connection with Anne Frank.⁴ Despite various efforts to save it, in 2010 the approximately 170-year-old tree collapsed after a severe storm. The Anne Frank Center USA (now the AFCMR) took on the project of distributing the remaining eleven saplings to places in the U.S. As AFCMR Director of Education, Beth Slepian (2016), put it, the history of the sapling project “literally grew out of a chestnut tree.”

Thomas Gieryn (2018:172) defines “truth-spots” as places where some special geographic feature and a combination of materiality and narration come together to “lend believability and authority to claims or assertions associated with that spot.” One could argue that the Anne Frank House and the Sapling Project are part of a larger constellation of “truth-spots” that build a narrative of hope based on confronting some of the grimmest realities of human experience in the place where they were enacted, and coming away motivated to prevent such atrocities in the future. Concentration camps and genocide sites are often objects of “dark tourism” (Urry and Larsen 2011), functioning as memorial spaces and places of witness that support a “never again” narrative—the idea that witnessing past horrors of human making

⁴ This website <http://www.annefrank.org/en/News/Anne-Frank-Tree/> is linked to the Anne Frank House organization, and is undergoing changes.

will teach us how to prevent them in the future. Although tree saplings have a gentler presence, they are potentially no less powerful. When a sapling is relocated, it generates another “truth-spot,” based on a genetic linkage with the Amsterdam tree *and* a narrative link between Anne Frank’s story and injustices specific to the new place.⁵ This material and symbolic kinship allows the truth-spot narrative and experience to move to other parts of the globe, there to be “displayed and celebrated,” and “enacted and reproduced” (Gieryn 2018:3). If successful, it takes root along with the sapling (since both will only flourish in a suitable place), growing local “roots and branches.” Like the small saplings themselves, the “never again” narrative is both powerful and fragile, as I will discuss later.

The Clinton Center Site

From my favorite spot on the floor, I look up at the blue sky and the bare chestnut tree, on whose branches little raindrops shine, appearing like silver, and at the seagulls and other birds as they glide on the wind...As long as this exists, I thought, and I may live to see it, this sunshine, the cloudless skies, while this lasts, I cannot be unhappy. [Anne Frank, *The Diary of a Young Girl*, February 23, 1944]

This quote is displayed at the Clinton Center’s Anne Frank sapling installation. This project originated when Muriel Lederman, then president of the Sisterhood of Congregation B’nai Israel in Little Rock,⁶

⁵ Thomas Gieryn called my attention to the genetic link in a personal communication.

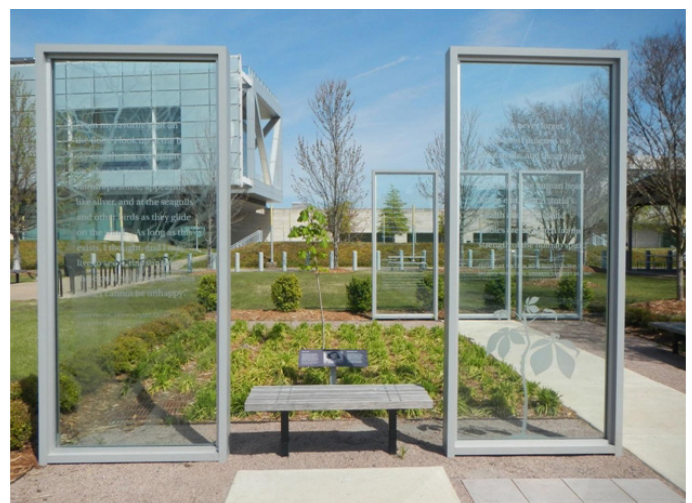
⁶ Sisterhood of B’nai Israel “is affiliated with the Reform movement and has as its guiding principle tikkun olam, repair of the world. Members of sisterhood were over-represented in the Women’s Emergency Committee to Save our Schools [WEC], the group whose political activity was instrumental in the integration of Little Rock’s schools.” (Lederman 2009).

heard on National Public Radio about a competition for the saplings, and the requirement that the “installation address not only Anne Frank’s legacy and the Holocaust, but also instances of discrimination in the area where the tree would be planted.” She thought, “What better place than Arkansas, with the Central High Crisis, the Japanese internment and the Trail of Tears?” (Muriel Lederman, personal communication, July 26, 2016). She envisioned the Clinton Center, with its many visitors, as an excellent prospective location. Eventually she partnered with the Clinton Center to submit a successful proposal in 2009. She made the case that these three episodes of social injustice “were grounded in the same mind-set as the Holocaust—the fear and exploitation of the ‘other’” (Lederman 2009). The proposed logo for the sapling installation was a window frame showing a tree with one green leaf, and the motto “Hope Endurance Justice.” Fundraising and other practicalities, including a three-year quarantine imposed on the imported saplings by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, led to a delay of about six years. The sapling was finally installed in October 2015. Even so, it was a surrogate, since the actual sapling was making efforts to adjust to Arkansas’ climate at a local greenhouse.

The installation design references Anne Frank’s experience of looking out of a window to see the chestnut tree. It mimics a small room with transparent “windows,” made up of five etched glass panels—two in front, and three behind the sapling (see: Figure 1). It is prominently located in front of the Clinton Center, and was designed by Ralph Appelbaum Associates, exhibit designers for the Clinton Center and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. Its transparent modernistic design frames the Clinton Museum and Library just behind it, and as

I will discuss later, its message echoes the Clinton Center’s “Bridge to the Future” motif. One front panel focuses on Anne Frank and her connection to the tree, displaying the quote cited earlier. The other panel establishes a connection with the former President Clinton, quoting him: “But let us never forget, the greatest progress we have made, and the greatest progress we have yet to make, is in the human heart. In the end, all of the world’s wealth and a thousand armies are no match for the strength of the human spirit.” Between the two is a small informational placard with Anne Frank’s picture.

Figure 1. Installation design.



Source: photo Stella Čapek.

The quotations on the three back panels, set behind the sapling and a little bit to the right, recollect injustices in Arkansas, including the displacement of Native Americans through the Indian Removal Act of 1830 (the Trail of Tears passed through Arkansas close to this spot), the internments of Japa-

nese-Americans at Rohwer and Jerome, Arkansas, during World War II, and the desegregation crisis at Little Rock Central High in 1957, where African-American students (“the Little Rock Nine”) faced down jeering crowds and the National Guard to break the segregation barrier. After several iterations during the design process, the following quotes were chosen to invite reflection on the three episodes:

We began every school day with the pledge of allegiance to the flag. I could see the barbed wire fence and the sentry towers right outside my schoolhouse window as I recited the words “with liberty and justice for all,” an innocent child unaware of the irony. [George Takei, Rohwer relocation camp resident from 1942-43]

The land we now live on belonged to our forefathers. If we leave it, where shall we go to? All of my nation, friends, relatives are there buried. Since you have expressed a desire for us to be removed, the tears have flowed copiously from my aged eyes. [Chief Heckaton, hereditary chief of the Quapaw during Arkansas’s Indian Removal]

The task that remains is to cope with our interdependence—to see ourselves reflected in every human being and to respect and honor our differences. [Melba Patillo Beals, one of the Little Rock Nine]

Each quote arises out of a troubling episode in Arkansas history, affirming the importance of place, whether one is being uprooted from a beloved place, interned in a place against one’s will, and/or seeking inclusion in a place that will nurture one’s human rights. The young sapling at the center of the “room” holds these narratives together, and links them to the Anne Frank story. At the

same time, it marks a crossroads between different points on a social justice map of Arkansas. Its presence helps reveal a hidden history inscribed in the local landscape, and connects it to a regional and global human rights map. In 2017, the Clinton Center became part of the U.S. Civil Rights Trail, with the sapling installation as “an important part of that designation” (Clinton Presidential Center 2018:3).

The installation’s overall message is both somber and inspirational. A Clinton Center brochure states that it “will allow visitors to reflect on the complex history of human rights in Arkansas and throughout the world...These historical episodes serve as poignant and painful reminders of Arkansas’s complicated journey toward social justice” (Clinton Presidential Center 2015). A more recent program brochure refers to the installation as “a reminder of the importance of civility and respect for all” (Clinton Presidential Center 2018). Depending on weather and time of day, the sapling installation may be a quiet, empty space or the subject of more human attention. The sapling itself evokes youth and vulnerability, and the bittersweet reality of the tree outliving Anne Frank. It also connects past, present, and future, as the surrounding panels point to social justice work that needs to be done—here and now—on the “complicated journey toward social justice.” As a truth-spot, it supports the belief that despite the realities of a brutal past, a more just future is possible.

Framing the Anne Frank Sapling

This exhibit is a tribute to the resiliency of the human spirit and a poignant reminder that we are all interconnected individuals who share a common humanity. [former President Clinton, 2015]

The sapling's inauguration on October 02, 2015 was an important framing event, providing legitimating "roots," and setting up an imagined future for the tree. In addition to former President Clinton, "nearly 1,000 guests—including 700 school children, family members of Holocaust survivors, members of the Quapaw Tribe, Japanese-Americans who were interned during World War II, and relatives of the Little Rock Nine" came together to celebrate the installation (Press release 2015⁷). Speeches focused on the tree as a link across time and space. Ronald Leopold (2015), Executive Director of the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam, remarked on the geographical and symbolic connection "from today" between the Clinton Center, the Anne Frank center in New York, and Amsterdam: "We share an important mission. These are places where memories and dreams come together, where the pain of the past and the firm belief in the future go hand in hand."

Thomas Gieryn proposes that places that serve as truth-spots manipulate time, or operate "like time machines," bringing together the past, present, and future. The speeches at the inauguration built a bridge between older and younger generations, and between a troubling past and an imagined hopeful future (although one filled with the hard work of social justice). The sapling was enlisted in this project as speakers described what the fully grown tree might look like and what kind of presence it could have. Leopold (2015) noted that "Young people will come to this beautiful park and will sit in the shadow of Anne's chestnut tree, reflecting on the stories depicted on these panels and on why those stories are still very important to their own lives."

⁷ See: "President Clinton Dedicates Anne Frank Tree Installation at the Clinton Presidential Center as Part of the Anne Frank Center's Sapling Project." Retrieved June 18, 2020 (<http://www.prweb.com/releases/2015/10/prweb13000057.htm>).

Former President Clinton remarked that when the older generation is no longer present, "Young people should be able to go to places like this and see symbols of life, unity, and hope." He added, "And we will remember the wisdom of a 14-year-old girl, whose spirit is depending on us to redeem the years she didn't have."

Interweaving the experience of two 15-year-olds, Anne Frank and Melba Patillo Beals of the Little Rock Nine, Ronald Leopold pointed out that—although worlds apart geographically and historically—both dreamed about a world where "hatred has made way for compassion and the profound awareness that we are all part of one big community, consisting of people with very different backgrounds and beliefs." Juxtaposing two different pasts, he praised the Little Rock Nine, who, "like Anne... did not give in to the hopelessness of the moment," but "opened the doors for millions of others, even though behind those doors there's still much work to be done" (Leopold 2015). The youngest speaker, 17-year-old Lexi Elenzweig (2015), president of Federation of Temple Youth at Congregation B'nai Israel, spoke of the sapling as a "living reminder of Anne Frank's legacy and the tragedy of the Holocaust," but also of hope: "I am just a little older than Anne Frank was when she died. The tree inspired Anne to write about her hopes and dreams for the future. Anne's words, written in her diary, have inspired millions of people around the world, including me. I hope one day our 'little' tree will begin to grow and flourish, and resemble the tree that provided comfort and hope to Anne."

Thus, through the inaugural event, the sapling installation space was simultaneously framed as a place of life and beauty, a symbol of hope, a marker of tragic events, and a *workspace*, where a trou-

bling past could be processed and learned from. As Bill Clinton and others emphasized, social justice and human rights in the future need to be based on a “common humanity.” Leopold reminded the audience that all of the sad histories commemorated there “were the work of human beings,” and that human agency could also create social justice.

Tree Interactions

April is glorious, not too hot and not too cold, with occasional light showers. Our chestnut tree is in leaf, and here and there you can already see a few small blossoms. [Anne Frank, April 1944]

Our chestnut tree is in full bloom. It’s covered with leaves and is even more beautiful than last year—May 1944. [The Anne Frank House n.d.⁸]

A children’s story written about the Anne Frank Tree in Amsterdam (Gottesfeld 2016) teaches children about Anne Frank, and about a special tree that watched her and “loved the sight of her.” Can a tree become an interactive “significant other,” extending symbolic interactionist George Herbert Mead’s term to non-humans (that is, entities with which/with whom we value interacting and have a mutual dialogical relationship)? In an earlier paper, drawing on Andrew Weigert’s (1997) interpretation of Mead, I argued for such possibilities (Čapek 2006). While that is not my main focus here, I note that, perhaps paradoxically, Anne Frank seems most likely to have had such a relationship with the original tree, even though she could not go outside to touch it or experience it directly. She observed it through the windowpane, where it framed the sky, passing birds, clouds, and changing seasons. She took care-

ful note of its small changes, and was attracted to its beauty. Its material presence and aliveness spoke to her, giving her a partial avenue to transcend a keenly felt physical confinement:

Whenever someone comes in from outside, with the wind in their clothes and the cold on their cheeks, I feel like burying my head under the blankets to keep from thinking, “When will we be allowed to breathe fresh air again?”...I long to ride a bike, dance, whistle, look at the world, feel young and know that I’m free, and yet I can’t let it show. [Readers’ Companion to the Diary of Anne Frank n.d.:4⁹]

The living tree and its integration into the ecosystem extended her gaze, gave her solace, and helped her imagine the possibility of a broader universe and a different future. She wrote, “I feel the suffering of millions. And yet, when I look up at the sky, I somehow feel that everything will change for the better, that this cruelty too shall end” (Readers’ Companion to the Diary of Anne Frank n.d.:7). In his speech, Ronald Leopold reflected that, for Anne, the tree “represented life in the face of death, the freedom to blossom and prosper.”

How can a tree be so powerful? Iris Murdoch’s (2014) concept of “unselfing” captures the expansive potential of a human response to beauty, such as the sight of a bird flying. According to David Haskell’s reading of Murdoch (as cited in Mowe 2017:59), at such times “we’re drawn out of the limitations of our mind, senses and imagination, and drawn into another place,” including, possibly, the “lived reality of a completely different species.” This allows us to “experience other parts of

⁸ See: <http://web.annefrank.org/en/News/Anne-Frank-Tree/>.

⁹ See: <https://bhecinfor.org/wp-content/uploads/AFC-Readers-Companion-Diary-of-AnneFrank.pdf>.

our network,” including what is non-human and beyond our immediate reach. Such ideas seem to have at least some kinship with Anne Frank’s experience of the tree as a boundary-crossing and horizon-expanding entity.

In contrast to this ongoing relationship with the original tree, most visitors to the Clinton Center have a one-time connection with it through the sapling. They look at it and read the surrounding glass panels, and perhaps sit down in the small garden area. Visiting students and teachers sometimes spend more time in this space (see below), interacting with the installation as a whole. Gardeners and caretakers of the landscape have the most direct relationship with the tree (both the actual sapling and the surrogate). Debbie Shock (interview, July 25, 2016, Little Rock), Facilities Manager at the Clinton Center, spends much of her day outside, and has a chance to observe interactions around it. In 2016, she commented:

...every day there’s visitors out there reading the panels, looking at the tree—young, old, from every state...it just *amazes* me. People will just sit on the bench, and you can hear them talk about it. And it brings a lot of conversation out...Lots of families, I’ve even heard moms and dads talk to younger children about what it is, and I’ve heard them say, “You’ll read the diary of Anne Frank, and when you read it, you’ll know this had something to do with it.” It just gives you goosebumps when you stand there hearing that.

Shock, a former teacher, observed that “to read it [the diary] is one thing...[but] I think now with these trees growing...students realize there’s a lot of history we don’t know about, but yet there’s hope for the future, and that we need to change things

from our past” (Shock, interview, July 25, 2016, Little Rock).

Besides direct tree interactions, the sapling brings with it a variety of educational programs specifically aimed at building dialogue, social interaction, self-awareness, and common ground. As I will discuss below, this bolsters the power of the tree installation as a truth-spot.

Extending the Performativity of the Sapling Installation

sad barbed justice
oppressive innocent irony
a nation ashamed

These lines are from a spoken word poem created by students responding to George Takei’s quote about Japanese-American internment. As museums and installation spaces have evolved in the later 20th and early 21st century, performative and experiential elements have come to be more expected. The sapling itself is small and grows slowly, and interaction is restricted to looking. The installation design amplifies its physically small presence, and encourages conversation and reflection. The Clinton Center has invested in headphones for visiting schoolchildren, with a narrative that lets them see the tree through Anne Frank’s eyes. The sapling is incorporated into programs for different age groups offered by the Clinton Center and—in partnership with the AFCMR—workshops, dramatic performances, talks, and participatory educational programs. In 2013, the AFCMR launched a Confronting Intolerance Today speaker series in conjunction with The Sapling Project to share innovative approaches to combating intolerance. The sapling attracts such programs and expands the audience for them; the programs,

in turn, amplify the significance and presence of the little tree. It is “performing” by growing, and it is also performing by creating a link to the AFCMR and to global social change networks.

An important function of the educational programs is to uncover the relevance of past events for the present and future. More challengingly, the programs invite personal reflection on one’s own possible inadvertent complicity in current injustices. This is a tricky assignment, since no one wants to see themselves as an oppressor. At an educators’ workshop in 2016, presenter Beth Slepian from the AFCMR demonstrated how the visual arts (in this case, historic photographs) could be used to approach teaching about injustice in a participatory way.¹⁰ For example, students imagine the roles of various people in the photographs, and think “beyond the borders,” imagining everyone who watched a particular incident. This leads to a discussion about the different roles of “bystanders, helpers, upstanders, and allies.” Students reflect on links to their own experiences—for example, bullying at school—and consider what steps they can take, and why. This raises the question “how do I contribute/not contribute to social injustice?” Or, “what can I do, and what can I make sure that I don’t do?” Interactive dialogue around a photo or a piece of art (or the sapling) supports discoveries about one’s connection to social justice.

Another sapling-related project in 2018 used an object-based approach to work with teachers and students through the Arkansas Declaration of Learning (ADOL) program—a partnership at that time between the U.S. State Department, the Butler

Center for Arkansas Studies, the Clinton Library, and the Crystal Bridges museum in Northwest Arkansas. These organizations supplied five objects a year, out of which teachers chose four to use as a basis for lesson plans that promote innovative learning and civic engagement projects. The Anne Frank sapling was one of the “objects.” It might be combined with a wire sculpture from the Crystal Bridges museum created by artist Ruth Asawa, who was interned as a child at the “relocation center” in Rohwer, and oral histories from the Butler Center, or other possible objects. A participating teacher remarked that these experiences led students “to think about civic engagement, themselves, and the past in an entirely new way.” The spoken word poem quoted at the beginning of this section was created by one of the student groups that worked with the sapling installation. A staff member described the sapling as

...a good jumping off point for conversations, and, you know, I think, the way it’s presented, I think it makes it easier to have some of the frank conversations with students, not trying to rationalize actions of others, but explaining why they [Japanese-Americans] were interned, and what happened. We want to talk about Anne Frank all day, but we don’t want to talk about the U.S. government turning away Jewish immigrants, which is a very complex discussion.

Thus, using the sapling as a “boundary object” linked to the more familiar Anne Frank story, the Clinton Center and the AFCMR have been able to link it to other narratives that open up social justice questions. Nathan Thomas, Educational Programs Associate at the Clinton Foundation, said that teachers reported that students themselves asked for more processing time to have these kinds of conversations, something that they usually did

¹⁰ More information about this can be found at: <https://www.annefrank.com/what-we-do>.

not have time for in the regular school curriculum. These can be personally transformative spaces, and can foster future civic leadership skills (Nathan Thomas, interview, August 16, 2018, Little Rock).

Personalized identity is also an important part of the programs. According to an AFCMR handout, “Anne Frank’s own arc of self-discovery in her diary is a model to help students understand the power of being themselves, making sense of the world around them, and setting goals to fulfill their dreams to change the world.” This emphasizes crafting one’s own unique identity even while being in dialogue with the experience of others. One example of this dialogical approach is the performance “A Conversation with Anne,” brought to the Clinton Center by the AFCMR. The one-act solo performance draws directly on excerpts from Anne Frank’s diary. After the performance, the actress stays in character to answer questions from the audience. The performance is open to a multi-generational audience, but especially aimed at young people. The “conversation” personalizes and humanizes Anne Frank, including her dream to be a published writer, her sometimes “sassy” comments, and her desire to experience her full self. It also points to her courage, resistance, restlessness, and hope—in other words, it presents a complex human being, not an abstract notion of a “hero.” This makes her easier to relate to as a role model, while also teaching about the dangers of intolerance.

Like Leopold’s speech, the AFCMR programs noticeably use “frame bridging” (Snow et al. 1986) across time and space to build a connection between different groups’ perspectives and experiences. The performance “Letters from Anne and Martin” draws on two famous documents: Anne Frank’s diary and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s “Let-

ter from Birmingham Jail.” Actors use excerpts from these writings to enact an imagined dialogue between the two about “their hopes and plans for a peaceful and unified world.” Like “A Conversation with Anne,” this performance generates audience discussions. Such programs continue to expand, alongside the sapling that grows and serves as a symbolic gateway to broader conversations. As I will discuss below, the experiential and dialogical learning exemplified by these programs is especially sought after in contemporary museum exhibits.

Museums and Social Justice in a Global Context

A more globally interconnected world has led to new debates about the role of museums and exhibit spaces, and particularly, their involvement in social justice issues. A growing number of museums visibly support human rights. Of course, this varies depending on economic, political, and other interests that shape museum spaces and “define the boundaries of possible action and the form and tone of particular exhibitions” (Cameron 2006:29). Nevertheless, the visibility of social justice focused museums has increased, and some are part of global social justice networks—for example the Social Justice Alliance of Museums (SJAM) or the Federation of International Human Rights Museums (FIHRM), which “encourages museums which engage with sensitive and controversial human rights themes... to work together and share new thinking and initiatives in a supportive environment” (FIHRM 2018¹¹). The SJAM website notes that while the definition of social justice “has different meanings in different

¹¹ See: “About Us.” <https://www.fihrm.org/home/>. Retrieved September 14, 2018.

parts of the world...there is a common denominator to fight injustice and promote equality" (SJAM 2018¹²). Institutions like the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) are critical nodes in a global network, offering model programs and engaging in broad outreach. The USHMM relates its slogan "Never Again" not only to the Holocaust, but to other sites of genocide and potential genocide, worldwide.¹³ Such approaches mark a shift from "this shouldn't happen here" to "this shouldn't happen anywhere, to anyone" (Jasper 2015:275). Collectively, this also helps to build a "transnational memory" (Gluck 2007), an essential piece of social justice work across international borders. The Little Rock sapling site is part of this constellation of social justice spaces and places.

Research literature on museums documents the increasing importance of participatory learning and dialogical approaches like the ones I described in the previous section. Liz Ševčenko (2010:25) argues for "developing interpretation not around a linear narrative, but around open-ended questions on current issues, and giving people the time and space to engage in exchanges with each other about them." Fiona Cameron (2006:23), in a discussion of "edgy" and controversial exhibits, references sociologist Zygmunt Bauman's ideas about postmodernity (2002:138) to claim that since "morality in a post-modern world...is re-personalized and individual, institutions need to decisively move away from

framing exhibition content according to a consensual, collective morality to one that also encourages self expression." She also draws on Chakrabarty's (2002) contrast between "pedagogic" and "performative" forms of democracy, the latter relying on a more interactive and dialogic experience. She concludes that a "performative genre" is especially appropriate for controversial topics, and that museum staff can function as "expert mediator, informant, and facilitator" (Cameron 2006:23). This leaves room for audiences to do interpretative work. Furthermore, Gayle McPherson (2006) points out that museums are increasingly under pressure to generate revenue through market-based fundraising. She concludes that, when combined with new technologies and a shift in leisure behavior patterns that seek out museums as places of recreation, museums will become "hybrid places" (Kotler 2001). This, too, supports a performative genre.

Critiques of social justice or "conflict" museums have focused on several key themes. One is an overreliance on emotion-based approaches. Lisus and Ericson (1995) refer to some conflict museums as "emotions factories," noting that emotional experiences often have no lasting impact. Hamber (2012:272-273) points to a more subtle challenge: that "conflict museums can create an overidentification with the victim, precluding people from thinking of themselves as potential victimizers" or understanding power relations. A danger of the Never Again discourse, he claims, is that "it can create an idealized and imagined concept of the future that is devoid of context and political reality," or overemphasizes individual agency rather than social structure. Critics also point to forms of nostalgia that produce uncritical "hagiographies" of key personages (Pickering and Keightley 2006). By contrast, Svetlana Boym (2007:13) argues that "re-

¹² See: <https://inclusion.com/2014/11/17/social-justice-alliance-of-museums-sjam>. Retrieved September 13, 2018.

¹³ The USHMM states that its Center for the Prevention of Genocide "works to educate, engage, and inspire the public to learn more about past genocides—such as those in Rwanda, Bosnia, and Darfur—and to consider what they can do to prevent these atrocities in the future. [It] also works to galvanize policy makers both in the US and around the world to create the tools and structures needed to avert the next crisis" (see: <https://www.ushmm.org/information/about-the-museum>).

flective nostalgia” can be mobilized for positive social change, allowing reflection on the complexities of past and present to inspire a positive, realistic basis for the future—one that “does not shy away from the contradictions of modernity.”

Considering the “performative genre” programs linked to the Clinton Center sapling installation in light of these critiques, it is clear that many of these pitfalls have been avoided. The Clinton Library and Museum is not a “conflict museum,” but the sapling site is both gentle and “edgy.” It brings together the “feel-good” appreciation of the ongoing life of the Anne Frank tree (sapling) and the complexity and difficult histories of erasure and exclusion. As discussed earlier, interactive performances like “A Conversation with Anne” are far from hagiographies. Contrary to Hamber’s critique, the AFC-MR sponsors a range of educational activities that help individuals “connect the dots” between social actions that made the Holocaust possible and current injustices that they can recognize (e.g., bullying in the schools, or the treatment of immigrants, or discrimination against LGBTQ persons). These programs also ask participants to connect the dots on the inside, reflecting on how they might become a “potential victimizer”—even if only through a complicit silence or previously unrealized privilege. Uncovering this is not easy work. Perhaps the presence of the growing sapling and its message of hope softens these encounters without trivializing them. Nathan Thomas (interview, June 01, 2016, Little Rock) pointed out that “Desegregation is really heavy, Japanese-American internment is really heavy, everything in the exhibit is heavy, but the tree lightens it.” Likewise, to counteract this “heaviness,” the programs build up a collective identity of shared humanity; instead of “othering,” they focus on how all human beings are connected

(as reflected in Melba Patillo Beals’ quote on the installation panel). Thus, as a “truth-spot,” the sapling installation energizes both personal and collective insights into social justice, without falling into unreflective nostalgia or avoiding challenging personal questions. However, because of the challenging task of confronting difficult subjects, as well as changing expectations about museum installation spaces, constant innovation is required, and the best practice models are shared through a global network.

In George Herbert Mead’s terms (2015), the self is a process that continually evolves through social interaction, which also shapes our understanding of the past, present, and possible futures. This implies that the future is subject to intervention and reinvention, especially if based in a pragmatic understanding of the past and present. Museum installations that encourage critical thinking about one’s own identity and engage in bridge-building between diverse groups in the interests of future social justice are premised on this transformative possibility. Performative and dialogical approaches facilitate an imaginative rehearsal of a possible future. They also engage with the past, doing what Hamber (2012:269) calls “memory work.” Associated with “memory sites” (Young 1993), this typically includes “outreach youth education programs, traveling exhibits, tours, lecture series, and storytelling sessions,” whose goal is “revealing the past...to prevent future forms of atrocity” (Hamber 2012:269). Eviatar Zerubavel (2003:4) has explored how different groups are socialized into “mnemonic traditions” that include “social norms of remembrance that tell us what we should remember and what we should essentially forget.” Museums that focus on embodied, interactive, and dialogical social justice exhibits invest in the idea of *mnemon-*

ic resocialization, a process through which we can learn new things that affect what we remember and forget, and that bring us into a more inclusive relationship with others. The Clinton Center and AFCMR programs provided many illustrations of this approach to the past, present, and future.

Returning to the truth-spot concept, what kind of truth do such practices generate? Although expertise has a place, truth is seen as a process of discovery and co-creation based on interactive, dialogical experiences between different groups. In Ševčenko's terms, this yields a non-linear, more open-ended narrative. Facts are not abandoned, but truth is intersectional, drawing on a variety of perspectives. This understanding of truth is postmodern in the sense that the kaleidoscope shifts slightly to accommodate unique personal identity construction. However, it still focuses on common ground. As Lexi Elenzweig said in her speech at the sapling inauguration: "My hope is that the Anne Frank tree will come to represent something different for each observer as we look through these windows, allowing each of us to see through the eyes of others and to understand that we are all rooted in the same ground."

The Tree as Immigrant

Trees do bring a creative agency into all manner of relational achievements which humans enroll, such as fruit production, timber production, and landscape production. But, they appear to work to other agendas and operate in other networks outside of or in conflict with human enrolled networks. [Jones and Cloke 2002:215]

Trees are "palpable living individuals" (Jones and Cloke 2002:3). And, as Nathan Thomas points out,

the sapling itself is an immigrant. Like many other migrants, including the Frank family, and the groups portrayed on the glass panels, it has struggled to survive despite being "out of place." He commented, "Just the idea of trees having to deal with, especially in Little Rock, the cultures we have in the soil and the bugs and the seasons we have—it's just not suited for it. But, if you slowly bring the tree into the climate, apparently—we'll find out—it can adapt." He saw the adaptation theme as a potential "deeper conversation to have" in the future, another link between Anne Frank and the tree.

The Sapling Project depends on local ecological knowledge and an understanding of the tree's original environment, so that it can be appropriately cared for. After a three-year quarantine to prevent the possible spread of disease, some saplings went to places with a climate more similar to the Netherlands. But, the Clinton Center sapling faces the challenge of higher temperatures in the U.S. South. Although it receives excellent care, the adaptation is not easy. As mentioned earlier, the sapling planted at the installation ceremony was a surrogate for the actual sapling that was being acclimated at a local greenhouse (along with some of its more distant relatives as backups). When I visited the sapling at the greenhouse on a very hot and humid summer day, the caretaker expressed the opinion that maybe "It will never get used to being here." He expressed misgivings about the relocation process of the saplings and concern about their future wellbeing. I learned during my project that Central High had applied earlier for its own sapling, but it did not survive. When Steven Goldstein from the AFCMR visited the Clinton center in 2017, he mentioned that a second sapling would be coming to Central High, giving Arkansas some "brag-

ging rights” as the only state with two saplings. But, someone from Central High, sitting in the row in front of me, loudly whispered to a neighbor, “I don’t even want it. There’s no information, and the kids don’t know how to take care of it.” While this problem could be solved, an ecological perspective on the saplings yields a cautionary tale about the dangers of taking an instrumental view of trees (or other non-human beings). They have their own “agendas” for survival and may not serve human desires. Olivia Judson (2009:2) points out that, like human beings, plants “are shaped by what happens to them, and alter their responses to future events based on their experiences in the past.” Perhaps we should be doing “memory work” not only with human beings in mind.

Climate change brings additional challenges and complexities. Trees all over the globe are increasingly vulnerable to damage through increasingly extreme weather events. For example, there is good reason to believe that the destruction of the original Anne Frank tree and the tree in Grand-Pré, Nova Scotia was accelerated by climatic events that weakened them even before intense storms killed both in 2010. The problem of ecological survival raises an interesting question about authenticity. The Anne Frank saplings derive their power to inspire from being direct descendants of the original Amsterdam tree. But, this authenticity cannot be recreated just anywhere. What if the original sapling, symbol of “Hope Justice Endurance,” cannot survive? Would a quick substitution suffice? Would a permanent surrogate sapling provide the same kind of authenticity, over time? Could having a permanent surrogate sapling be interpreted positively, as a lesson in limits, resilience, and flexibility in a globally and climatically changing world, and embraced as a new kind of truth?

Conclusions

All beginnings contain an element of recollection.
[Connerton 1989:6]

My paper has been about memory work that touches on the future as well as the past, using the Anne Frank sapling installation as a focus. I have looked into the somewhat mysterious role that trees play in human experience, using the lens of arbori-culture, which sees trees as both socially constructed and materially agentic entities. I have also proposed that the sapling installation can be seen as part of an interrelated global network of truth-spots. Thomas Gieryn (2018:3) has asserted that no two truth-spots follow “the exact same recipe,” but in each case “place itself is not merely an incidental setting where some idea or assertion just happens to gain credibility, but a vital cause of that enhanced believability.” The motto of the Clinton Museum and Library is “a Bridge to the Future,” playing on the architectural design that makes it appear to hang partly in the air by the Arkansas River, near where the Trail of Tears once passed. This *particular* place is important, with its constellation of past events, present significance, and the imported tree sapling that connects it to yet other places and histories. The sapling stands at the center of many interlaced immigration stories and a geography of previous suffering. The location has the double advantage of a standard attraction—a national presidential library—and a unique combination of elements in the sapling installation. If the sapling were moved to a different place, the entire configuration (and the message of the truth-spot) would change. Yet, as a symbolic and material offshoot of other truth-spots like the Anne Frank House, it also shows that belief can be portable, even though inflected differently in each local place.

Different layers of truth (and meta-truth) adhere to this place. The installation and its accompanying programs support the compelling belief that doing the necessary hard work to understand past and present injustices can lead to a more just future. This belief allows hope to live on, as the sapling (or perhaps a surrogate) grows in place. The installation stands out as a place where “nature” (in the form of a tree) is presented as a healing force, grounded in its ability to regenerate. The tree enhances the place because it is physically part of the original Anne Frank tree, but also because of what a tree *is and does*. As Rabbi Barry Block of Little Rock (interview, July 20, 2017) commented, “I don’t think it was random that she [Anne] was drawn to a tree.” But, the installation also draws the gaze beyond the sapling, to what is more challenging. It supports the “never again” narrative, but always with the important caveat that the future depends on taking action for social justice, after being honest about the past. Other truths may open up here, too, as participants not only ask “what happened here?” but also, “who am I in this place?” The setup invites each individual to find answers in terms most relevant to their own experience, leaving room for individual interpretation. This seems to be the hallmark of a more modern approach to truth, one that also fits with museums’ changing missions. From a meta-truth perspective, then, the truth supported here is a process of ongoing, intersectional discovery. Judging by the virulent response from those who believe that truth is

fixed, and who label anything that challenges their views as “fake news,” the “never again” narrative is fragile and always challenged. The same “othering” that produced the Holocaust is alive and well in contemporary inequalities and genocides.

Truth-spots are necessarily selective creations. We also live among shifting “truth” landscapes in the world. Eva Schloss, who became Anne Frank’s step-sister after her mother married Anne’s father after the war, commented on a disturbing parallel between the U.S. refusal to take in more Jewish refugees in the 1940s and President Donald Trump’s proposal for a wall, and a ban on Muslim and Syrian refugees (Salzillo 2016). The stirring up of hatred and refusal to condemn racism, white nationalism, conspiracy theories, and hate crimes caused her to question what we have learned from history. This hatred has not left the tree saplings unscathed. In May 2018, one of the saplings in the town of Waalwijk in the Netherlands was attacked, and the commemorative plaque stolen. Park rangers bandaged it after its first injury, but it was deliberately broken a second time (Jerusalem Post 2018). As Ronald Leopold stated so clearly in his speech in Little Rock, the doors of social justice open, but there is much hard work to be done. That message is already embodied in the Clinton Center installation, but underlined and amplified by current global events. The tree sapling is a small presence, but what “swirls around it” (Jones and Cloke 2002) is powerful.

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Othering of Full-Time and Volunteer Women Firefighters in the Canadian Fire Services

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Abstract: Being discriminated against because of factors such as gender, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, and stature (i.e., height and weight) has been a common experience for women in traditionally men-dominated/identified occupations. Although women's representation has risen in other men-dominated domains (Hughes 1995), within firefighting their presence remains extremely low in Canada (4.4% [Statistics Canada 2017]). Women firefighters mostly operate in a patriarchal context; they are often ignored, harassed, and treated poorly due to an intersectionality of factors (Paechter 1998). Thus far, most research has taken place in the US, UK, and AUS. In the present Pan-Canadian study, we examined the experiences of volunteer and career women firefighters (N=113). The Psycho-Social Ethnography of the Commonplace methodology (P-SEC [Gouliquer and Poulin 2005]) was used. With this approach, we identified several practices, both formal and informal (e.g., physical and academic standards, gender roles), which resulted in women feeling the effect of the intersection of gender and firefighting. Results indicated that women firefighters experience "Othering" manifesting itself in a variety of ways such as discrimination, hostility, and self-doubt. This paper focuses on Canadian women firefighters and ends with social change and policy recommendations to better their reality.

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Efforts to recruit women into non-traditional occupations (e.g., firefighting, policing, military) have increased in recent years (Hughes 1995; Batty and Burchielli 2011). Overall, however, progress has been minimal in remedying the deficit of women in many fields of work (Judd and Oswald 1997; Hulett et al. 2008a; Wright 2008; Gouliquer 2011; Jahnke et al. 2012). This is the case with firefighting globally, as women struggle with multiple barriers (e.g., discrimination, harassment, poor equipment, archaic promotion systems) (e.g., **AUS:** Beatson and McLennan 2005; McLennan and Birch 2006; Batty and Burchielli 2011; **CA:** Poulin, Gouliquer, and Moore 2018; **US:** Yoder and Aniakudo 1996; Wang and Kleiner 2001; Hulett et al. 2008b). In North America, women constitute 7.3% of the United States (Haynes and Stein 2016) and 4.4% of Canadian firefighters (Poulin et al. 2018; Statistics Canada 2017). The underrepresentation of women in firefighting is not surprising, given the

domination by men surrounding labor-intensive and uniformed occupations (e.g., law enforcement, transportation, construction, military [Martin 1990; Gouliquer 2011; Wright 2016]). Moreover, women of ethnic minorities (e.g., African, Aboriginal, Hispanic), older women, and non-heterosexuals (e.g., lesbian, gay, bisexual)—who comprise 3.5% (lesbian), 1.9% (gay), and 2.1% (bisexual) in the general population of the US, Canada, and the UK (Gates 2011)—are further underrepresented.

Multiple factors have impeded women's integration into firefighting and other non-traditional occupations (e.g., Wang and Kleiner 2001; Yoder and Aniakudo 2001; Batty and Burchielli 2011; Gouliquer 2011; Sinden et al. 2013; Poulin et al. 2018). Factors such as race and sexual discrimination and harassment have negatively contributed to women's overall acceptance and inclusion from the profession of firefighting (Yoder and Aniakudo

1996; 1997; Yoder and Berendsen 2001). The identification of firefighting as physically and mentally draining has been presented as hampering women's integration (Flynn 2000). While some studies have been conducted in other Western countries, little research exists pertaining to Canadian women firefighters (except for Sheppard 2001; Klassen and Gillin 2005; and our recent book chapter [Poulin et al. 2018]). The present research is in response to this gap in the literature.

Women commonly experience a process of exclusion in men-dominated occupations and organizations as they are often perceived as different from the stereotype of the ideal worker (Acker 1990). According to Lewis (1997) and Rapoport and colleagues (2002), the "ideal worker" for most men-dominated employment is a man whose ability to work is not hindered by social, emotional, and caretaking obligations outside of work. This stereotype is underpinned by such masculine-associated attributes as strength, competitiveness, decisiveness, and instrumentality; while caretaking and social networking are stereotypically perceived as feminine, and women's work (Lewis 1997; Rapoport et al. 2002). Thus, it is presumed that only masculine traits are necessary to be successful in men-dominated fields and that men are not burdened with other life demands (Bleijenbergh, van Engen, and Vinkenburg 2011). In general, women and men who do not conform to masculine characteristics and the masculine hegemony are made invisible and excluded through a process called Othering (Rapoport et al. 2002; Bailyn 2006; Bendl 2008).

Othering

According to Staszak (2008:2), Othering is "a discursive process by which a dominant in-group ('Us,' the

Self) constructs one or many dominated out-groups ('Them,' Other) by stigmatizing difference—real or imagined—presented as a negation of identity and thus a motive for potential discrimination." More simply, Othering is a process that uses exclusionary criteria based on undesirable characteristics between two or more groups (Broome 2012) to discriminate. The "negation" of identity is what separates the marginalized group from the dominant group (Pettigrew and Meertens 1995; Riach 2007; Staszak 2008). Hence, the process of Othering is grounded in the application of overly simplistic stigmatizing stereotypes (Riggins 1997; Lister 2004; Staszak 2008; Jensen 2011). Othering can be violent (e.g., xenophobia, genocide, rape) or non-violent (e.g., isolation, exclusion of ethnic or religious minorities), but it is often the non-violent acts that are more harmful to marginalized individuals (Hudson and Melber 2014) as they have insidious, long-term psychological effects. Non-heterosexual and non-traditionally gendered people, ethnic and religious minorities, and immigrants are groups typically targeted in both violent and non-violent acts (Hudson and Melber 2014).

Otherness, which can occur either geographically (e.g., Western vs. Eastern cultures) or spatially (e.g., segregation to ghettos, insane asylums), works to prevent intermixing between two or more groups (Staszak 2008). Otherness and identity are constructed using opposing binary categories such as man/woman, heterosexual/homosexual, or in-group/out-group (Paechter 1998; Bannerji 2000; Gingrich 2004; Staszak 2008; Jensen 2011; Paragg 2015). The construction and experiences of Otherness are underpinned by an asymmetry in power (Said 1978; Paechter 1998; Staszak 2008) and the exclusion of the out-group from sites of power and meaning-making (Weiner 1994). In general, dominant in-groups are the individuals who create the rules and im-

pose identities and worldviews on the out-groups (Staszak 2008; Hudson and Melber 2014), believe and behave as if they are the only ones who matter (Paechter 1998), and are in a powerful position that can be used to devalue and inflict discriminatory measures upon the Others (Staszak 2008). The out-group is oppressed, Othered, and subjected to the rules and practices of the in-group: they do not have the power to change the rules (Staszak 2008).

Reality is a rich mix of complex, conflicting, and intersecting identities that are not conducive to the binary nature of Otherness (Paechter 1998). An African American lesbian may prioritise her gender, race, or sexual orientation to resist her Otherness in certain situations, but may be treated differently by individuals who are also Othered (e.g., white women) due to the intersectionality of these factors (Carby 1997; Paechter 1998; hooks 2000). Overall, Othering is a social tool used to marginalize a group and disqualify their membership into the dominant in-group (Tsouroufli, Ozbilgin, and Smith 2011). This paper investigates Othering of women in the Canadian fire services.

The Fire Services' Masculinized Environment

Fire services are para-military institutions (Hulett et al. 2008b; Poulin et al. 2018)—with an attachment to heterosexualism (Ainsworth, Batty, and Burchielli 2014) and masculinized heroism (Greenberg 1998)—and shares commonalities with other “total institutions,” such as militaries (Goffman 1960). Firefighters are segregated from family, friends, and society through the use of mandatory uniforms and communal-style workplaces (Craig and Jacobs 1985; Hulett et al. 2008b). Within this seemingly “united” atmosphere, strong bonds are often formed between

men, especially White men, while non-White men and women of all races, ages, sizes, and sexual orientations are Othered (Yoder and Berendsen 2001). According to Batty and Burchielli (2011), a masculinized language and culture are symptomatic of fire services and function to marginalize and alienate women. When women enter men-dominated occupations, they are often met with heightened, elaborate performances of masculinity in conjunction with the denial of feminine-associated characteristics and culture (e.g., teasing and devaluing motions) that are both threatening and demeaning to women (Batty and Burchielli 2011; Ainsworth et al. 2014). These performances, which are fueled by negative stereotypes about and attitudes towards women, are utilized as deterrents to both current and prospective women workers to disempower them (Batty and Burchielli 2011; Ainsworth et al. 2014). For example, women are frequently subjected to negative slurs such as “bitch,” “whore,” or “troublemaker” (Yoder and Aniakudo 1996).

The use of degrading language is intensified through the creation of an inhospitable and harassing working environment (Yoder and Aniakudo 1996; Batty and Burchielli 2011). Women are given ill-fitting gear, their privacy is violated, and pranks, teasing, and hazing behaviors exceed those experienced by their men coworkers (Yoder and Aniakudo 1996; Batty and Burchielli 2011; Poulin et al. 2018). Insufficient job instruction, excessive and punitive supervision, and gender/sexual harassment (Wright 2011; Ainsworth et al. 2014; Poulin et al. 2018) are additional barriers that women face. Research indicates that women firefighters are excluded from day-to-day interactions (Yoder and Berendsen 2001), given the “silent treatment” (Yoder and Aniakudo 1997) or left behind at the fire station during emergency calls (Yoder and Aniakudo 2001). Across multiple

studies (e.g., Yoder and Aniakudo 1996; 2001; Yoder and Berendsen 2001; Sinden et al. 2013; Ainsworth et al. 2014; Poulin et al. 2018), women reported feeling purposefully ignored by their men counterparts, having had to hide weaknesses, and not being able to seek help without scrutiny. Feelings of isolation due to a lack of other women coworkers or segregations of women within the firefighting environment were common (Yoder and Berendsen 2001), as was the ongoing need to prove themselves to their men colleagues (Yoder and Aniakudo 1997; Yoder and Berendsen 2001; Poulin et al. 2018).

What has been minimally researched is the intersection of the different out-group identities related to gender, race, sexual orientation, age, and stature, and the discriminatory practices that have come about due to these intersectionalities.

Discrimination Based on Multiple Differences

Women firefighters have always been treated poorly based on their gender (Craig and Jacobs 1985). For women minorities, however, discrimination is complicated by the intersection of other statuses. In a study by Yoder and Aniakudo (1996), African American women reported race-based differential treatment as well as being treated differently based on gender. While most of these women (82%) agreed that racial discrimination was an issue, a smaller number (50%) identified sex discrimination as a problem. Sexual harassment has been a central theme in most studies about women firefighters (Yoder and Aniakudo 1996; 1997; Shuster 2000; Yoder and Berendsen 2001; Ainsworth et al. 2014; Poulin et al. 2018). However, when gender intersects with sexuality, race, or non-traditional gender, sexual harassment becomes ambiguous as to whether it is

linked to gender, race, sexual orientation, or a combination (Wright 2008).

Implications of Discrimination and Harassment Based on Othering

Discrimination and harassment based on Othering dominate many men-dominated fields, and have serious emotional and physical consequences for women. They have been linked also to distrust in the system (Batty and Burchielli 2011), job dissatisfaction (Sinden et al. 2013), early retirement or job departure due to interpersonal conflict with men-colleagues, lack of promotion opportunities (Griffith et al. 2015), and lower participation in the fire services' events (Batty and Burchielli 2011). Despite these negative occurrences, women firefighters have prevailed, albeit in small numbers in the fire services.

Purpose of Present Study

Although some progress that has been made during the past few decades in the workplace, women firefighters still struggle to feel like they are a part of the dominant in-group (i.e., white heterosexual men). As outlined in the literature above, women have been excluded, harassed, discriminated against, treated differently, subjected to jokes, teased, and subjected to hazing behaviors due to multiple factors (e.g., gender, ethnicity/race, age). Moreover, factors such as pregnancy, parenthood, menstruation, height, weight, physical strength have created additional barriers for women. Additionally, traits or characteristics that are not indicative of the men stereotype firefighter (e.g., heroic, brave, strong, masculine) are threatening and subsequently Othered. As evidenced in the literature, there is a need to explore the experiences and realities of women engaged in

full-time and volunteer firefighting in Canada as they are the “outsiders within” (i.e., a part of the in-group and out-group) and can provide a unique perspective on events (Yoder and Aniakudo 1997). Due to Canada’s expansive territory, it is very rural in nature; thus most fire services are largely comprised of volunteers. This factor has rarely been a factor to be considered in previous studies. Yet, it deserves attention. This paper focuses specifically on Canadian women firefighters’ experiences of Othering and its intersectionality with other differences such as age or a racialized identity.

Methodology: The Psycho-Social Ethnography of the Commonplace

In the present research, we utilized the Psycho-Social Ethnography of the Commonplace (P-SEC [Gouliquer and Poulin 2005]) methodology. P-SEC is an interdisciplinary methodology that is inspired by three traditions (Poulin and Gouliquer 2012): 1) feminist standpoint epistemology (Harding 1987), 2) institutional ethnography (Smith 1987), and 3) schema theory (Bem 1983; 1993; Beals 1998).

Traditionally, firefighting was comprised of only men; thus, the practices, culture, and policies developed without women, which further marginalizes them. Due to its nature, relations of ruling manipulate and control human behavior (Smith 1987; 2005). Marginalized groups reify their marginalization by taking part in the ideological and material relations of ruling; therefore, marginalized individuals often behave in ways that maintain the hegemony. P-SEC uses institutional ethnography to problematize the disparities between the individual experience and the social relations of ruling embedded in organizations (Smith 2005). More specifically, P-SEC directs researchers to examine ordinary everyday events,

practices, or policies of the institution that complicate the lives of the marginalized group, which are known as “Organizational Moments.” Thus, the marginalized reality, as shaped by the Organizational Moment, helps illuminate how the relations of ruling operate (Poulin and Gouliquer 2012).

Concepts from schema theory were integrated into the P-SEC methodology to illustrate how marginalized individuals make sense of their institutional reality and the complications they experience. Making sense, according to schema theory, requires creating, storing, and applying cognitive concepts (e.g., stereotypes) that allow individuals to easily process information (Bransford and Johnston 1972; Markus 1977; Rumelhart 1980; Brewer and Treyns 1981; Garnham 1981; Holland 1985; Beals 1998). Schemata also allow individuals to develop expectations about the future: They are shaped differently depending on experience, and work to mediate our understanding of the world (Garro 2000). Thus, investigating schemata helps further expose the relations of ruling and how marginalized individuals negotiate their shaped reality, both psychologically and socially (Poulin and Gouliquer 2012). P-SEC also involves investigating cognitive and behavioral coping mechanisms used when facing complications. Examining the coping mechanisms helps reveal how practices or policies (i.e., the Organizational Moments) benefit the institution, but complicate the reality of the marginalized. The final step in the P-SEC approach is to use the findings to develop social change and policy recommendations that will improve the marginalized individuals’ realities.

Participants

One hundred and thirteen (N=113) women firefighters took part in this pan-Canadian study. All partici-

pants were either current or past volunteer/part-time or career firefighters. Volunteer firefighters are usually compensated one way or another (e.g., honoraria or through tax exemption programs). The amount varies widely. In some jurisdictions (e.g., Quebec), the volunteer category does not exist as they are paid per emergency call and their work referred to as part-time. However, in none of these cases are they able to earn a living from this revenue. Participants were recruited through the use of advertisements within firefighting contexts (e.g., Women in Fire webpage, magazines and newsletter/discussion forums) and by the snowball technique (i.e., word of mouth). Participants ranged in age from 19 to 64 years ($M = 38.5$ years), and the time spent in the fire services ranged from 1 to 31 years ($M = 10.34$). Seventy women were volunteer/part-time, 18 were career/full-time, and 24 had experience with both volunteer/part-time and career positions. Height ranged from 152.20 (5') to 188.98 (6'2") cm ($M = 167.64$ or 5'5"), while weight ranged from 110 to 250 pounds ($M = 160.34$). Eight women indicated that they were non-heterosexual, and 16 women identified as non-Caucasian.

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were carried out in person, via telephone, or through online communication platforms (e.g., Skype), and lasted an average of two hours. Participants were asked to highlight, in chronological order, significant career events such as training, job-related performance tests and interviews, or promotions. These served as anchor points and helped guide the interviews (Gouliquer and Poulin 2005). Using anchor points as an outline, participants were asked to recount their firefighting experiences. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed according to P-SEC analysis (i.e., thematically and for Organizational Moments and their concomitant com-

plications, schemata, coping strategies, and benefits to the institution). All identifying information (names, places) have been changed or removed to protect the women firefighters. In the following section, the Organizational Moment, Othering, is explored.

Results

Organizational Moment: Othering

As described earlier, Othering is the systematic stigmatization of an out-group by an in-group as a means to maintain the hegemony (Tsouroufli et al. 2011). Men have been the dominant in-group within the fire services since its inception and women firefighters are considered outsiders. Specifically, it is white heterosexual men who dominate and impose a particular masculine identity within the social environment of firefighting (see: Connell 1995 for a discussion on multiple different masculinities). Women do not fit the stereotype of the firefighter and they are marginalized through an Othering process. Women do not need to display so-called "feminine characteristics" (e.g., be physically and psychologically weak, wear make-up, or be pregnant) to be Othered; the assumption is that by default, they are lacking in "male characteristics." Other characteristics such as sexual orientation, age, ethnicity/race, stature (i.e., height and weight) can also be stigmatized. Notably, the Othering process is dynamic and interactive rather than additive: Characteristics are often Othered together, creating an intersectionality of oppression (Culp 1994). All participants spoke of instances of Othering and Rachael's quote exemplifies this point:

I think that the biggest negative is always feeling like the outsider... If the guys need help on a course they're teaching, they tend to choose each other...I'm

never the one chosen or asked. It's isolating. [Rachael, 38, Caucasian, career & volunteer/part-time]

Complications

The process of Othering created complications for women firefighters. The most notable ones were: 1) Discrimination, 2) Hostile Working Conditions, 3) Self-Doubt, and 4) Weakened Firefighter Identity.

Discrimination

Discrimination can be seen as dynamic and existing along three dimensions: Subtle (ambiguous) or overt (visible and structured), formal (i.e., job-related) or interpersonal (i.e., socially-related), and intentional or unintentional (Van Laer and Janssens 2011; Jones et al. 2016; Jones et al. 2017). The process of Othering is usually underpinned with acts of discrimination. For the women firefighters, discrimination began at the start, during the recruitment process. According to Diane, new women applicants struggled with gender-based discrimination:

There were several people who applied [for the firefighting job], some of which were female. All the females got rejected. There were some key players, key stakeholders, and senior officers in the fire department. Town council decided that they needed to look into this because it is discrimination [but the women still] didn't even get a foot in the door. [Diane, 37, Caucasian, volunteer/part-time]

Women spoke of discrimination that spanned throughout their career, as exemplified by the gendered bullying Hariot received:

I had much experience with him being a bully [the Deputy Chief]. He would overlook us [women fire-

fighters] for tasks or roles, and make negative comments about the capability of women...He made us feel guilty for it [needing uniforms that fit], and then he bullied us. [Harriot, 28, Caucasian, career & volunteer/part-time]

Discrimination pertaining to non-gender-related characteristics, such as age and sexual orientation, was also described. Michelle recounted instances of subtle discrimination where her achievements went unacknowledged by her men colleagues because of her age:

I'd always win [competitions] in my age category...I would always be about sixth or seventh overall. But, because I was in the over-forty category, I would always be in the top three. They [men colleagues] wouldn't even mention it. They would never say anything. They didn't want to. [Michelle, 47, Caucasian, volunteer/part-time]

Instead of being treated like typical women, women with non-heterosexual orientations (e.g., lesbian, bisexual) were stereotypically perceived as possessing more masculine traits and capabilities and thus, somehow accepted as pseudo-men. As Jen's quote illustrates, the cost of being accepted, even if only symbolically, is the complicit obliteration of women's gender and sex identity.

This woman walks by in front of the truck and all the guys in the truck have a conversation about whether or not they'd have sex with her. They don't even bat an eye about saying that in front of me. I think partly because I am a lesbian in their eyes, even though I tell them I date men, too. But, it's easier for them to think of me as a lesbian. They think that I'm in on it...sex with that woman, too. [Jen, 36, Caucasian, career, volunteer/part-time]

Older women and women minorities were perceived and treated by their men colleagues as “special” because everyone believed that the physical and academic standards had been lowered so that they could pass. These perceptions were internalized and affected women firefighters for the entirety of their careers as they often felt and were identified as less capable and intelligent than their men colleagues. Age and racial Othering is illustrated in the quotes of Natasha and Qadia, respectively:

I think that it was bad enough being the first woman, but when I was hired, I was the oldest person ever hired there. I was forty and so there was all this discrimination from all sides. [Natasha, 57, Caucasian, career]

Just because we’re minorities doesn’t mean we’re stupid. They set the entrance exam at 75%, where the white male still needed 90%. We’re [minorities] not dumb. [Qadia, 49, non-Caucasian, career]

Further complicating these women’s lives was the discrimination they faced when actually displaying feminine traits or characteristics such as pregnancy. Career women firefighters are protected by formal workplace legislation for pregnancy and maternity; however, they had issues with not being given meaningful light duties during their pregnancy. For volunteer/part-time firefighters, there is no protection and women are more at the mercy of their departments. The quote illustrates the limited (non-existent) choices they faced:

A leave of absence in my department is six months long. That doesn’t even accommodate being off with a baby, let alone being advanced in pregnancy and not being able to do heavy lifting. And if you take a leave of absence longer than six months, they re-

quire that you do your whole recruit training all over again. [Nadia, 44, Caucasian, volunteer/part-time]

Most volunteer/part-time women firefighters leave the volunteer fire service for years or permanently due to the lack of accommodation related to pregnancy and childcare.

The discursive messages that men were communicating to their women colleagues were another deeper and implicit layer of discrimination. The experience of Danielle in the next quote illuminates how, in addition to treating women differently because of their gender, men firefighters treated them differently based on physical attributes.

Because of my stature, and I’m talking about my height, I do get treated differently...This one night we were out, it was so slippery that as soon as you stepped off the fire truck, you fell. Another female firefighter fell, she’s heavier, and the guys just laughed. I had to go out, same thing happened, I fell. But, instead of laughing, they all rushed off the truck to pick me up. [Danielle, 49, non-Caucasian volunteer/part-time]

Thus, the women firefighters who embodied the ideal woman stereotype (i.e., pretty, petite, and feminine) were treated as fragile, weak, and in need of help (i.e., with benevolent sexism). The men’s gender performance illustrated in Danielle’s quote serves to bolster the masculine hero firefighter stereotype and the hegemony of masculinity and men. It also serves to divide women as women who did not embody the ideal feminine stereotype were punished (e.g., mocked), while the others were rewarded with benevolent sexism for their perceived femininity.

Volunteer women firefighters are also discriminated against as their status is not valued and they do not

have “social capital” (Yarnel and Dowler 2002). Consequently, they are not chosen to attend firefighting conferences and social gatherings. Pauline’s example illustrates how the volunteer firefighting status can lead to less workplace opportunities.

There was an e-mail out from head office saying that there was an international women’s firefighting conference and if anybody wanted to apply they could—career or volunteer. I put my application in and my friend as well, and it turned out we were the only two volunteer females who applied. We were not chosen to go. It was all career...And I heard through the grapevine that we weren’t picked because we weren’t “qualified.” [Pauline, 46, non-Caucasian, volunteer/part-time]

What is not clear in such incidents is the ambiguity that multiple identities can create. It is simply untraceable and unclear if it was the volunteer status, gender, racial identity, or age or a combination that influenced the selection process. The above findings illustrate that it is often the case with discrimination when multiple identities intersect with gender.

Hostile Working Environment

Hostile working environments are characterized by repeated adverse verbal (e.g., insulting remarks, ridicule, teasing, verbal abuse, degradation of one’s effort and work) and physical acts (e.g., isolation, social exclusion) (Einarsen, Raknes, and Matthiesen 1994). Multiple women, such as Dale and Ivy, reported negative verbal occurrences, which led to feelings of fear:

They [men colleagues] said, “Wait until we bend you over. Either way, we are gonna break you!” The next day, I was coming down to go through the bay and

the guys were literally talking about how they were going to corner me to make sure that I would get so scared that I would leave. The words were extremely crude and explicit. I actually got scared! [Dale, 40, Caucasian, career & volunteer/part-time]

This one instructor who did not want me there pulled me aside when I said, “I need a point of clarification.” And he told me to shut up, and he tried to incite me to hit him. He had his finger in my face...I started to walk away from him, and he says, “Well, I’m gonna bring you up on charges, basically get you into trouble.” [Ivy, 45, Caucasian, career]

Many women reported sexual harassment and some sexual assault. However, for fear of being disbelieved and ostracized by their colleagues and the fire services’ administration, women kept quiet about the harassment and sexual assault with the hope that the situation would change. However, this stratagem often resulted in men taking advantage of the situation, as Colleen’s quote illustrates:

At fire training, out of the blue, he [Deputy Chief] exposed himself to me...I stayed my distance away from him for quite some time. Then, when I’d been around him again, he’d seem fine...So, I come in on a Saturday and he was in the office. I walked in and he went around behind me and shut the door and then forced himself on me [sexually]. [Colleen, 35, Caucasian, volunteer/part-time]

Colleen did not report the assault for years.

Self-Doubt

Many participants reported feelings of self-doubt and a loss of confidence. The duration of time each woman firefighter was part of the fire services,

whether one or twenty years, was not a factor. Although women knew that they could handle the demanding physical and mental aspects of the occupation, many had moments when they believed that they were not good enough to be a firefighter. Participants spoke about the hardships from having experienced this self-doubt. As illustrated by Paige, who had injured herself while trying to “keep up with the big boys”:

I have my days where I still doubt my ability to be here, even though I've been here for fourteen years...I have my doubts as to whether or not I still belong. [Paige, 44, Caucasian, career]

According to Denise, the discrimination from her men colleagues plummeted her confidence:

You go to work and it's always like walking on eggshells. You watch your back all the time. You don't know if you're going to get blamed for something or if you're going to do a good job. At the end, [my] confidence went from really confident, thinking that I could do anything, to almost thinking, “Oh my God, I'm not a good firefighter at all.” [Denise, 34, Caucasian, career & volunteer/part-time]

The intersection of gender and age also played a role in women firefighters' feelings of self-doubt. Instead of doubting that they could do the job because of age or gender, they identified that both factors were an issue. Whether they were older when they joined the fire services or later in their career, self-doubt plagued the women. Ivy and Cecilia's quotes indicate how many of the women negotiated their doubts:

I doubted when I first got into recruit training if I could physically do it: I was in better shape than

over half the people in the class. But, it was my own downfall that made me doubt—you get so old, and then you question. [Ivy, 45, Caucasian, career]

There's definitely been situations where it becomes more of a self-doubt. You wonder, “Am I a weak link here? Am I helping or am I slowing the process down?” I think you kind of always have [self-doubt] in the back of your head, “What are the guys thinking?” [Cecilia, 44, Caucasian, career & volunteer/part-time]

Weakened Firefighter Identity

The social perception is that firefighters are men. Thus, because women do not fit the typical masculine firefighter stereotype, they are often undermined internally (i.e., within the fire services) and externally (i.e., outside of the fire services). When undermined internally, coworkers, city management, and the government refuse to treat women as firefighters. Yvette's example speaks to how explicitly, through job assignments, leaders can undermine women's credibility as a firefighter:

They [men colleagues] don't want females in the fire department. They want it to be just a guy's thing, and it's to get them to let me do things. We had a big huge rolling house fire and I am fully trained to go in and attack. I rolled up on scene, I went up to the new chief and said, “What do you want me to do?” And he said, “Go stand by that fire truck and watch it pour water.” [Yvette, 24, Caucasian, volunteer/part-time]

When women are undermined externally, it can involve their family, friends, and the public. This process is illustrated by Rebecca and Vicki:

You still have people from the general public walking up and going, “Well, you're not a firefighter. You're

a woman, you don't go fight fires."...They didn't think we are fighting fires and going to car accidents and riding in the big red trucks. [Rebecca, 43, Caucasian, volunteer/part-time]

When people think firefighter, they think 6'2', big, burly guy coming with his axe. And when I jump off the truck, they're like, "What's going on?" [Vicki, 36, non-Caucasian, career]

Ultimately, women are treated and viewed as if they are not capable of doing the job.

Schematic Analysis

Participants evoked various schemata to make sense of the complications they experienced because of the Organizational Moment, Othering. Three of the most common schemata were: Old Boys' Club, Just the Way It Is, and Family.

Old Boys' Club

This schema consists of a hegemonic and historical understanding of why men treat women so poorly and why women are lacking in numbers in men-dominated occupations; it's an Old Boys' Club (Adams 2001; Gouliquer 2011; Walker and Bopp 2011-2012; Burdett 2017). Women firefighters evoked this schema to understand that the behaviors and attitudes of their men colleagues are deeply rooted in a sexist tradition that is generational in nature. Thus, the women evoked this schema to make sense of why men can still behave the way they do. As Holly and Anabel suggested:

It's an Old Boys' Club... I think a lot of what drives some of the guys to join is that it gets them out of the house, they're away from their wives, they can be-

have as they want to and say the things they want and not have to worry. [Holly, 38, Caucasian, heterosexual, volunteer/part-time]

It's an Old Boys' Club and you are never going to belong. And the moment you think you belong, you're wrong. [Anabel, 32, Caucasian, heterosexual, career]

The use of the Old Boys' Club schema illustrated that women understood the powerlessness of their position, although by using it, the women were absolving the men of taking responsibility. The schema indicates that the culture and the treatment of women both remain marginalizing.

Pseudo-Family

Pseudo-families, according to Forsyth and Evans (2003), function as emotional and economic support groups, and are characterized by aggressive behaviors. Women evoke the Pseudo-Family schema to justify why the fire services are comprised of teasing and hazing behaviors. If firefighting is a Pseudo-Family, then many negative behaviors and comments are warranted as this is what is stereotypical of familial life. As Claudia suggests:

It really is like a large family. They're my brothers, my sisters, and we totally fight like siblings, too. I've had blowouts with some of them. I've had blowouts with my old Fire Chief. We butt heads, we deal with it, and then we move on. [Claudia, 29, Caucasian, volunteer/part-time]

Bloodline connections among families are non-negotiable. However, if Fireservices embrace and display the mentality of a Pseudo-Family and behaves according to close group pressure rules (Forsyth and Evans 2003), this dynamic will result in group

pressure and alliances that will tend to silence marginalized members. This is exactly the types of behaviors participants reported should not be inevitable. Accordingly, many women felt that nothing could be changed because one cannot betray their firefighting family. Bee and Evie's comments illustrate this mentality:

You have your ups, you have your downs. It's like a family. You can't really do much about it. They are yours. You gotta work with them. [Bee, 32, Caucasian, career]

We've very much a brother-and-sisterhood. You can choose your friends, but you can't pick your family, so you better get along because this is what it is. [Evie, 49, Indo-Canadian, volunteer/part-time]

The use of this schema by women firefighters indicates that women are recognizing their limited powerlessness in transforming this workplace into a professional environment and cognitively making do with it.

Just the Way It Is

As the firefighting culture is difficult to change, women see that everything within the fire services is Just the Way It Is. Although this schema is closely related to the Old Boys' Club and Pseudo-Family schemata, it differs in specifically drawing attention to the fire services' culture and its discriminatory and rigid mentality. Women utilize this schema to make sense of more punitive treatment (e.g., harassment, discrimination). Bree and Isa's quotes capture this aspect of the fire services:

Are there racial slurs? Oh, all the time. There's sexist jokes, too. Like, the racist jokes, I think it's just part

of the culture. The swearing, the jokes, the crassness, it's all part of the culture. [Bree, 26, non-Caucasian, career]

Well, there's always forms of harassment, sexual harassment. Not in a negative actual touching type of way, but sometimes people's comments are a little too far. It is joking in a lot of cases... If you're sensitive, too hypersensitive, you wouldn't fit in. There is a culture and [the question is] do you want to be part of it, or do you not want to be part of the culture. [Isa, 37, Caucasian, career & volunteer/part-time]

By using this schema, women are able to put up with the level of harassment and discrimination. By doing so, however, they undermine their own presence in the midst of fire services.

Behavioral and Cognitive Coping Strategies

Women utilized behavioral and cognitive coping strategies to negotiate the complications from the process of Othering. Four behavioral and two cognitive coping strategies were identified. Behavioral coping strategies included: Proving Yourself, Denying, Adopting Different Techniques, and Training for Strength. Cognitive coping strategies included: Pride and Firefighters; Not Firemen.

Behavioral: Proving Yourself

Many women talked about the need to prove that they could do the work and survive the culture. According to Kim:

Whether it's realistic or not, once you prove yourself, I think you're good to go. They're watching and they're gonna see, and then you start to prove yourself. You're competent, you know your stuff, and

you're right in there with them—you're not hanging back. [Kim, 39, Caucasian, career]

Behavioral: Denying

To overcome negative treatment from their men colleagues, women pretended that they were not bothered by the negative comments and behaviors to which they were directly or indirectly exposed. Alice and Johanne's comments exemplify denying as a means of coping and underscores women's sense of powerlessness in the fire services:

You've got to walk a fine line of being one of the guys... you don't want to make them [men colleagues] uncomfortable in their fire house. They need to be comfortable, so you kind of ignore a lot of the things you hear. [Alice, 46, non-Caucasian, volunteer/part-time]

I know that I chose that profession [firefighting], so I just don't react to it [language, discrimination] at all... I don't want to stir things up, but I am a woman in a man's world, so there's a certain amount of things that you just ignore or try to deal with it. [Johanne, 32, Caucasian, career]

Behavioral: Adopting Different Techniques

Although women firefighters are both mentally and physically strong, many tools, equipment, and techniques are designed for and by men. Thus, physical testing, in addition to being based on men's strengths, is accomplished in a firefighting environment built to accommodate men's height, strengths, and techniques. Women often spoke of changing how the task was done so that they could accomplish the work. As Lenore's statement suggests, they had to adopt different ways of doing what seemed like an easy task for the men:

The sledgehammer was hitting me in the crotch and I was losing all my power. I had to stand and hold the sledgehammer differently to be able to move this thing quickly. Whereas the guys' techniques, they could stand up and do it no problem. [Lenore, 29, Caucasian, career & volunteer/part-time]

Behavioral: Training

Strength training was another commonly exhibited coping strategy for women in the fire services. Many women firefighters centered their lives around the gym to improve their strength and to avoid being labeled with the weaker sex stereotype.

I think it's a self-fulfilling prophecy that you worry that you'll be looked at as weaker, so I just want to make sure that my strength is to a place where I'm comfortable that I could do any of the tasks required...I'm definitely aware that my strength, compared to a lot of men, isn't as good, so I work hard on that in the gym. I do a lot of weight training. [Carol, 26, non-Caucasian, career]

Cognitive: Pride

Being proud of accomplishments was a cognitive strategy utilized by women to counteract Othering. Although this seems like a positive adaptive coping strategy, it had negative undertones. Women felt proud of their work, but they saw themselves as doing well as a *woman* in a men-dominated occupation instead of just doing well. The next quote by Ultana illustrates this sentiment:

I think as a woman, you have a little bit more pride because you're a woman doing a job that's ninety-five percent male-dominated...Knowing I'm one of three women in my department that's doing this job, it's

a huge sense of pride and accomplishment. [Ultana, 38, Caucasian, career & volunteer/part-time]

In addition to gender, age intersected with women feeling pride in abilities as a firefighter. Like Jady, participants expressed that they were proud of being able to continue to be a firefighter despite their age.

It is a reward for yourself just to be able to do it. So, when I come out and I've done a good job, I feel proud of myself. I can still do this really hard work and I'm an old woman now. [Jady, 37, Caucasian, career & volunteer/part-time]

Although 37 is not typically considered old, the high expectation placed on strength and physical performance influences the intersection of age and gender in firefighting. This remains the case today despite the fact that the act of fighting fires does not dominate the actual work of firefighters. In summary, although they are faced with multiple oppressive factors, women combat being Othered with their pride of being a firefighter. As revealed by Ulie:

I'm proud of it. The title firefighter means a whole lot more to me. If I have to give a biography, I always put that in there because I do think that it's important. One of my friends was like, "Well, I'm gonna introduce you, what should I say?" "Career Firefighter." And she's like, "Well, anything else?" "No, that's enough." [Ulie, 36, non-Caucasian, career]

Cognitive: Firefighters; Not Firemen

To contest the hegemony and stereotype that only men are firefighters, women coped by rejecting the label "firemen" and replacing it by "firefighters." As

noted previously, women faced direct and indirect questioning regarding the legitimacy of their presence as firefighters, both internally and externally to the fire services. Thus, they show defiance towards the use of labels which excludes them. Madelaine's quote demonstrates their active attempts to reframe and change cognitions:

There have been times where little girls come over to me and they'll say, "It's so cool that you get to be a fireman!" [I say,] "Well, no. I'm not a man, but I'm a firefighter." [Madelaine, 23, Caucasian, volunteer/part-time]

Benefits to the Fire Services and the White Heterosexual Man

As the above findings illustrate, Othering is embedded in policies and practices of the fire services that are *assumed* to be gender neutral, and have the same impact on all firefighters. However, this is not the case. They were developed without women or individuals who are not part of the normative group. Thus, they tend to complicate the reality of marginalized individuals, while benefiting those who are members of the norm and the ruling apparatus. Two benefits for the fire services and the dominant group of men emerged: 1) Medical Calls, and 2) Tokenism.

Medical Calls

In more recent years, the types of work accomplished in the fire services have expanded. For example, historically firefighters did not typically respond to emergency medical calls or car accidents. This work, however, has not been equally distributed between men and women. Women are encouraged and pushed into the caring and nurturing role, which further divides the force and reinforces gen-

der roles. Women spoke about their men colleagues' ineptitude and resistance to doing work that was perceived as feminine or that involved working with women victims. Kim and Natasha's comments illustrate what the women usually encountered during these types of calls:

The guys will shove me to the door on certain female-type calls. Like the pregnancies and the vagina problems, and then the girly problems... They shove me to the door and they stand by the door. [Kim, 39, Caucasian, career]

On medical calls, if there was somebody having a heart attack and we had to do CPR, and the spouse was there, the guys would always push me over to the spouse and say, "Natasha, go deal with her. You're better at that." [Natasha, 57, Caucasian, career]

Several participants, such as Valerie, were asked to join the volunteer fire services because men did not want to do some of the medical calls:

"Well, why don't you just join? 'Cause we could use you on the medical calls. You know how to do all the medical calls, and we don't like to do them." [Valerie, 41, Caucasian, career & volunteer/part-time]

The women viewed their presence in firefighting as a valuable asset for the institution. They believed that their presence helped the fire services avoid potential lawsuits from sexual harassment claims. Catherine's quote exemplifies this benefit to the institution:

I think we're a big benefit for the fire department, especially dealing with female patients. That takes a lot of liability away when the guys are working there and then the woman says, "He touched me." So, there's no

risk of having a sexual assault case against someone. [Catherine, 27, Caucasian, career]

Tokenism

By putting women firefighters in the media, fire services promote the image that they care about women. According to Zimmer (1988:65), "token" refers "to persons (usually women or minorities) who are hired, admitted or appointed to a group *because* of their difference from the other members, perhaps to serve as 'proof' that the group does not discriminate against such people." In many incidents, the women talked about how the fire services' administration used them to ensure that benefits (e.g., acquiring further funding, positive publicity) ensued. However, using women as tokens overshadows what is really going on within the fire services. This occurred in both the volunteer and career fire services as the following quotes illustrate:

Our administration has always wanted to parade the female firefighters. Parade us around like show ponies. You know, "Look at us! Look how many female firefighters we have. Aren't we great?" [Miriam, 37, Caucasian, career]

For management's perspective, I look good for them. It was in the media when I finally got on because I was non-Caucasian and a career [firefighter]. [Zaki, 36, non-Caucasian, career]

Discussion/Conclusion

Othering women and other marginalized groups in men-dominated professions is commonplace as it provides advantages for the dominant group (White heterosexual men) (Paechter 1998; Staszak 2008; Hudson and Melber 2014). The Canadian fire

services is one of these professions that has and continues to exclude women from their ranks and sites of power if they do get in (Weiner 1994; Poulin et al. 2018). As the above findings demonstrate, Canadian women firefighters, whether volunteer or career, are Othered. The complications, (i.e., 1) Discrimination, 2) Hostile Working Conditions, 3) Self-Doubt, and 4) Weakened Firefighter Identity) allowed the fire services, and thus White men, to maintain their dominant in-group status within the fire services. It also allowed the institution to routinely ignore the issues that women firefighters confront on a daily basis. The findings from this study indicate that women were harassed, alienated, stigmatized, and discriminated against by their men colleagues. For women, the fire halls and stations were often hostile working environments. This, in turn, led them to self-doubting their abilities to be firefighters, which is compounded by other characteristics such as age, minority, and stature. In addition to not being accepted by their men colleagues as “real” firefighters, women firefighters were confronted with a persistent external gaze of the general public that negated their existence as firefighters.

Much of the research on women firefighters previously was conducted in other Western countries (e.g., AUS, UK, US: Yoder and Aniakudo 1996; Yoder and Aniakudo 1997; Yoder and McDonald 1998; Wang and Kleiner 2001; Yoder and Berendsen 2001; Batty and Burchielli 2011; Perrott 2016;), but there are stark similarities and contrasts in content. Although previous studies focused on women firefighters’ experiences, many have only investigated specific intersections (e.g., gender, sexuality, and occupational group; Wright 2016; gender, sexuality, and class; Wright 2011; sexuality and gender; Wright 2008; race and gender; Yoder and Aniakudo 1997). Moreover, while Othering underpins much of the past stud-

ies, to our knowledge, no study has directly identified that the intersectionality of different identities/statuses is connected to Othering. The strength of this paper is the highlighting of the multiple intersections (e.g., gender, race/ethnicity, age, firefighter title, feminine characteristics, stature).

Barriers to inclusion within the fire services were highlighted by participants. Women described their experiences with exclusion from events, hyper-masculine criticisms and adverse behaviors, the denial of all femininity, and hyper-awareness of minority status(es). Women who exhibited “undesirable” characteristics, such as those associated with femininity, pregnancy, motherhood, smaller stature, appearance, or strength/weakness, were Othered by their men colleagues through the use of gendered and psychological violence. Although instances of sexual assault were present in the data, many of the negative behaviors were psychological in nature. This supports Staszak’s (2008) notion that non-violent behaviors are more common to marginalized groups than physically violent ones. The process of Othering in the fire services produced two outcomes: 1) It inhibited solidarity between the dominant and marginalized groups and specifically perpetuated women’s exclusion, and 2) it interfered with the women in the fire services from getting positions of power (Staszak 2008).

Women have and continue to struggle with reporting instances of discrimination and harassment within men-dominated occupations (Chetkovich 1997; Poulin et al. 2018). Participants in this study avoided reporting their men colleagues due to fear of ostracization, a lack of trust in the fire services’ system of reporting, or potentially exacerbating the situation. When women reported these instances, they were often ignored by the administration, harassed further by their colleagues, or reprimanded

for attempting to report a colleague. Participants developed and employed similar behavioral and cognitive ways of making sense of and dealing with the Othering. As opposed to most strategies they used, when they cognitively redefined themselves as Firefighters; Not Firemen, the women actively challenged perceptions about women's roles in firefighting. Investigating Othering and the intersectionality of factors using the P-SEC methodology was a novel approach to analyzing women firefighters' experiences in the Canadian fire services. Until now, there has been limited research focusing on women's experiences of Othering that also takes into consideration the various intersectionalities that women embody.

Policy/Social Change Recommendations

The findings from the present study indicate that the policies, practices, and culture of fire services need to be improved and changed to overturn the negative outcomes that women firefighters encounter in their daily work. The pressure to fit in with the dominant in-group leaves women firefighters with little to no choices when it comes to reporting harassment and discrimination, let alone more minor transgressions such as language and work assignments. The following policy and social change recommendations have been developed based on women's experiences in the fire services.

The hiring policies and practices should be monitored more closely with respect to equity principles under the Canadian Employment Equity practices. The fire services in Canada are administratively and functionally very decentralized. Firefighting is fractured and no national organization or fire protection exists. For the career firefighters, cities are the employer and for the volunteers, they report to provincial bodies. In

both instances, a national body of quality control that has the financing and political power to control the periphery would bring a more uniform way to deal with the issue of under-representation of women and minorities. Enacting a more central body across Canada could help alleviate the diversity-related issues currently observed within the fire services.

The fire services, whether volunteer or career, need to develop clearly delineated policies on dealing with harassment and discrimination within their departments. Having a zero-tolerance policy for all forms of harassment—verbal (e.g., derogatory remarks) or physical (e.g., unwanted physical contact, sexual assault) (Saguy 2000)—in every fire station will promote a safer environment. The consequences of violating the policy should be monitored and reported to the national body. Additionally, women need to be educated about their options for reporting harassment and discrimination; this would enable them to make difficult choices, without feeling guilty or afraid of the consequences (Poulin et al. 2018). In keeping with this recommendation, having a reporting and aid system located outside of the firefighting hierarchy and city management would help increase women's confidentiality and confidence in reporting instances of discrimination and harassment.

Testing and evaluative policies should be evaluated with a gendered-diversity lens. Testing should reflect what the job entails, as some tests are not indicative of real-life firefighting environments. For example, firefighters never work alone; therefore, individually dragging a 200-250-pound dummy is seemingly less relevant than effective team work. Balancing the training (individualized, standardized, physical, and academic standards) with a recognition and valuation of the benefits that a diverse workforce can bring should be prioritized.

If the fire services and men are committed to supporting women and other marginalized groups, the cultural environment, ideals, practices, and policies need to be transformed. The findings in this study indicated that women bear the brunt of entrenched complications to survive in a profession that they are passionate about. Thus, it is important that these issues be addressed to encourage women and minorities' inclusion within the fire services. Without the

commitment to provide a more diverse fire services workforce, their experiences will continue to be ignored, which will further discourage women and other diverse groups from entering such men-dominated occupations. Ultimately, changing the atmosphere by eliminating Othering practices, and altering the culture, archetypes, values, and policies will enable firefighting in Canada to become a more positive and productive workplace for all.

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Meetings or Power Weeks? Boundary Work in a Transnational Police Project

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Abstract: Meetings are common in contemporary working life, but they are often overlooked in academic studies and sometimes defined as empty or boring by employees. Yet, the meeting society is being reproduced again and again. There seem to be hidden ways to incorporate meetings into today's working life without arousing critique about pointless activities and deviations from what should really be done. One strategy was illustrated in a study of a transnational police project. Police culture celebrates visible crime fighting, which is associated with action, physical toughness, and capturing criminals. The police officers involved in the project emphasized the need to avoid "a lot of meetings," but *de facto* constructed their project *as* meetings. Nonetheless, the project was declared a success. We analyze this paradox in terms of boundary work concerning meetings; the police officers turned some meetings into "real police work" by discursively and practically removing them from the category of bureaucracy and its associations with formalities, rigidity, and documentation. The most important example is how an "operational action group meeting" was renamed "power weeks," eradicating the very word "meeting" from the term. This was closely associated with increased informality and multi-tasking during these gatherings.

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Meetings are an omnipresent part of many workplaces and taken for granted as a way of organizing work, but several scholars stress that they are overlooked in most academic studies (Schwartzman 1989; Van Vree 1999; Allen, Lehmann-Willenbrock, and Rogelberg 2015). A recurring theme in various studies is complaints about meetings, particularly regarding their perceived meaninglessness. Employees argue that meetings take time from what they consider their core tasks (Schwartzman 1989:82; Kello 2015:713-714). Yet, the meeting society is being reproduced again and again. There seem to be hidden ways to incorporate meetings into today's working life without arousing critique about pointless activities and deviations from what should really be done.

Here, we analyze a particularly illuminating case that combines EU cooperation, well-known for its intense meeting and conference culture, and po-

lice work, which is equally well-known for praising action and quick results in the streets rather than negotiations around a table. We want to explore how field-members protect their definitions of "real work" against a heavily bureaucratized transnational cooperation, so that their core conceptions can be kept within contemporary demands of working life. By doing so, we want to contribute to explaining the reproduction of meetings as a standard way of working, "the accomplishments of meetings as a form" (Schwartzman 1989:38), by analyzing how people's actions are "mixed or mixed up" (Schwartzman 1989:38) by this form. We argue that, to conceptualize how this is happening, we need to not only put meetings in the foreground of attention (Schwartzman 1989:39), but also employ a theory of members' everyday boundary work.

Our case consists of a transnational and inter-organizational project concerning border police in the Baltic region that aims to improve cooperation

and find new ways to bridge different organizations, each with its own bureaucratic regulations. As such, this project was similar to many others. Organizing tasks in project forms are often seen as an opportunity to create flexibility, dynamics, and change in contemporary organizations, and they are “perceived as a controllable way of avoiding all the classic problems of bureaucracy” (Packendorff and Lindgren 2014:7). Despite this, as an EU project, many administrative efforts were demanded. These bureaucratic demands conflict with the ideal image of the police, as their occupational culture and identities have been described as pragmatic, anti-theoretical, and celebrating “action” (Reiner 1985; Chan 1997; Loftus 2010).

For example, Manning (2007:70) pointed out that even members of the top command within police organizations may “think of themselves as ‘good police officers,’ and emphasize their ‘street smarts,’ ‘toughness,’ or past crime-fighting successes rather than their administrative skills, wisdom as ‘people managers,’ or their educational achievements.” The defining elements of police culture, for both street cops and management cops (Reuss-Ianni 2011), are a celebration of masculine ethos, policemen as crime-fighters with an imagery of conflict and danger, in contrast to bureaucratic tasks, meetings, and paperwork. However, the project we studied was actually made up of administrative tasks and formal meetings and was still considered a success due to it being “hands-on.”

This article is based on descriptions and interactions involving these meetings, collected via conversational interviews and ethnographic field notes (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 1995). The study aims to illustrate how the police, through boundary work, maintain a recognizable police identity in face of

the bureaucratic demands involved in this project, including many meetings. We note how some meetings came to be defined as “real” police work, whereas other meetings were considered bureaucracy, close to non-police work. In doing so, field-members managed to continue having meetings and still present their activities as real police work. The theory we suggest belongs to the anthropological framework in which meetings are seen as a form within which actors “transact, negotiate, strategize, and attempt to realize their specific aims” (Schwartzman 1989:37), but we want to enlarge this framework to also encompass practices that manipulate or reconstruct the emic limits of this form.

Background: The Turnstone Project

Since enlargement in the early 1990s, the EU has tried to facilitate cross-border and transnational cooperation. For example, the EU Security Policy¹ aims to avoid political confrontation, environmental threats, and destabilizing regional conflicts through intense cooperation in many areas, from justice and home affairs to security and defense. Such efforts are achieved in various ways. This article concerns one such enterprise, a project called Turnstone, that united border police organizations involving several countries in the northern Baltic Sea area.² Countries were to cooperate in surveillance of the “border

¹ See: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/78367.pdf>. Retrieved June 19, 2020.

² As stated in the project application, enlargement of the Schengen area in 2007/2008 demanded international cooperation and inspired new methods of guarding the border. Project Turnstone was an extension of previous collaborative projects between EU countries in the Baltic Sea area. The goal of the project (as stated in the application) was to increase law enforcement cooperation between border agencies. The participating border agencies were: 1) the Police and Border Guard Board in Estonia, 2) Helsinki Police, 3) the Gulf of Finland Coast Guard District in Finland, 4) the State Border Guard of the Republic of Latvia, 5) the State Border Guard Service at the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Lithuania, 6) Stockholm County Po-

free” area because all are members of the Schengen area. The project was initiated by the Stockholm County Police, Border Division, in Sweden, and was introduced in January 2014 and co-funded by the European Union, Stockholm Police, and the Police and Border Guard board in the Northern prefecture of Estonia.

The initiators of the project explained to us that “criminals don’t respect borders,” lamenting the decreasing materiality and territoriality of borders (for an analysis see: Loftus 2013; Colombeau 2017). Simultaneously, they explained that the police encounter obstacles created by their national borders when trying to retrieve these criminals, as well as by the structures, rules, and routines of their own organizations. Furthermore, they described a situation in which they did not know enough about each other’s organizations to understand which sections or people to contact when needed. The launch of the project was described as an opportunity to create mutual knowledge of each other’s organizations that could help overcome these difficulties and escape the rigidity of the various organizations. The hope was to create personal networks that allow shortcuts through the bureaucracy.

The project was made up of meetings. In the detailed list of project activities in the application sent to the EU, which also governed the work, all activities referred to different meetings.³ The activities seen as binding were Management Board meetings, Intelligence group meetings, Operative Action group meetings, and a final conference. A number of other sub-meetings evolved more or less sponta-

lice, Border Police Division, and 7) the Swedish Coast Guard, Region Northeast.

³ CIPS/ISEC 2012, Technical annex—detailed list of project activities.

neously during the project, such as morning meetings, decision meetings, section meetings, telephone meetings, and quarterly meetings. The most formal meeting was the Management Board meeting. The ones that gathered the most participants were the “kick-off” meeting and the two conferences that concluded the project. The first of these conferences included workshops involving the participants, and the second was a large conference with internationally well-known researchers in the field of policing.

The project formally aimed to make representatives from the participating organization meet and work together in a hands-on manner. For this purpose, Operative Action group meetings were planned, meetings that were later renamed as “power weeks.” During these occasions, representatives from the different organizations and countries were to get together and carry out, collect, and compare intelligence information. Meetings were often organized in meeting chains. For example, before a power week, the organizers held an Intelligence group meeting, and after the power week, the project leader, coordinator, and those responsible for organizing the power week met and evaluated the power week in another meeting.

Meetings and Boundary Work

During the fieldwork, it soon became clear that not all encounters, gatherings, and events were called meetings. This discovery triggered us to ask, “What meaning did the involved border police officers attach to ‘meetings?’” “How did the police officers manage to reconcile these bureaucratic expectations with their strong feelings about ‘real’ police work?”

The social anthropologist Helen Schwartzman (1989:7) defined meetings in terms of focused in-

teraction. A meeting is a communicative form or standard situation with at least three persons (later revised to at least two persons)⁴ and characterized by multiparty talk. The participants of a meeting assume that this talk will concern the subjects described as the aim of the meeting. In the anthology *Handbook of Meeting Science*, the editors suggest that meetings at work are events that have been arranged beforehand, can be arranged face to face, and often take place in special rooms (Allen et al. 2015:4). However, they emphasize that this definition does not exhaust the potential variety of meetings. Schwartzman's definition emphasizes social phenomena, whereas Allen and colleagues concentrate on more concrete, practical issues. Thus, the academic definitions are not clear-cut. To add to the complexity, ambiguity is an inherent property of work-life language itself, as its lexical elements tend to be imprecise and words tend to acquire various associations. This imprecision is enhanced in contemporary meanings of meetings, as there is an increasingly broader continuum of variants of meetings and a tendency of increasing informality during meetings (Van Vree 2011). The tendency is interrelated with technological changes; people may engage in multitasking or "being in two places at once" during meetings. Thus, meeting participants may both engage in focused interaction with other participants and in side-involvements on their laptops or smartphones (Wasson 2006; Kleinman 2010).

Increased informality is also indicated in the meeting industry's appropriation of "meetings," so that meetings may last for many days and take place outdoors, in resorts, or in hotels. Such meetings are

⁴ Lecture: "The Dance and the Drama of Meetings: An Anthropological Perspective," Higher seminar, Department of Sociology, Lund University, May 20, 2016.

supposed to enhance creativity and create more effective meetings, enacted with a rhetoric of emotional involvement (Andersson Cederholm 2010). Such meetings are portrayed as being different from typical workplace meetings, which occur in an office setting, often last for about 60 minutes, and have a predetermined agenda (Allen et al. 2015:4).

To analyze the definitions and distinctions regarding meetings among the police officers in our study, we have utilized the concept of boundary work. Symbolic boundaries involve "distinctions made by social actors to categorize objects, people, practices, and even time and space" (Lamont and Molnár 2002:168). Researchers have studied how people construct boundaries around various activities, conditions, or types of people. Boundary work has been used to analyze various and different social phenomena, such as what is defined as science (Gieryn 1995), in work-life in regards to responsibilities and tasks belonging to different occupations (Allen 2001), the social construction of violence (Åkerström 2011; Uhnoo 2011), and in interactions other than talk, as in gender boundaries activated in play situations (Thorne 1999).

In the present case, the boundary work was mostly implicit. Police officers defined some events as meetings, or "regular meetings" as one officer called them, including the formalistic paraphernalia, atmosphere, and seating. Others, such as Operative Action group meetings, or as they were later called, power weeks, were not defined as meetings, but belonged to the sphere of "real" police work. These were events in which a smaller group of officers from the participating countries gathered to collect and compare intelligence information. Field-member's ways of dodging the meeting label and calling

it something else turned out to be closely associated with increasing informality, as well as multitasking, during these gatherings.

Material and Methods

This study relies on empirical data gathered through fieldwork and qualitative interviews conducted in seven border and police organizations in Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, and Sweden during a 2-year period.⁵ Our study not only incorporates the “street cops,” who have been the focus of many ethnographic studies describing police occupational culture, but also both lower rank intelligence officers and middle and top managers. The top managers were present in the start-up and ending conferences; and the rest took part in all other activities. Most officers took part in the whole project, but some persons were exchanged. The representatives were evenly divided from the different countries and organizations.

The fieldwork consisted of several shorter visits, a few days to a week at a time, at the different border agencies and can be described as multi-sited fieldwork (Hage 2005). Field observations were gathered over 718 hours during work sessions, everyday border guard or police work, project-related meetings, and day-to-day office work.

All of us did some field work; we participated in the planning stages and the start and ending meetings that were larger workshops and conferences. One of us, Sophia Yahklef, collected most of the data and participated in the power weeks, which are the focus of this article. Four power weeks occurred in

2014 and four in 2015. They lasted 5 working days, from Monday to Friday, and each engaged between 8 and 20 participants. The same officers (with some exceptions) participated in all of the activities. The majority of the participating officers were male, and the number of females participating in the power weeks varied between one and six.

During these meetings, the field researcher took notes on a notepad or in a notebook. As highlighted by the social anthropologist Thedvall (2006:32), meetings offer the researcher an excellent opportunity to pay attention to the members while also being able to take notes. In addition to taking notes on what was said during the meetings, the researcher focused on describing the tone of voice and facial expressions of the members and noted instances when the members looked bored; looking at their smartphones, doodling, or otherwise preoccupied.

The interviews conducted for this study focused on the interviewees' experiences in border work, involvement in national and international cooperation, and other issues that they found to be important regarding their job positions and organizations. The interviews took the form of *active interviews*, in which the interviewees were considered narrators who, together with the interviewer, co-constructed a story or description of a phenomenon (Holstein and Gubrium 1995). The interviews were usually conducted at the offices of the people being interviewed or in a conference room at the interviewee's workplace. A few times, informal conversations that were not recorded occurred at cafes or restaurants. A total of 73 interviews were conducted, some rather short (15-20 minutes), but most longer (1-1.5 hours). Six to 15 people from each participating organization were interviewed.

⁵ The data were gathered in 2014-2015 and are further described by Yahklef (2018).

There were fewer women than men involved in the project, resulting in 13 interviews with female officers and 53 interviews with male officers.

Conversations and interviews with informants were conducted in English or Swedish. The work language spoken by the officers during joint meetings or actions was mainly English, but at times they would also use Russian, Swedish, Finnish, Estonian, Lithuanian, and Latvian when speaking to each other. The third author used Swedish and English, but a postdoc⁶ working on the project also knew enough Russian to be able to understand some of the occasional small talk between those who spoke this language.

We informed the interviewees and participants about the purpose of the study, anonymity, and that participation is voluntary. The names of people and places involved in the research, as well as other information that could identify the interviewees, have been changed for this article and other presentations related to this study.

The analysis in the present article was inspired by an interest in meetings and earlier case studies of work-place meetings (Åkerström 2018; Thelander and Åkerström 2019). Vaughn (2015), who was inspired by Simmel's formal sociology, argued for the advantages of exploring a particular phenomenon with qualitative case studies. This is one such case study that we hope will shed more light on the under-researched topic of work-place meetings. The study should be assessed on its transferability rather than traditional generalization, with application to other potential analysis (Fangen 2005:276).

⁶ Docent Goran Basic.

Portrayals of Formal Meetings

From the beginning of the project, the participants warned against the project becoming yet another effort with many meetings between people at a managerial level. The participants emphasized that this project should be more hands on, consisting of "real police work" and not just "regular meetings." During the first planning meeting at a large conference hotel on the outskirts of Stockholm, Sweden, suggestions to integrate anything that "smelled administration" or management activities were resisted. The participating officers had all gathered in a conference room, talking about the development of the project. For example, when one officer mentioned the need for organizational development, a high-level officer sitting further down at the U-shaped conference table objected forcefully to this suggestion. Leaning back in his chair and folding his arms, this officer declared with a loud and decisive voice that it was important to remember that:

This project is meant to be on street level involving practical cooperation, establishing more partners. It should be about *real work*, it is important with some structure, but we *don't* need to create a huge organization, we just need to work together. [Fieldnotes 2014]

The large group at this first meeting was later divided into groups. In one of the group discussions in which a field observer was present, the ambition to turn the project in a hands-on direction was emphasized. One participant explained how other EU police cooperation projects that he knew about had turned out to be "long meeting circuses" ending with nothing but documents and no practical results. He talked about a "collaborative diplomacy" going on year after year:

In previous cooperation, it has often been hard to find, officially it's not hard to find common ground, the gentlemen meet and shake hands and say "yes" and agree, and so on, but when it comes to what to do specifically, it's harder to know what we are talking about.

Such a contrast structure (Smith 1978), in this case the linguistic dichotomous distinction between the "real job," where things got done through practical work, and bureaucratic meetings where things did not get done, were evident in most interviews and field observations collected during the whole time the project lasted. There was a recurring discursive practice of drawing a line between "meeting circus-es" and what should really be done.

When the project started, one of the field researchers asked a participant at a border police station if there had been too many meetings in the project. The police officer said, "not so far." Still, the warnings persisted. He added that, even though the situation was acceptable at the moment, he was afraid that the project could change to being held at a "meeting level," saying, "I've had that experience before and never been pleased with it." Closely tied to this argument was skepticism towards managers and their purported unrealistic talk. Another interviewed intelligence officer from Finland expressed his hope that Turnstone would stay at "the right level, shop level, and not only a lot of bosses who just talk. This is not a forum for discussion, but seeing that there will be results."

The project members' way of talking about formal meetings corresponds to common cultural assumptions that meetings often consist of "empty talk" that may not lead to anything substantial, and meetings give managers with little knowledge of the reality too

much influence. Kello (2015) pointed to descriptions of meetings as meaningless and dull and meeting participants as affected by meeting fatigue. In Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris (1997), a comparative study of meetings in two British and Italian companies, even their studied managers criticized their own meetings as merely talk or inaction. Thus, this meeting critique is widespread, but in our study formal meetings were especially adverse to the police occupational culture and policemen's identity as people of action. Therefore, the discursive and practical boundary work that could be observed was crucial.

Consider the instances when the field-members were ambivalent towards the meeting frame, such as when they performed mini "shows" when fetching coffee, candy, or chocolate from the always present coffee table in the conference rooms by stating loudly that "this is the kind of food that creates crime-fighters," by doing a little dance, and exchanging jokes contrasting the conference rooms and their activities and paraphernalia (computers and papers) with images of "elite gang busters." In these and similar ways, the participants demonstrated distance from formalities and rigidity, thereby celebrating action and downgrading meetings, sometimes with self-irony.

We could not find any differences among the participating members from various countries regarding their stances towards formal meetings; they all seemed to embrace the meeting critique discourse. However, national characteristics in relation to meetings could be used in the joking relationship that developed among the officers over time. For example, though the Swedes could be teased for their tendency to arrange "long and boring meetings," the Swedish officers could claim that their Finnish colleagues were hardly able to hold a telephone

meeting, “Three minutes are what they can master. No more.”

Meetings Become Real Police Work

Project members relabeled Operative Action group meetings as power weeks because the latter name, according to the officers, was “boring and complicated.” However, the new name was not only less boring and less complicated, but also entailed more action, according to one officer. Another important facet of the name change was perhaps the disappearance of the word “meeting.”

So what did these power weeks entail? They gathered a team of officers from Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, and Sweden in the different countries for 1 week at a time. The team was tasked with processing and investigating information regarding ongoing or border-related criminal activity. The idea was that this select group of people would get to know each other’s organizations by working closely together during different work-related activities and, in the process, establish personal relationships. Each week had 8-20 participating officers working together. Usually, the same officers (with some exceptions) participated on each occasion, and most of the participating officers were men.

The power weeks were referred to as proper police work, whereas other meetings were not. At times, the contrasting structure (cf., Smith 1978) between formal meetings and meetings falling under the concept of power weeks was very visible. Consider, for example, this field note made during a meeting in Stockholm with the project leaders:

The project leader and his assistant talk about how they have taken away one of the meetings to be able

to finance yet another power week. “We don’t need another bureaucracy meeting, the bosses may have to do a study visit in reality.”

It is evident that, in this explicit boundary work by the police officers, power weeks do not constitute meetings because they have taken away a meeting to make room for a power week. Furthermore, a meeting is associated with bureaucracy, whereas power weeks are associated with reality. Mostly, however, the boundary work was implicit.

So how did the power weeks escape being associated with meetings? To answer this, we took a detailed look at how they worked.

A typical day would go as follows. The officers arrived and placed their laptops, phones, coffee mugs, and water bottles on the conference table. The inviting officer gathered everybody and asked for their attention, a sort of “start-up meeting” in which everybody was informed, for example, about cars stolen in one of the Nordic cities the previous evening, and the participants were then asked if they could add any information. The officers checked their computer systems, and one border officer made a phone call to his colleagues in the harbor. If no one had any questions to ask, the meeting was adjourned after a few minutes. The officers then turned their attention towards their laptops or phones. They opened their programs, searched for information within various systems, wrote emails and messages, checked media web pages, and tried to tie together information on the border-related crime activities in question. Occasionally, the officers asked each other questions, received telephone calls, or told the others when they acquired information about a suspect or recently committed crime. Gradually, persons of interest or ongoing surveillance were listed on

a large whiteboard at one end of the room. A border officer sat at one end of the table and took notes on all ongoing activity in an Excel document.

When the officers found something that they thought was interesting, they could comment loudly on this fact, at times engaging in talk with the whole group or with a few others. Occasionally, they got up to get some coffee, wrote something on a whiteboard, or went to the bathroom.

The workdays also provided occasions for jokes and bantering. The border and intelligence officers frequently shared stories and jokes about toughness and bravery or dangerous encounters with criminals. These stories often caught everyone's attention and provided a pause during work. Officers discussed action or police films that they had seen or made ironic comments about heroes who they did not resemble but still somehow admired. With this, as in joking about boring emails, the officers engaged in "contrast work" between the expressed ideal in police occupational culture and the reality of their situation.

The officers demonstrated high commitment to their work. They worked long hours, typically staying in the conference room from 8 o'clock in the morning to 9 o'clock in the evening. At times, they waited to leave for lunch until 3 o'clock in the afternoon. Some had been up early, travelling to the power week, and often looked red-eyed and tired. Although appearing tired, the participating officers often engaged in amiable small talk and seemed to be relaxed in each other's company. At the same time, the participants focused on their electronic work tasks and immediately changed their "purely social" manners if something they deemed important was found. The work achieved

many hits; that is, together they found many suspects who were of interest for surveillance because they operated in more than one country. However, most of the time, the hits were not followed up, and few arrests or substantial findings were made during the power weeks.

Boundary Work in a Police Cooperative Project

Through the above-described scenes, we can see that the power weeks offered an alternative and relatively free type of interaction compared to the formal or regular meetings. The officers could each be involved in their own digital work, and they were not disciplined by a conventional meeting culture with its demands of a collective focused attention and quite formal way of talking. When asked about what "meetings" meant, the policemen mentioned board meetings or management meetings, not these power weeks. They seemed to associate a proper meeting with Van Vree's (2011) description of modern meeting culture, an interactional ceremony of gatherings involving disciplining gestures and emotions. In a meeting, people are supposed to stick to the subject, taking turns at talking and voicing opinions in measured and balanced ways, while the chairman should intervene "courteously." Such gatherings imply meeting competence in terms of having a chair, having and keeping to the agenda, writing a protocol, and knowing about voting rules and keeping to the proper roles and manners.

Power weeks were meetings that obviously did not fit into such a form. They were placed outside this category by subtle boundary work consisting of discursive and practical elements. First, "meetings" disappeared linguistically. This disappearance oc-

curred early on in the project with the renaming to power weeks, as this name was declared less boring and more sexy. Throughout the project, in everyday talk among the police officers and in interviews, police officers in project Turnstone stuck to the use of “power weeks,” whereas the original name was forgotten.

More than discursively delineating meetings from power weeks, interaction other than talking may serve as boundary work (Thorne 1999). Moving around in the conference room, feeling free to take breaks whenever one wanted, working at one’s laptop in a seemingly immersed way, improvising interruptions by telling stories and jokes, these ways of navigating the long days of being situated in a social gathering can also be seen as doing boundary work. Thus, the police officers employed not only discursive methods to demarcate in relation to the image of meetings, but also practical methods. By interacting in certain ways and continually performing, and joking about, an action-oriented ideal of real police work, the members managed to keep having these EU-initiated “meetings” without jeopardizing their police ethos. On the one hand, the gatherings during power weeks did not resemble a formal meeting with an agenda, turn-taking, and sitting still during a fixed period of time. On the other hand, police officers from several countries and organizations did accomplish workplace meetings.

Some boundary work during power weeks turned explicit, as when certain gatherings *within* the week were actually named “meeting” (underlining that the rest of the week were not “meetings”). In the morning, for example, a start-up meeting was always enacted, when the officers went through past events and planned the upcoming week. Another example was, during the course of the day, when some-

one announced that they should have “a meeting.”⁷ The groups sort of mobilized and became focused or “collected,” even though they actually were already assembled in the same room; the participants looked up from their screens and their mouse-clicks and small talk stopped, and there was one speaker at a time with joint attention. These meetings were brief and concerned work regarding important “high profile cases,” such as thefts, robberies, or smuggling performed by members of international organized crime groups. As these groups operated in several countries, many officers were involved in these cases and were eager to share information regarding these crime groups. Such involvement can be contrasted with the project’s formal meetings in which many points on the agenda did not concern all participants, but rather the EU cooperation as a whole. The police officers never frowned upon these more or less spontaneously called meetings within the power week. They were not described the way formal meetings were, as “just talk,” diplomacy, or bureaucracy, but considered as “real police work.”

Discussion

Social interactions through meetings constitute a large part of the everyday lives of not only bureaucrats and managers, but of many employees. Meetings are an omnipresent part of many contemporary social contexts, and what occurs in meetings affects many more beyond the meeting participants. However, several scholars stress that meetings are overlooked in most academic studies (Schwartzman 1989; Van Vree 1999; Allen et al. 2015). One puzzling aspect worthy of further in-

⁷ In the first power week, the field-worker was asked to leave during such meetings, a demand that was not voiced later.

vestigations is the abundance of meeting critique (Hall, Leppänen, and Åkerström 2019) parallel to a process of “meetingization of society,” an increasing number of meetings in Europe (and other places) (Van Vree 2011).

Through an illuminating case of a collaboration project between border police in the Baltic region, we could explore how representatives of an occupation identifying with action and pragmatic work relate to the demands of formal meetings. How could they protect their definitions of “real work?”

The dislike of bureaucratic practices, such as writing reports and having meetings, is well documented in studies of police culture. Reiner (1985:103) and Chan (1997:343) note that a pragmatic, anti-theoretical perspective is a typical occupational habitus for street-level police officers, and it is also supported and celebrated by high-ranking officers (Manning 2007). Our case included not only intelligence officers, but also border police at a managerial level. They all supported what came to be described as the project’s “hands-on profile.” This profile was explained as a contrast to projects that consisted of a lot of meetings at a managerial level.

At the same time, project Turnstone *was* its meetings. In the original proposal to the EU, the many activities that were listed and subsequently completed consisted of meetings, from the initial kick-off meeting to the finishing conference. Despite this density of meetings within a work atmosphere praising the opposite, the project was declared a success by those involved. At the end of the project, during a final conference, some of the participating officers emphasized the lack of administration and meetings and used this as an explanation for why they considered the project a success.

This paradox can be explained by the fact that the project members engaged in multifaceted boundary work (Lamont and Molnár 2002). We have tried to show both discursive and practical variants of such boundary work *in situ*. Some social gatherings were pronounced as meetings, whereas others were placed outside this category. Navigating within a heavily bureaucratized project, police officers came to accomplish some meetings as a form of work gathering without necessarily using the term “meeting” or the associated patterns of interactions, so that they could devotedly join an EU collaboration and still protect and perform their police identity. With the help of ethnographic studies close to everyday gathering practices, we could discover such subtle manipulations or reconstructions of emic limits.

Ironically, one may argue that the power weeks—our prime example—*were* meetings; with their casual and loose character, they seem to fit well into today’s tendency to informalize this working form (Van Vree 2011). Yet, members found ways around this category.

Conclusion

To conclude this article, we would like to highlight some complexities. First, formal meetings in project Turnstone, such as the management and board meetings, did not fit into “real police work,” but they were described by all participants as a “necessary evil” and, consequently, tolerated. Managers had to negotiate and agree, plans had to be made, and finances had to be acquired and budgeted. Formal meetings had to exist, field-members argued, but they did not really belong to proper police work. In this respect, some of the boundary work we have found around meetings can be seen as being

quite close to or overlapping what scholars refer to as actors' definitions of "dirty work." Emerson and Pollner (1976) elaborated on Everett Hughes' concept that pointed to the moral division of labor in a society in which some occupations are degraded. In their study of a psychiatric emergency team, Emerson and Pollner (1976) concluded that some tasks in a given occupation may be among the least desirable to emphasize their occupational identity. In this way, "representatives for a profession or occupation mark a moral distance to certain parts of their work so that they confirm the preferred moral order by pointing out that some tasks do not belong to their 'true occupational self'" (Emerson and Pollner 1976:244).

Second, project Turnstone could not escape the bureaucratic practices of the EU, which included ambitious documentation, collected in part during meetings. However, even these least appreciated parts of the project came to be, if not appreciated, accepted. They may even have contributed to the sought-after creations of social bonds by providing an arena for mutual agreement of their relative meaninglessness. During some project-related meetings, for example, the participants would occasionally roll their eyes and laugh together at such seemingly unnecessary activities, such as filling in participation lists or adding the EU logo to every PowerPoint slide in a presentation. These activities came to be expected and were eventually taken for granted, and there were some enjoyable aspects within them.

Third, formal meetings were continuously described in ways that characterized them as undesirable and placed them in a category that was outside "proper police work." The assumption that "nothing gets done" during most formal meetings corresponds to a rationalistic or instrumental evaluations of meet-

ings. Meetings are meant to solve problems and achieve results. Police officers continually contrasted "getting things done" with "just talking." This rationalist norm is also strongly prevalent in the widespread criticism of pointless meetings, within and outside project Turnstone. Much meeting criticism is part of an instrumentalist and moralist worldview. In their comparative study of meetings in two British and Italian companies, Bargiela-Chippini and Harris (1997:6) highlighted this criticism because it was constantly reiterated by the directors in their study—meetings are "talk," and because talk is not seen as action, meetings could be interpreted as the opposite, as inaction.

Fourth, one could argue that the power weeks did not achieve much more than creating a lot of pooled information, which were often not followed up (there were few arrests, which was considered the most important goal by most officers). In addition, things "got done" during formal meetings (plans were made and decisions made). Power weeks were appreciated because they offered a special social form beyond those involved in the formal meetings and protected the police ethos. During these gatherings, the officers were not socially and emotionally disciplined according to conventional meeting culture, the business meeting culture in Van Vree's terminology (2011), demanding collective, focused attention even when the discussion did not involve or engage them. They performed boundary work by acting outside of the archetypical meeting frame. The officers made frequent excursions from their work by engaging in small talk, telling jokes, and sharing stories. They presented an image of emotionally involved quick thinking and humorous professionals, in contrast with the stereotypical image of the restrained bureaucrat, obeying rules, a soulless executor of orders from above (Mahmood 2017). This

was a social type the policemen explained were interested in “meetings.” Other studies have hinted at other ways to downplay the demands of a meeting frame in which professionals engage; professionals who do not identify with a meeting culture, but define their core activities in other ways. Doctors and nurses in Hall’s (2012) study sometimes stood up in the staff meetings on quality management, answering calls and leaving if someone from their ward called them. This was in stark contrast to staff in a university context or civil servants in municipality organizations attending the same type of meetings.

Finally, during power weeks, members of our study could hope for “a situation of action,” even though having a (formal) meeting was described as meaningless and boring. Information gathered during these events was supposed to lead to “real” transnational police work in the form of chasing and arresting border-crossing criminals. They considered themselves to be in a sort of “stand-by” mode, basically ready for action and digitally engaged in the idea of action because their activities were defined as close to their criminal cases. In formal meetings, there was no such hope.

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Body, Beauty, and Death in an Andean Context: A Self-Ethnographic Narration

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Abstract: With this article I seek to build bridges between the different narrative elements where the body is situated as a central language, of experiences as a researcher in socio-cultural contexts of Bolivian indigenous peoples in the years 1984 and 1998. In this biographical period I have lived different reflective processes, frustrations, and successes that can contribute to an understanding of the framework of gender, ethnic, and political relations. This text, auto-ethnographic, enables us to see the deconstruction and subjective transformations in an androcentric context of a traditional Andean culture, as well as the investigative awareness achieved during interactions in the field. In my field work I have used tools from different disciplines (anthropology, sociology, social psychology), that are useful for validating the autoethnography as a methodological model to the gender autonomy, listening and learning the different ways of understanding corporal discourses. That is, I wish to recognize the value of various types of production and interpretation of knowledge, such as narration, arts, literature, film, and photography that favors emancipation of the peoples and their inhabitants.

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With the revitalization of narrative methods over the past thirty years, the social sciences not only have gained strategies for addressing narratives, but have also been able to make visible the protagonists excluded from the scene of the research, confirming the experiences of those who do the research as sources of situated knowledge.

As a qualitative strategy, these ways of narrating resurged in the eighties, along with a series of academic, ideological-political interpolations in higher education centers that sought to criticize the dominance of positivism in social sciences. These, in turn, responded to the climate of effervescence and questioning derived from the social movements of the sixties, with men and women who took over the streets, institutions and industries in pursuit of socio-cultural change.

A decade later, towards the end of the nineties, a “narrative shift” or “linguistic shift” began to be heard more frequently among the more critical groups (Blanco 2010; 2012). This shift, in turn, was extended as a result of the strength of the rupture with old mandates, along with the interpolations of the validity of the regulatory order and the control of the institutions. It is recognized as one of the most intense periods in Western society and opened the way for the so-called crisis of dominant representations.

In summary, the ruptures with the old paradigms that are found in the ideological-political and institutional questioning also have to do with the recognition that language is not neutral, that it is political and possesses plasticity and vitality, and, based on that, the recognition of its multiple meanings, interpretations, pluralisms, and resonances situated in

broad and diverse socio-cultural contexts. Language and words are not outside the world in which they are constructed, and, in turn, are fed in dialogues with others; from there, the importance of agreeing that we are made of words, and, moreover, that what is said is not always what was intended, gives rise to multiple conflicts, ruptures, and fictions that require comprehension.

I agree with Rosa Montero (2003:10) when she writes that narrating is the primordial art of being human. She also mentions that we must tell about ourselves, and by putting ourselves into words, we invent ourselves because “our identity resides in the memory, in the account of our biography.” Therefore, it is also reasonable when she warns that in narration, the words are finicky, rebellious, and evasive: “They do not like to be domesticated. Taming a word (converting it into a topic) is to put an end to it” (Montero 2003:17).

The domestication of words abounds in academia, and in that scenario we are all trapped. Because of that, we try to move in those small spaces where a little air can enter, in that palimpsest of academic culture where we all write about what others have already written, as Faulkner would say (Montero 2003).

As a possibility of freedom, the self-ethnographic account of experiences in the field has gradually become a concern of the social sciences. It has also been validated as a strategy and used much more in northern countries, particularly the United States, than among the Latin American disciplines and social sciences. Even with its lesser development in those fields, some experiences have given accounts of its potential in Argentina, Mexico, and Chile (Padawer 2003; Scribano and De Sena 2009; Blanco 2012).

Some of the richness of this method is linked to taking the “affective and cognitive experiences” that arise during the research process as *material for analysis* (Scribano and De Sena 2009:5). Thus, appropriating this technique implies recognizing that the comprehension of a certain field of study requires a view entwined in the research process between the subjects of the study, the social space, and the experiences of the researcher. “Self-ethnography means telling about what you hear, what you feel, and your own commitment, not only with the subject, but with the action, in reconstructing your own experience” (Scribano and De Sena 2009:8). Perhaps the following statement by Carolyn Ellis (Ellis, Adams, and Bochner 2011:209) clarifies its meaning: “Self-ethnography is a kind of autobiographical writing and research that...connects the personal with the cultural.” Michael Fisher (Marcus and Fisher 1986:194-233) argues that “ethnic autobiography” must be recognized as a model of postmodern ethnography.

That is, self-ethnography opens a space for questioning the neutral and objective perspective postulated in classical ethnography of a neutral, outside, and external observer. It puts all its emphasis on: 1) taking the social and affective links of the researcher with the subject and the study group and considering them as elements that are crossed over by what the study seeks to investigate, and therefore as loaded with valuable information rather than as factors that bias the view, and 2) conceiving this knowledge production dynamic as a process that is always open-ended and unfinished.

Self-ethnography as a strategy is not constituted solely in a self-referential account, but rather is joined with various social and political phenomena that have required researchers to be completely immersed in order to “identify critical situations and confirm myths and

biases created by an apparent homogeneity” (Montero-Sieburth 2006:10). Thus, following and listening to the self-ethnographic subject means being aware of the blurring of the distance between what is observed and what is interpreted, even in the subjects’ own stories. In that process, the distinction between the ethnographer and the person narrating is also blurred by means of what we could call a trip towards a memory of what is seen, experienced, and imagined, to the point of being unaware of the scenarios themselves. This figure emerges even if the scenario is a fictitious space that exists only in the representation. That is, what is important is the plot, the organization of the account, the journey that starts there, and not whether what is heard is the truth or a lie.

In this self-ethnography, I ascribe to aspects of recording and writing of both the evocative and the analytical stream, recovering different types of documents as in the case of Magraner Moreno (2012), who combines visual and sound files, at the same time as drawings made in the field, as well as a variety of narrative resources (field notebooks, newspaper articles of field work, documentary videos). With these accumulated records I can describe my professional and personal journey as a researcher, at present, looking critically and reflexively at my biographical journey in an Andean socio-political and cultural context.

No matter how big the differences between the currents are: evocative and analytical, I do not appreciate that they are definitively excluding. León Anderson (2011) does not suggest completely eliminating the evocative of a self-ethnographic narrative. Neither Ellis and Bochner (2000) demand a certain degree of involvement in the text to be admitted as self-ethnography. Basically, all these two currents should appear as two parallel paths, leading to the same place. The tension between the analytical or evocative self-ethno-

graphic position seems to be a forgotten debate about personal self-ethnography, in which, above all, the struggle for direction and the predominant meaning of this method of narrative research is revealed.

I have organized this work in seven convening nodes: 1) Contextualization; 2) Immersion in the field: living in Bolivia; 3) Body to earth: the beautiful and the ugly; 4) Releases: a fiction of freedom; 5) Daily life for understanding the meanings of life and death; 6) Gender relations in the community: androcentric based organizations; 7) Progress towards the autonomy of the Bolivian Tropics; and 8) In closing: towards emancipating research.

Contextualization

I see myself as part of the revolutionary generation of the seventies, which in its subjective construction received the literary and socio-political influences of thinkers and artists who proposed breaking with the dominant status inherent in the worlds of Europe and the United States at a time when Latin American social movements were rapidly opening the path and dictatorships and persecutions of politicians, workers, and intellectuals were breaking out all over the South American continent.

In Chile, the dictatorship caused a social divide and forced withdrawal, with a subsequent dispersion in pursuit of survival. As is known, those who opposed the dictatorship were persecuted, imprisoned, disappeared, or forced into exile. My family of origin was among those groups of academics that were “exonerated” and forced into exile.¹

¹ Some groups of outstanding academicians subsisted in Chile, selling eggs or in other trades of carpentry, cuisine, and informal commerce, and never returned to academia. Others never returned from exile to their countries of origin after the diaspora or died outside their country. Towards the end of the

In 1983, my father, mother, and siblings had been in exile for 10 years. In Chile, there was a new outbreak of political persecution that obliged me and my own family to leave Santiago and head to the northern part of the country, from there crossing the border into Bolivia. That decision transformed our lives, requiring us to deconstruct what we knew to give way to what we were to determine.

Immersion in the Field: Living in Bolivia

From the 1980s until today, the train has been one of the most used forms of transportation for casual merchants and for transporting products between Chile and Bolivia. In the decade of the eighties, the people who commercialized this route the most were those from the valley and the Bolivian high Andean plateau. In January 1984, the five of us (a couple with three children) got on one of the Calama-Oruro trains. The trip lasted three days, which were an intense, shared experience with Chilean, Bolivian, and foreign women and children.

The women were carrying their enormous *aguayos* (multicolored woolen cloth shoulder bags) with marketable products and their babies on their backs; the men wore traditional clothing and had tanned faces, hands, and feet; they chewed coca leaves and drank alcohol to pass the cold nights and withstand the trip in the discomfort of the spaces. This hardship was for everyone, since there were more passengers than seats, and many traveled sitting on the floor.

80s, those who returned to academia rearmed themselves in university centers and programs. Some groups continued to be committed to critical orientations, striving to resist the dominant focuses and insisting on working to produce knowledge of the various conflictive nodes of social relations: power, gender, civil rights, political memory, poverty, and inequality, with an emphasis not only on what these nodes generate, but on how knowledge is produced.

The conversations in Quechua, Aymara, and mixtures with Spanish filled the environment. The tight space caused more intimate contact than usual in a passenger train. This transportation, dating from the time of the saltpeter works, that is, from the 1890s, with deteriorated bathrooms without water, no dining car, and cold and hard seats, made it necessary for the passengers to collaborate. All the activity inside was shared day and night: meals, bathrooms, odors, and diverse spaces.

This shared experience offered us a first panorama of the change in the ways of resolving everyday problems that began to be revealed on this train.

In Bolivia, it was the time of Hernán Siles Zuazo, who progressed in his government after a long period of military governments. This democracy was developing, besieged by social protests led by the *Central Obrera Boliviana* (COB) (Bolivian Workers' Center) and by political contradictions from the left, set in the framework of what Mayorga (2002) called *democracy adrift*. Regarding this process, Mansilla (1991) suggests that in the practice of Bolivian democracy, there is an underlying authoritarian political culture inherited from the days of colonial rule and from some political practices of the Andean peoples, a practice that we find not only in the framework of Bolivia, but also in the Latin American social fabric.

Therefore, when the time came to become involved with leaders of the Cochabambina and Paceña leftist political organizations linked to the university, I began to become aware of the androcentric and pyramidal authoritarian hierarchies of their structures. This experience was combined with the great tensions and conflicts that were being experienced in Bolivia at that time.

I found those structures and ways of relating to be anchored in the leftist organizations, inspired by the currents of Marxism, as well as in the native peoples' organizations. However, I felt it was imperative to continue with my commitments to support other refugees and get involved in the movements for democracy and social change. During that period, I was becoming aware that the political platform elaborated by communism to organize women was resistant to the passage of time and the socio-cultural transformations opened up by feminism.

I then observed that these currents of change in the power relations in society were seen as "vectors of imperialist ideology and bourgeois individualism" (Grammático 2005:89). I and some of the younger Chilean women who had been included questioned the position of subordination that we perceived in the relationship with some authoritarian and androcentric leaders, since we came from a context of having experienced the emergence of feminist ideas and the so-called "sexual revolution" of the '60s (Casola 2014).

Meanwhile, suggestions regarding the redistribution of political responsibilities in the shared child-raising and domestic tasks of couples were absent from the agenda of the Bolivian Communist Party. The Bolivian militants complied with the place assigned to them, and we did not find the slightest response to our demands for equality.

At that time, we were living in a suburban sector of Cochabamba, several kilometers from the market, the children's school, the university, and any clinic. In exchange, we gained clean air, animals, and large green spaces for recreation that were safe for the family. In that context, it became difficult for me to participate in all the political activities that were

taking place at the university, mainly since there was no room for negotiation regarding who would take care of the home and the children.

Bolivia was in the midst of social and political tensions, with a shortage of products and tremendous price inflation. This experience constantly reminded us of the boycott by the Chilean right, hiding basic foods, that had been experienced during the Allende government. Milk or bread could not be obtained, and it was necessary to resort to daily negotiating strategies with a farmer who had a cow in the area where we lived. Sometimes it worked and other times it did not, since I was unable to get her to trust me. My aspect and my accent worked against me. For her, I was a *q'ara*.²

Ideologies Regarding Corporal Beauty

In search of data on how to get food, I started to link myself with women from the area, many of them natives. There I met Valeria, an 18-year-old farmer, who in a cheerful tone compared her corporal structure with mine. For example, she measured the size of our arms and said to me, laughing, "How ugly you are! Skinny, pale, you're no good for anything. I am pretty and strong; touch my arm, look," and in a single movement she lifted a gas drum and put it on her shoulder. "Your hair has no color," and she took her long braid and showed it to me, making it turn, and with her teasing eyes said, "This hair is good, *blaaack*,

² According to Bertonio (1984), *q'ara* refers to anything that is bare, like a head, hills, plains, and if it is a stone or rock *hanc-cara*. The following expressions inform us of its sense and applications: *Kara Ppekeñani*, bald; *Karalaccampu*, clear sky; *Karaisi*, dressed without hair, *Karakhatatha*, with no people in the plaza; *Kara*, of a single color; *Karapuntas*, white-faced. Chipana (1986:256) tells us that currently *q'ara* is a term that designates a non-Indian person, Ladino/a (Spanish-speaking Indian), white, refined, outside the Andeans, with the status of a stranger or one ignorant of Andean culture.

shiny." She was stout and strong, with compact arms and shining, smooth, hairless skin. She laughed at what, according to her, was my physical weakness. We were very close, and she told me a piece of her life every night while she quickly moved her needles to knit *chompas* (sweaters) for my children.

At first, these corporal distinctions had no significance in my learning; they were anecdotal, but they would become fundamental in my working life. Mary Douglas (1998) has recognized the process of the comprehension of the centrality of the body in social experiences as a natural object shaped by socio-cultural forces. From that focus, it can be thought that social processes are anchored in a material base that is regulated, restricted, and ordered by cultural inscriptions (Douglas 1979). Among the meanings from the Andean world, the body is intertwined with meaningful symbols of nature and social organization and vice versa (Gavilán 2005). Social organization, in turn, is tied to the worldview and religiousness.

In that sense, what Valeria did was a comparative analysis regarding my corporality and hers in relation to some ideas of beauty and how both of us were situated in the cultural scene, depending on a set of valid subjective beliefs.

In the Andean world, the representation of corporal fragility and weakness among women is associated with a low level of prestige. The body is symbolically joined with the processes of the earth. Therefore, it must be nourishing and fertile, both elements fundamental for the existence and survival of the community.

According to the analyses of Pierre Guiraud (1986) and Marcel Mauss (1971), as discussed by Vivian

Gavilán (2005), a female body is highly valued when it is not thin, and a broad waist, strong and resistant arms, and nourishing breasts are appreciated. Body fat, milk, semen, and blood are symbolic elements associated with life, productivity and reproduction in Andean couples.

A rounded face, a well-nourished aspect, and a healthy tone constitute an ideal model. Long, silky hair with which various braids can be created around the head makes women beautiful. The *q'ara* style with which Valeria associated me responded precisely to opposing guidelines of corporal aesthetics and therefore was devalued in that sense as having less prestige³ with a lower resistance capacity in life.

My half-washed aspect, the color of my hair, and my bony structure earned me a nickname in Quechua, *champhuma/chususiqui*, which means "hair color dry bush and without meat on the behind." All these symbols that in Western culture, colonized by European criteria, are considered traits of beauty and prestige represent weakness and therefore a low level of aesthetic prestige in the Andean worldview.

Releases: A Fiction of Freedom

In 1988, I divorced and had to make decisions, freeze my university studies in psychology and look for my own place to live and a paid job. This new critical milestone became another ratcheting up that obliged me to look at myself in the new context and try to understand my place in that scenario and what survival tools I had.

³ It is fundamental to consider that in the Andean, as well as among Westernized worldviews, corporal ideologies are not oriented towards homogenization.

I did not want to go back; I could not return to Chile, nor did I want to return to the communist party. Among what I saw as my positions of resistance was not giving in when faced with adversity, so I worked through my social networks until I got my first job. This job, after quite disadvantageous agreements and negotiations (no salary but with housing and meals), took me to a site in the rural valley of Cochabamba. When my supervisors in the NGO decided that I could go out into the field, the director's recommendation was, "Do not read anthropology, or research manuals. Do not lose your capacity for being surprised and steep yourself in everything you experienced these years in Mizque; draw, write, observe, be connected."

With that recommendation, I joined the technical team and had to work with a group from the communal population linked to Western-style health and with healers from a traditional practice, with educators and with union leaders. I had more than a hundred hours of interviews to code along with a woman farmer. Each morning, from 8:00 to 12:00, the two of us listened to the recordings in Quechua, and she described the central themes for me, which I was systematizing according to thematic areas that represented traditional practices.

Every afternoon, from 2:00 to 6:00 pm, this material was coded and emptied onto enormous sheets, where I had organized matrices with categories based on the focuses that the interviewees revealed. This could become material for broadcasting on the rural radio and/or in articles for the magazine *CONOSUR Ñaupaqman*. Both communication tools were prepared in Quechua and Spanish in order to reach the Quechuan communities in the Valley of Mizque, Aiquile, and the Raqaypampa Heights.

That work in Mizque and in the communities in the heights such as Raqaypampa during those two years (1989-1991) gave me a quota of support and sense for my plans for life in Bolivia. Year after year, I felt that by observing, learning, and participating I would acquire more awareness and social commitment to the native populations and their demands.

At that time, one of the central focuses of the rural communities was the deepening of the debate of the base organizations regarding the ownership and autonomy of the land and the territory that was resulting in a framework of historical-political processes generated at the start of the eighties.

As Pablo Regalsky (2003) notes, these rural fights give an account of the vigorous emergence of a social actor—the indigenous farmers, who displaced the working class from their hegemonic position and set out a new strategic project of change in the country, in the context of the indigenous uprising in various other countries of the continent. Historically, this milestone is identified in Bolivian political analyses as the start of a process towards autonomy in the field of Andean communities. For Regalsky (2003), this means autonomies in delimited territories inhabited by a number of domestic units that through their community assemblies and their traditional or union authorities control what occurs inside that space.

The axis around which the uses and customs, and the forms of authority are organized is access to the land, which is produced through mechanisms and norms that are collectively generated. These movements were formed in the bastions of the strengthening of self-governments in the Quechua and Aymara regions that in the future would give way to the construction of indigenous jurisdictional

spaces with autonomy, which expanded and joined various Latin American communities by a common claim of “land and territory.”

Daily Life for Comprehending the Meanings of Life and Death

In Mizque, we occupied a house two kilometers from the town. It did not have its own light or water, and to get to town, we had to walk. There was no electricity or public transportation in any rural area of the valley. It was common to use well water, candles, gas lanterns, gasoline engines, and burros or bicycles. We bathed and washed our clothes in the river on Sundays. For the children, it meant total freedom. While the clothes were drying in the sun, many women from Mizque who came down to the river bathed in slips, never nude.

Washing clothes with the other women from the town and sharing a community activity allowed me to observe and understand parts of their culture. At the same time, my children participated in the games and activities of the children from Mizque. At six o'clock in the evening, the sun slowly went down, and everything was night and stars. The weather was temperate in this area, rainy and stormy in summer, with big rises of the river that often left us isolated. In the evening, the heat of the day caused an intense, sweet perfume to escape from the fruit trees, and for that reason, this land was called *misk'i*, which in Quechua means land of honey.⁴

That was a time when a painful knowledge of life and death in the Andes opened to me. I gained this

⁴ From the Quechua *misk'i* (adj.), sweet; *misk'imikhuy* (n.), appetizing, succulent delicacy; *misk'irimax* (adj.), affable and sweet; *misk'isimi* (adj.), adulator, flatterer, the one with sweet and smooth accent; *misk'iyachiy* (v.), to sweeten, to make flavorful or succulent.

knowledge by observing the work of the NGO doctor, with whom I worked, and the midwives and healers of Raqaypampa. This town is located in the extreme southeast of Cochabamba on highlands and belongs to the province of Mizque.

When I did the rounds, we started at 7 in the morning under a program organized to visit the cantons distributed in the area: Santiago, TinTin, Vicho-Vicho, and San Vicente. If there was an NGO vehicle, we used it, but if the technicians had left before us, we did it on foot. If it was during the rainy season, access was much more difficult. These visits were strictly coordinated with the leaders of the cantons, and there was better communication with them through technicians who were also farmers from the area (Yanapaqkuna).

During that period, the team was concerned about the high number of deaths of women in childbirth and of newborns and babies up to six months old. To understand how they were attending to the births, an agreement had been reached with the communities for the doctor to accompany the healer-midwife during births and to offer her help if she asked.⁵

In this process, I learned how the community faced maternal and infant mortality and that the importance of care centered first on the mother and subsequently on the child. Yes, the death of a newborn was a cause of enormous sadness, but it did not compare with the traumatic significance of the loss of a mother as an active member of the community dynamic.

⁵ In the cantons that we visited, on several occasions, I observed that in order to position the infant in the mother's womb, the healer performed a *manteo* (technique for inducing labor and childbirth).

This practice corresponded to an Andean logic of comprehension of the relationship among life/death/land/community and the link between the productive capacity of the land and the survival of its inhabitants. In the process of deconstructing my old knowledge, I had to understand that I could not assign ideas from Western modernity, which I had installed as universal, to the notions of a man, woman, or child of Raqaypampa, and especially not an ideology of health/illness loaded with moral values.⁶

That is, I was stressed by my concept of corporality and of subject, both representative of ideologies of a Western, individual society. It was complicated for me to integrate the ancestral awareness of the subject in dialectic interrelation with the whole. In these communities, the notions of the collective were active, where health/illness/life/death were joined to a network of relationships. The being-in-the-world depended on the equilibrium between the subject and all levels of the universe.

The links between these levels, people, places and extra-human beings operated as a key so that vital energy circled overall (Estermann 2008). Thus, a person is conceived not as a substance, but rather based on the person's relationships with the part-

⁶ I heard on different occasions the great mistrust that the doctor's practices caused: opening and closing the interior to operate on their bodies, removing blood and fat from them. Among the typical healing strategies I participated in with a healer in Cochabamba (Quechua zone), were poultices of medicinal herbs accompanied by rituals with different natural elements; suction of the sick zones; and supporting the person with certain matter or substances they held in their mouth (holy water, honey, rose petals, white carnation, tobacco steeped in alcohol), which absorb and assimilate the pathological contamination of the evil, which is then thrown out when the evil has left the organism. The sucking of the healer implies a complete linking of the material body and the mythical body of the world and the social body of the affliction, appealing to those who wish to harm it and make the patient ill.

ner, the children, the *Pachamama*, the guardian deities, and the animals and their products in a cosmogonic totality.

On this point, Van Vleet (2002) considers that in Andean communal interaction, the community is fed by the quality of such links, at the core of which is the *Ayni*,⁷ more than by kinship. According to this logic, events occur through the vital force of the land—the *Pachamama*—and unfold correctly when the relationship that is established involves a reciprocal and harmonious coexistence between the work and the resources for its realization (Van Kessel 1996).

This logic also impregnates the Andean medical conception regarding the body, health, and illness. The Andean medical conceptualization is based on a comprehensive vision characterized by the holistic treatment of the individual that comprehends illness as a psychological, socio-environmental, and, in some cases, magic-religious imbalance. A social trauma or an environmental crisis is expressed through the sick body (Arratia 1996; Chamorro and Tocornal 2005), as opposed to Western medicine, which considers the individual sick body and focuses the treatment mainly on the damaged organs.

In this way, in Andean cultures, illnesses cause an imbalance in the community and in its networks of relationality, interchanges, and responsibilities (Bastien 1986; Orta 2000; Martínez 2001; Chamorro and Tocornal 2005; Bolados 2009). In seeking heal-

ing, all the elements linked in the relationship are integrated, offerings are made and rituals are held for the *Pachamama*, the hills, the Achachilas and all their products in search of the reestablishment of equilibrium and, with that, also the curing of the body.

These experiences with death, health, and illness provided me with an initial understanding of the Andean relational order and opened a path towards other languages that are translated into myths, legends, and stories from the oral tradition. To rescue these myths, I observed, listened, and drew. This exercise obligated me to remain open to an understanding of the meanings of the characters, legends, and stories and their symbolic relations. This implied an opportunity to develop another tool to link with the community through visual language with shapes and colors. I illustrated legends, stories, and religious festivals that occurred during my visits to the cantons. I also sought to represent in my drawings the people's relationships with the market, the commerce of their products and the different agricultural strategies I observed. I was not always praised for my way of seeing and representing, given that in my first drawings, I had not yet reached a fine understanding of the traits of the characters, as well as the animals of the region. Thus, some criticized me, saying, for example, "Partridges do not have tails with feathers, and they do not fly up into the trees" or "That animal does not look like a fox; it has the face of a dog."

Once a year, the NGO defined how to summarize the most relevant events that had occurred in the province of Mizque and its cantons. This became a topic that had to be illustrated to be returned to the community in the form of a calendar. For example, one of these illustrations took into account the

⁷ Fernando Huanacuni (2005:3), in his book *Cosmic Vision of the Andes*, mentions that "our ancestors understand that there are two forces, the cosmic, which comes from the universe, the sky (*pachakama* or *pachatata*) and the telluric force of the land (*pachamama*). The two energies generate all forms of existence; these two convergent forces are expressed in every life process. And the different forms of existence are related through the *Ayni* (complementarity and reciprocity)."

complex symbolic world linked to the activities of interchanged collectivism in the day-to-day relations of Raqaypampa, and I tried to reflect that link in different scenes.

Gender Relations in the Community: Androcentric-Based Organizations

Another of my activities consisted of attending the meetings of the union organization to gather information about emerging issues and to tour the cantons and pueblos to distribute the magazine *CONOSUR Ñaupaqman*. In this way, I witnessed the deep-rooted model of male hierarchies predominant in the organization of the community, for example, in the way that political decisions are made regarding the distribution of roles in daily life, rights to the land, men's and women's right to speak in public, and the distribution of irrigation or seeds.

I could also observe and hear stories of how games of seduction were played, sexuality, and the establishment of couples, even though, just as in other Andean communities, part of their worldview includes the ideal of relationships of complementarity and reciprocity (De La Cadena 1992) between men and women. However, what predominates in practice and ideologically are relations of hierarchy and subordination of women, in which they are considered subjects that must be watched over and guided similarly to children.

Marisol De La Cadena (1992:22) notes that, in the Andes, "notwithstanding that the sexual division of the work is necessarily complementary, subordination underscores the ideological explanations regarding relationships between men and women."

Women participate in agricultural and cattle-raising tasks and in the market; nevertheless, the level of importance and prestige of their activity is defined based on a structure in which their work and they as members of the community are in an inferior gender position, in charge of caring for and pasturing the sheep or selling minor products. Additionally, in this community system, many women were physically, verbally, and socially mistreated in a brutal manner by the men.

This concept of inferiority was deeply rooted: "Neither girls nor women farmers should go to school. The only thing they do is distract the teacher, then on the road they are raped and just cause problems in the community. In the end, it's not good for anyone, and the teachers will then go away, and the community will be left without an educator." Mizque and Raqaypampa are Quechuan regions that are located six hours from Cochabamba. Due to their closeness, men and women farmers constantly connect in their market, but even so, there is a very high level of illiteracy and speaking only of Quechuan, more among the women than the men.

All communal organization depended on the male lines in public. In private, men and women discussed, negotiated, and agreed, with high levels of conflict. However, part of the communal culture was that men must not be discredited in meetings; the women had to be quiet, but they never were. That was often how the violence started that occurred on the roads, in homes, and in the fields. Women were always under the strict control of the community, with the operation of the *javwanaku* (consideration), or constant social control, where male honor and prestige were at stake, and the man's domination of the family core was confirmed.

I was not outside this same logic as part of the interwoven relationships. In that context, the women on our team also experienced control over our behaviors and occupied places of subordination. For example, we always had to go down to the pueblo with the technicians, and if there were religious festivals, we had to be with the group; otherwise, “the rumor” reached Cochabamba, and explicit sanctions on the duty of maintaining our behavior came from the boss or our colleagues.

Additionally, at the level of the organization of the work, we reproduced those principles of perception and action. In addition to doing the technical work, we had to cook for the men, take care of the children, and take on the housework before our interests. Thus, a transversal hierarchy similar to what occurred in other scenarios in Latin America was (and is) reproduced. I compared these relational forms when I later exchanged experiences in the 1990s and the first decade of the 2000s with women from Zapatist organizations from Chiapas in Mexico and with community leaders from Ecuador and Peru.

Team meetings were held in Mizque to organize the work and decide on the timelines. We, women, actively expressed our opinions, but we had to obey and be attentive to presentations by the director or the technicians. In this group, the doctor had her own place of power, coming from her hierarchy in the biomedical field. There was horizontal work between her and us, among us, and between her and the team.

Between the third and the fifth year of working in Mizque, I became responsible for the Communication and Rural Education Magazine *CONOSUR Ñaupaqman*. I gathered the technicians’ reports,

which were converted into simple articles with drawings and photographs on topics of education, health, agriculture, or union organization, oriented towards the rural community and associated institutions. Then, when each monthly edition was finished, I toured the rural communities with the team, delivering the magazine and recording new information. I shared part of the work in the field mainly with male farmers and leaders, who were also becoming monitors of the magazine and then the radio. With this work on *CONOSUR Ñaupaqman*, I participated in all the rural mobilizations from 1989 to 1992 that were recorded in its pages.

Progress towards the Autonomy of the Bolivian Tropics

In 1990, during one of the visits by the evaluators of the Latin American Inter-American Foundation (IAF), my work was publicly praised for the first time, something that was not well-received by some native technicians who constantly placed what I did in doubt.

At that time, the “gringo from the IAF” asked me if I wanted to work in the field in the communities of the Tropics that were booming due to their union movements. I immediately said yes, since I had already met Evo Morales, the young leader who stood out for his charm and speaking ability. My boss said, “No! How? A woman cannot go into the jungle alone!”

The gringo⁸ looked at him, surprised, but did not back down from his request, and finally they let

⁸ Kevin “Benito” Healy. To review some of his work in Bolivia, see: <http://www.iaf.gov/index.aspx?page=646>. Retrieved June 20, 2020.

me collaborate. We traveled for eight hours by highway towards the tropical zone. On the way, he asked me if I had personal projects pending. "Yes," I answered, "to finish my university studies." "And what do you need for that?" "A scholarship," I immediately answered. The next year, I restarted my university studies with a scholarship and turned my work in the field one hundred percent towards the rural union organizations in the Tropics of Cochabamba.

In early 1992, *pueblos* all over Latin America were mobilizing regarding the controversial commemoration of the 500 years of the conquest. In Bolivia, the struggle for autonomy and the right to land and territory had unified the more than one hundred native *pueblos*, from the high plains to the most remote jungle *pueblos*. The great encounter of the native cultures that would reclaim autonomy and territory was approaching.

In that same period, I was able to join a team of German documentary filmmakers who were critical of U.S. intervention in the *pueblos* of the Southern Cone. They were confident that I could contact the leaders to request and obtain authorization to film and to consult the families from the zone if they wanted to give their testimonies.

In making those arrangements, I confirmed that with my perseverance in community work, I had gained the trust of the leaders and families. That was how I started with these documentary filmmakers on an intensive learning process regarding the richness of working with images, the importance of planning, the capacity to overcome the unexpected and the need to enter and leave the field analyzing the experience each day. We camped there for 20 days, filming in the Tropics in the middle of the rainy

season, so it was an arduous struggle to protect the equipment and to fight off the mosquito attacks, the vehicle getting stuck in the mud, and the rising of the rivers.

This was a first ethnography of the family life of the farmers cultivating in the Tropics, which circulated on European television and in which the voices of its protagonists could be heard regarding the problem of the international penalization of coca leaves, the union organization, their rituals, and daily life in the fields. Based on this experience and the documentary, there arose articles, interviews, and photographs for the publication of a book about the defense of the coca leaf as a traditional medicinal plant.

The documentary *Im Schatten der heiligen Pflanze*, directed by Gernot Schley, offered another view of the conflict over the use of coca leaves. At that time and until now, the international media have focused basically on the production of cocaine and the need for the intervention of the DEA in Bolivia. From that standpoint, the majority of the international press features have not focused on (or have not understood) the political-interventionist background of the United States in Bolivia and the abuses of power that the rural *pueblos*⁹ experienced daily. In contrast, this documentary was able to exemplify the benefits of growing coca leaves, the threat of armed violence by the repressive agencies (the DEA and UMOPAR), the search for alternative crops and the daily life of the families.

I committed to that fight with such passion that it caused conflicts for me in the NGO, and thus I ex-

⁹ For more information, see: Gernot Schley, *Im Schatten der heiligen Pflanze: Boliviens Coca-Bauern klagen an* (1992), Horlemann Verlag.

perienced the third ratcheting up of my life plans in Bolivia. I had to go out on my own and decide where to focus my work committed to the defense of human rights. It was an illuminating period, since the success of the documentary work and the commitment that had been created with the German documentary filmmakers enabled me to apply for financing to continue supporting rural organizations in the Tropics with the objective of communicating and supporting the defense of human rights in rural families.

From the middle of 1992 until 1997, my field was the jungle, with 90% humidity, torrential rains, floods, dengue, and the threat of cholera. I had to go out into the field on paths that had the consistency of a trail of soap (red clay, rain, and constant humidity), in the middle of the dense foliage, with a backpack full of flipcharts. That was how we got to the Quechua and Aymara communities transplanted from the high mining plateau to the farms in the Tropics.

We also found Guaraní families settled in zones away from the populations on the highway or the market. We provided training for women, young people, and leaders. The main focus of concern was the unionized communities. There, the military attacks regarding coca leaves and the persecution of intermediaries and drug traffickers were mixed. Many times, women were sexually assaulted and houses were sacked by members of the UMOPAR.¹⁰

¹⁰ According to reports from the *International Human Rights Commission* at the time, it was pointed out that "Throughout the region of Chapare, UMOPAR agents have gained fame as ruffians and thieves." See <http://www.hrw.org/legacy/spanish/informes/1995/bolivia3.html>. Retrieved June 20, 2020.

It was a constant threat, just as were the untreated tropical illnesses such as leishmaniasis and the high levels of illiteracy. In this region, the organizations that adhered to the defense of coca leaves as a product of traditional use¹¹ joined other popular base organizations throughout the country in the claims for land and territory as the flag of a common struggle.

By then, my two sons and my daughter were older, and their upbringing, in a complex manner, was shared with their father. Many times, my elder son accompanied me on my comings and goings in the jungle, on trucks carrying rice, chickens, or potatoes. While I did interviews or distributed the magazine *Nuestro Trópico*, he collected bugs or got lost among the trees. When he was older, he helped me distribute the publication to the federations of farmers or distribute food for rowboats in the infinite marches held by the rural populations demanding their rights and autonomy. I learned to *pijchar* (chew) coca leaves during the unending union meetings, to sleep in the storage sheds, to bathe wearing a slip in the rivers. However, my weak stomach, as Valeria said, did not help me, since for half my life in Bolivia I fought innumerable intestinal infections.

At the end of 1992, due to the international impact of the mobilizations to recognize the 500 years since

¹¹ The violence generated by drug trafficking in the rural communities was aggravated by the implementation of Law 1008, which penalized a broad spectrum of activities related to drugs, including fabrication, distribution, and sale. Although the law was strongly debated before being approved, the debate centered on the regulation of coca more than on the provisions of the law to cover the crimes relative to controlled substances. In fact, the majority of the latter provisions came from prior anti-drug laws. See: <http://www.hrw.org/legacy/spanish/informes/1995/bolivia3.html>. Retrieved June 20, 2020.

the conquest of America, the *pueblos* became more radical in their demands, and the confrontations and deaths were denied by the government of Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada (“Goni”), president of Bolivia that year. He was a politician-businessman from the right, allied with the United States, who took the army into the street with arms and tear gas. At the end of each day, the numbers of people injured, arrested, and killed mounted. In those events, I was arrested along with leaders of the *Federación de Campesinos del Trópico* (Rural Federation of the Tropics) and foreign journalists, both men and women, who had come to cover the mobilizations. The leaders were released a month later, and the government decided to expel them from the country, in addition to several foreign volunteer professionals who were expelled for “interfering in the internal politics of the country and collaborating with indigenous terrorism.”

In my case, they interrogated me with false accusations linked to using the money from the German financing to facilitate the acquisition of arms in the Tropics and for writing “false headlines” for the pages of *Nuestro Trópico*. According to Interpol, the complaints of the rapes of native women by the UMOPAR were unfounded because the rapes had never occurred, and the accounts of beatings received by male and female leaders of the community, published with photos, were false. The Human Rights office with which I coordinated my work hired an attorney, and the federation of students at the university where I was studying hired another. However, Saavedra Bruno, the Minister of the Interior at that time, did not give in. He wanted me extradited, outside the area of the accusation, since our magazine reached hundreds of international organizations. The sense of anguish grew in me as time went by, and I thought about

my sons and daughter. Then, one of the attorneys asked me, “Where are they going to deport you if your identity documents say that you are a nationalized Bolivian?” And, on that my defense was based.

That experience in prison revived silenced fears that were difficult for me to overcome. The judge’s sanction was that I could not go back to writing in the press, and the magazine for the rural organizations was banned. However, after I overcame my fears, my disobedience of institutional orders emerged once again.

Yes, I had been prohibited from writing, but not from filming. Therefore, I used what I had learned with the Germans, and until 1997, filmed records became my preferred work tool. These documentaries had a wide circulation in the rural communities and among the organizations that supported the struggle against U.S. interference in Bolivia. By 1997, we had edited five movies with different themes: the use and cultural defense of coca leaves, the prison life of Quechuan men and women accused of drug trafficking, Law 1008 on drug trafficking and the place of the United States in this false war, the ultimatum referring to the demands of the United States in the internal politics of Bolivia, and the life of a farming family in the Tropics.

By then, my relations with the Federation of Coca Leaf Producing Farmers had begun to be more distant. My principal conflict was owing to pressure from Evo Morales for these tools to be placed at the service of the emerging MAS party. I reflected on this with the team and manifested my apprehensions about focusing our efforts on a political party, which evidently had tremendous weight; how-

ever, its agenda left out other groups and visions, for example, women, as well as other global rights issues, which were among our objectives.

Since 1994, a profound transformation had been intensifying in the base union organizations as they adopted the organization of political parties for their struggles. In the communities, the federations were entwined with the municipalities. The union leaders started a campaign to gain seats as representatives and senators. Therefore, they were incarnating their struggles within the representations of the formal political system, which they had rejected in the past. That was my main concern, combined with my view of the political party experience that had clouded my experiences as a militant-obedient in the past. However, in the first decade of the 2000s, I observed Evo Morales become a representative, a senator, and then president of Bolivia.

From 1995 to 1997, I focused on working with women who were imprisoned under Law 1008; my last intensive work in the field in Bolivia was oriented towards making visible the legal abandonment and the violence contained in this law, which fell on many rural women accused of micro trafficking. There in the prison, I put all my tools and my capacity for resisting frustration to the test.

In Closing: Towards Emancipating Research

Situating myself under the self-ethnographic model has meant trying to combine a search for gender and political emancipation with a research process that progresses towards the autonomy of the large stories that dominate the social science scene. By placing ourselves subjectively in the research scene, what

we write is what we do based on those meanings by which we interpret “who we are and what we do in the world.”

This perspective, in turn, contains psycho-social demands, since it requires constantly explaining the complexity involved in what we observe, what our spokespersons say they do, and what we see them do. In this process, beliefs, ideologies, gender, ethnic belonging (native and *q'ara* in this case), social class, and even the ages of those who interact are at play. All these dimensions must be included and analyzed.

In this way, I believe that those of us who use these models should assume the subjectivity of the view we make of the world that we are getting to know or interpreting, beyond the culture in which we have been constructed.

This position marks a way of producing knowledge, sustained by the inclusion of emotions and the commitments of our positions. As researchers, we run great risks, since dialogical relationships need to be established, with constant shifting between the field of knowledge, the subjects, and our own reflection. In that position, researchers face their vulnerability, distances are given new meanings, and hierarchies must be questioned. As a researcher, I must be observed and read, subject to my biography, and crossed by cultural and gender discourses, and therefore must understand that these subjections permeate my way of looking and narrating.

I believe that in any social relation, whether scientific or day-to-day, neutral distances are fictitious. I say this, since how could we disembodied, disincarnate, or de-gender scientific work or those who live that experience? Bodies and all their cultural

tracks matter. The research process that I started in the context of native Andean *pueblos* taught me that objectivity is impossible when faced with such diverse ways of perceiving, organizing, naming, or feeling the experiences in these cultures.

I also learned to maintain a willingness to constantly learn and to recognize the agency that resulted from each phase I lived.

In addition, during those years, I learned the urgency of following the tracks of the memories of these peoples, of their voices and accounts. A magnificent notion for naming this learning was identified by Mikhail Bakhtin (1990) in his analysis of human textuality: *unfinalizability*. The accounts of women and men from the jungle, the valley, or the Bolivian heights did not end when they told me their experiences. They were not finished when they were transcribed, since their stories continue unfolding and changing, along with each one of us who was there.

In this exercise, I have been able to contribute to conserving these memories only by means of narrating fragments of the multiple journeys of the protagonists of these spaces of action. I have also tried to note the relevance of constantly rethinking the notion of the body and of the richness of opening ourselves to worldviews that understand that the body is joined and entwined with the world and with other entities that inhabit it; thus, it is porous and does not constitute a closed territory.

I agree with those who suggest working with biographic, ethnographic, self-ethnographic, narrative, and graphic models first as a form of resistance and then as a form of agency with several objectives:

- To unleash experiences encapsulated by silence, fear, or methodological restriction.
- To capture metaphors through languages.
- To open reflective dialogues with all the intensity necessary, trying to make voices heard (and also striving to overcome the temptation to appropriate the voice of the other person who is narrating).
- To recover unofficial subjectivities made by groups' histories.
- To attempt a poetics and policy from what emerges from the culture (with "poetics" being defined as the rhetorical, persuasive, tropic, and metaphorical construction of any context [Clifford and Marcus 1986]).
- To recover the voice of the body that relates and lives (in a critical sense, given that ideas such as the existence of a being and a universal and transcendental body, characterized by individualization, prevail in the social sciences, where each person is a unique, individual subject with its own reason and body, and precise limits that separate it from other entities, substances, beings or people, not only in terms of its corporality and awareness, but also regarding its will and capacity for action or agency).

In summary, this text is a proposal to open up the current conceptual systems of analysis and interpretations that dominate the social sciences based on notions such as *center*, *border*, *linearity*, and *hierarchy* and to replace them with *multi-focus*, *reflexivity*, *nodes*, and *networks*, among other open-ended notions.

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Appendix: Photos and Illustrations from the Author's Archive

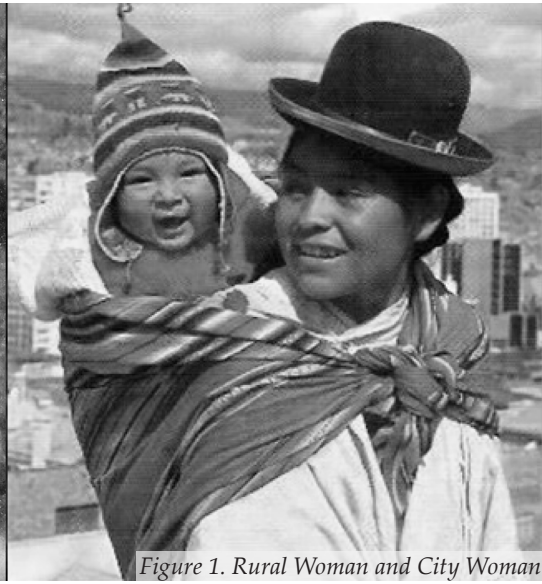


Figure 1. Rural Woman and City Woman



Figure 3a. Own illustrations about legends and scenes from everyday life.



Figure 3b. Own illustrations about legends and scenes from everyday life.

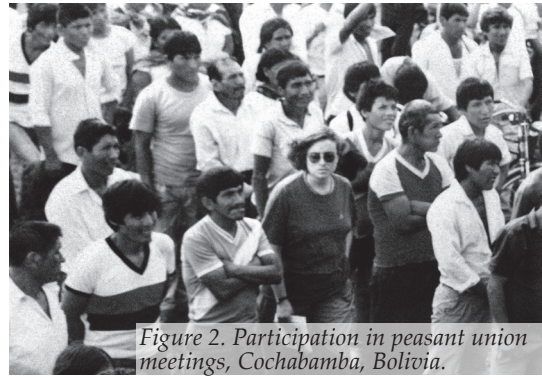


Figure 2. Participation in peasant union meetings, Cochabamba, Bolivia.

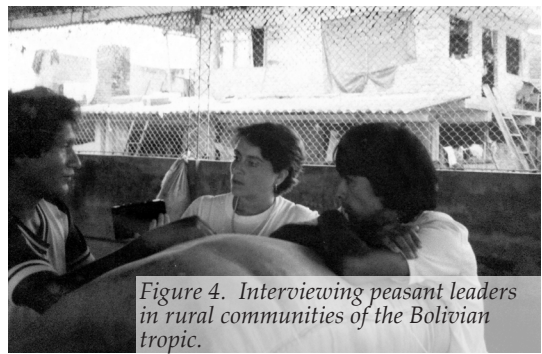


Figure 4. Interviewing peasant leaders in rural communities of the Bolivian tropic.

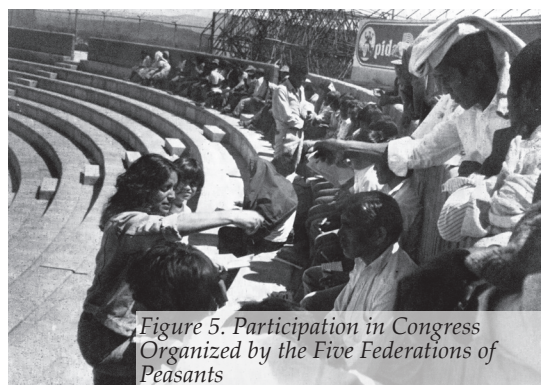


Figure 5. Participation in Congress Organized by the Five Federations of Peasants

An Attempt to Restore the Ordinary Death to the Visual Realm—Artistic, Therapeutic, and Ethical Aspects of the Post-Mortem Photography of Children in the 21st Century. Short Introduction

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Keywords:

Post-Mortem
Photography
of Children;
Bereavement Process;
Parent's Grief

Abstract: Post-mortem photography was a transcendental element in the 19th century, which not only democratized portraiture, but also helped in the bereavement process. The comeback of post-mortem photography as a psychological tool helping parents of deceased children to cope with death was only a matter of time. The role and importance of *memento-moris* has to be taken into account in order to make significant changes in the grieving process, but all of the aspects of this kind of photography need to be considered. The artistic, therapeutic, and ethical dimensions of post-mortem photography in the 21st century has its rules, and those rules need to be followed. The article constitutes only a part of the research devoted to the bereavement process from a sociological perspective.

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The Tradition of Post-Mortem Photography

I regard post-mortem photography (also called *memento-mori* here) as a valuable aid in the bereavement process; but to make it more understandable, there is a need to start with the 19th century Victorian post-mortem photographs, or even go back to earlier cultural practices. Before the invention of photography individuals were celebrated and memorized through paintings and sculptures (see examples: Portrait of Hannibal Gustav Wrangel depicted as dead, 1643¹; Portrait of a Deceased Girl, probably Catharina Margaretha van Valkenburg by Johannes Thopas, 1682²). It was a very limited method, affordable to the rich families only, or available to famous citizens. Most people kept artifacts, such as hair or personal belongings, to mourn the loved ones. Pelin Aytemiz (2011:1) mentions, referring to John Harvey, that to secure the memory of the recently deceased person, people kept charms, portraits, and “personal keepsakes”—as, for example, letters, jewelry, or clothing (see examples of mourning jewelry³). According to Elke Weesjes (2013), between 1839 and 1860, ambrotypes and tintypes took over the place of paintings and drawings or dead-masks, togeth-

er with the desire to immortalize the memory of a beloved family member. In the article about the tradition of the British post-mortem photography written by Audrey Linkman (2006:312), we may find the same information:

Post-mortem portraits were not limited to any specific class in British society. While relatively few people may have been able to afford a painting or drawing of a dead relative, photography brought portraiture within the financial reach of a wider section of society. Post-mortem photographs were commissioned both by the affluent and by people of more modest means.

Katherine Pettit (2006:35) refers to Jay Ruby focusing on the fact that it was also the time when death belonged to topics of polite conversations. The grieving process was considered normal (like wearing black in public, etc., sometimes months or even years after a death, which was implicated by the connection to the deceased) and the cemeteries were used as recreational sites where people were likely to take walks. Troy Cluff (2014:2) notes in his work that in Canada the post-mortem photography appeared at the same time as the cemetery reform movement inspired by Romanticism. The aesthetic aspect became important in the creation of more pleasing burial places. Death was something natural, something that awaited everyone, so there was no use in making it secret or shameful. The process of bereavement was a standardized social ritual, known to all, and that knowledge played an important role in the public reception of death.

The 19th century, apart from being recognized as the age of progress, has also had a less friendly demographic effect. Especially in the first half of the

¹ Blog: Costume Cocktail. Posted on September 14, 2015. “Post mortem painting of Hannibal Gustav Wrangel, 1643.” Retrieved November 27, 2019 (<https://www.costumecocktail.com/2015/09/14/post-mortem-painting-of-hannibal-gustaf-wrangelsgatan-1643/>).

² Blog: Costume Cocktail. Posted on September 14, 2015. “Portrait of a Deceased Girl, probably Catharina Margaretha van Valkenburg, 1682.” Retrieved November 27, 2019 (<https://www.costumecocktail.com/2015/09/14/portrait-of-a-deceased-girl-probably-catharina-margaretha-van-valkenburg-1682/>).

³ Bond, Charlotte. 2018, December 05. “Somber ‘Memento Mori’ Jewelry Commissioned to Help People Mourn.” *The Vintage News*. Retrieved November 27, 2019 (<https://www.thevintagenews.com/2018/12/05/mourning-jewelry/>).

Victorian era a high mortality rate prevailed. The unregulated migration resulted in overcrowding of the English cities, lack of housing, vagrancy, homelessness, unemployment, and epidemics of typhoid and cholera, which consequently led to more poverty and death. An important component in the high numbers of deaths was widespread infant mortality. It was natural and common to have numerous offspring, but surviving childhood required great internal resistance and favorable external circumstances. This was obviously due to the fact that children were least resistant to unsanitary living conditions and most vulnerable to diseases, as well as sensitive to malnutrition (Kamińska 2013:117-118). Therefore, we can find many photographs of deceased children as “the memory was central to the mourning process and photographs undoubtedly served to stimulate and perpetuate memory” (Linkman 2006:343). There was an expectation central to the Victorian practices of mourning and remembrance that the child’s corpse would be depicted as exceedingly beautiful. It also appeared in consolatory literature where “the topos of the beautiful dead child is central...and is repeated over and over again in the letters of condolence, sermons, and poetry” (Brown 2009:14). This convention of a beautiful photo portrayal of dead children was called “sleeping angel” imagery (Iepson 2014:23).

In the American and European culture, post-mortem photography was a popular way of memorializing dead relatives. According to Ewelina Kamińska (2013:116), *memento-mori* photography was present in most of the countries of South America, North America, and Europe. In its original shape the way of depicting the dead remained unchanged. Various types of post-mortem photography are distinguished by different authors. One

division can be done according to the historical periods and aesthetic changes through time. Another one focuses on the ways the deceased were depicted and here—according to Katherine Pettit (2006:36)—we can recognize three main styles of *memento-moris*. The first one would represent the dead in his or her last sleep (also in the already mentioned “sleeping angel” type; see an example: Deceased Child, Photographer unknown, photo circa 1850⁴). The second—alive, but dead—where the eyes were open or the pupils were painted on the eyelids, in an attempt to create an illusion that the subject was still alive. The grieving Victorians revealed a profound fascination and desire for immortality by creating fictional photographs that portray the deceased as alive. Additionally, the person could have a rosy tint on the cheeks (Munforte 2015); (see an example: Little Drummer Girl: Sarah A. Lawrence of 119 Hudson Avenue, photographer unidentified, Green Island, Albany County, New York, ca. 1847.⁵ Sixth-plate daguerreotype, hand colored. © Stanley B. Burns, MD & The Burns Archive; www.burnsarchive.com). Thirdly, the deceased could be portrayed with mourners, which was also the idealization of the social institution of a middle-class family—parents depicted mourning their dead child. Sometimes only one parent (mostly the mother) appeared in the photos with the deceased child (see an example: An image of a mother posing with her dead child taken

⁴ Website: Death & Dying III. Post by Nicoleel on April 16, 2019. “Victorian Post-Mortem Photography.” Photo of a Deceased Child, Photographer Unknown, circa 1850. Retrieved November 27, 2019 (<http://idst190.web.unc.edu/author/nicoleel/>).

⁵ Website: The Burns Archive. “The Death & Memorial Collection.” Little Drummer Girl: Sarah A. Lawrence, circa 1847. Retrieved November 27, 2019 (<http://burnsarchive.com/EXPLORE/HISTORICAL/Memorial/index.html>; <https://www.incollect.com/sites/uploads/BurnsArchive-LittleDrummerGirl.jpg>).

in the USA, 1840s⁶). According to Dongjie Wang (2015:3), the fashion for the post-mortem photos was a bit deeper than a pure ritual:

The deceased were usually dressed in their best clothing and treated very respectfully in post-mortem photographs. The photographs of adults often showed mementos like rosaries and crosses in the folded arms. Many children were pictured alone, but a popular style was the family portrait with the deceased child in the center (Thanatos Archives). Part of the reason for this was to ease the grief of the living, but respect for the dead was another important factor. It was a common belief that the spirit of the dead did not leave until the funeral was over, so it was very important to include the deceased in ways that would make him or her feel as if they were still alive.

With time, the need to show the deceased as alive was less and less pressing. The new way of depicting dead people included showing the tragedy of death. The portraits were taken in coffins surrounded by candles and flowers, sometimes not at home but in funeral homes or churches (see an example: Girl in coffin. Herefordshire County Record Office⁷).

We need to know that not all people considered those pictures or death itself beautiful: seeing the dead as beautiful was something that had to

⁶ Summers, Chris. 2016, December 15. "Stay Dead Still: The Gruesome 19th-Century Portraits of Children Who'd Passed Away which Helped Their Parents to Recover from Bereavement." *Mail Online*. Retrieved November 27, 2019 (<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4036412/Touching-morbid-gruesome-19th-century-portraits-dead-children-helped-parents-recover-bereavement.html>).

⁷ Clint, Edward. 2016, June 19. "Myths of Victorian Post-Mortem Photography." *Incredulous*. Retrieved November 27, 2019 (<https://www.skepticink.com/incredulous/2016/06/19/myth-victorian-post-mortem-photography/>).

be learned. Additionally, not all photographers referred to this kind of photography in positive terms. The differences in attitudes towards the deceased and post-mortem photography in America and Britain can be illustrated by the article of Linkman (2006:312), who writes:

The Americans John Gihon and Albert Southworth managed to discuss the issue in print in a helpful, straightforward manner, which conveyed their pride in producing work of this nature to a high standard. By contrast, of the few British photographers prepared to put their names to articles about post-mortem portraiture, all saw fit to distance themselves to some degree from the work, describing it as unpleasant or distasteful. This suggests that British photographers were uncomfortable when discussing the topic in public. Most justified their involvement on the disinterested basis of the comfort the portrait would bring to the grieving relatives.

The British society was permeated by some other issues which photographers had to face: the fact that some remains of the dead could inflict a potential risk of infection or that more time had to be devoted to that kind of photography forced the photographers to set the prices that were higher and thus more profitable to undertake for them (Linkman 2006:315-316). Over the time, the practices and rituals changed and the need to go hand in hand with the dead child in a picture was no longer acceptable. Death lost its public nature, it was removed from the public sphere and relocated to the private sphere of life. According to Nicola Brown (2009:19), the meaning of the photos has changed—they were removed from view as something disgusting and not esthetic anymore. They also were "thrown away, or hidden, in family bibles, drawers, wallets, lockets or pockets.

Some may have been transformed into relics by combining them with other mementos.” They lost their devotional meaning with time and became ordinary objects.

This trajectory from intensely meaningful, treasured, touched objects to meaningless rubbish helps explain why so many of these photographs have disappeared from the complex of memories and feelings which made them so precious has grown distant and faded as time has passed. [Brown 2009:19]

The changes in mourning practices were brought about also by commercial photography, which became a tool for the documentation for the living. The invention of Kodak cameras turned everybody into photographers, who could take photos, so the photographs became more and more private and rather hidden from view (Wang 2015:5). In the 20th century the infant mortality dropped and the death was connected mostly with elderly people (Weesjes 2013). The post-mortems seemed to be lost for good, while contact with the deceased and with their corpse relatives only experienced during funerals, when the body was not always visible (as the coffin may be closed). But, still, there were some individuals and groups that practiced amateur post-mortem photography, whose examples can be found in the circles of African Americans, Asian Americans, and Polish Americans (the photographs in the coffin or ordered from the funeral home). In Poland, this kind of tradition was and continues to be most vivid in the country and it has not changed much.

Contemporary *Memento-Mori* Photography

A contemporary example of *memento-mori* photography appeared in America a few years ago. *Now*

I Lay Me Down To Sleep,⁸ which is a Colorado-based non-profit volunteer organization, was founded in April 2005 by Cheryl Haggard and Sandra Puc. On the 4th of February 2005, Maddaux, Cheryl's son, died. A photographer and a friend of Cheryl, Sandra Puc, took some photos of Maddaux and his parents—all in a tasteful black-and-white convention. As for now (2017) the website of this project announces that there are 1700 active photographers around the world who are volunteers that can be asked to provide grieving families with *memento-moris*. I shall add that this is not the only professional service in the United States of America offered to parents who lost their children and there are some freelance photographers around the world also providing such services to parents who experience an early infant loss.

It is said that this kind of organization has changed the attitude towards child death. Before the 1970s medical staff often prevented parents from seeing and holding their stillborn babies and also encouraged families to quickly forget their loss (Blood and Cacciatore 2014a:2). The conducted research showed, however, that there was a need for a continuing bond which had to be reorganized (Bowlby 2016). The custom of memorial images is now offered in almost all hospitals in the United States, which can be highlighted as a good practice. Of course, there are a lot of questions about the efficiency of this kind of help. Some studies stress the fact that to be sure if the post-mortem photography is crucial in the parents' bereavement process, there should be appropriate research in place to assess all the aspects and potential effects (Harvey, Snowden, and Elbourne 2008:352-353). Some

⁸ *Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep*. Official website of the organization. Retrieved November 27, 2019 (<https://www.nowilaymedowntosleep.org/>).

researchers have investigated the effectiveness of bereavement interventions in neonatal intensive care (Harvey, Snowdon, and Elbourne 2008:353) and suggest that:

Experimental research may well be difficult, but not beyond the realms of possibility...A mixed-methods approach such as this would provide data on effectiveness, as well as preferences, and could be used to explore wider practical and ethical questions, such as who should take the photographs, how, when, and where? When should they be given to parents: at an early stage, on leaving the hospital, or at a follow-up visit? Who should have responsibility for this: photographers, nurses, bereavement counselors, or consultants? Style and content of photographs can differ, and reactions to those should be explored. It would be appropriate to consider not only whether parents want to have these images, but also whether parents, siblings, or wider family members need and respond to them in the same way.

The pictures are regarded by parents who took part in this project as “wonderful artifacts that document an unspoken part of our social history and can be seen as icons or reminders of love and loss” (Weesjes 2013). The grief counseling and death education in public schools in the United States of America slightly changed the pathological indication of public display of mourning over the death of a family member. Also, modern digital photography made *memento-mori* photography more available to all those who need it. But, as Angela Riechers (2008:3) points out, the amateur “often blurry, poorly lit” images were for many parents the only evidence of stillborn baby existence.

Katherine Pettit (2006), referring to Sigmund Freud and Thierry de Duve, states that in order to survive

and heal, a mourning person has to direct his or her attention towards someone or something else. In Poland, still it is mostly understood as: “have another baby,” but some psychiatrists see the chance of building a new bond with the deceased, through the substitutive objects, such as belongings or images, that can help ease the grieving process. This idea of remodeling the bond between the parents and their deceased child is based on the theory of attachment and loss by John Bowlby (2016). In addition, the sociological approach focuses on holding on to memories in an attempt to redefine the identity after loss (Komaromy et al. 2009:7).

The visual culture manifests itself in five ways that give the society of late modernity five specific features. Piotr Sztompka (2012:15-20) points to the icon, spectacle, self-presentation, design, and voyeurism as the main visual dimensions of the society we are living in. Its natural consequence is the usage of images for different purposes, for instance, therapeutic ones. Due to its indexical nature, the photography makes a mourning process occur with almost every photograph. And, all photos are *memento-mori*—as stated by Susan Sontag (2009:23). It is due to the fact that all photos represent past in the Barthesian meaning—the viewer is always aware that the subject or the object of the image once existed in a certain time and place, but it does not exist in the same way at the time of viewing the photography (Barthes 1996:157-162). The photography is a copy of the real object and an emanation of the past—something connected with magic, art, and a metaphor of resurrection. Thus, we can think about all photographs in the category of *memento-mori* as they continually remind us of death (Ferenc 2011).

Cybele Blood and Joanne Cacciatore (2014b:224) refer to the studies that show “bereaved parents

endure profoundly painful emotions, significant challenges of their worldview, and a compromised sense of identity, with risk of negative psychiatric outcomes.” In the subject of perinatal death, “they face the additional burden, as their baby is not socially recognized as significant.” Therefore, the reappearance of *memento-mori* photography in perinatal death protocol was and continues to be a change that was needed and expected by parents. But, we need to bear in mind the fact that “parents are affected differently and grieve in different ways” (Kohner 2000:358). It means that we can find parents who do not want help and photos, they just want to forget and move on. There can be many reasons behind the decision to refrain from taking part in that kind of service, such as disfigurements of the body, violent cause or circumstances of death, preferences to have only photos of alive children, religious, or cultural ideas. Sometimes the situation makes parents feel confused and the state of shock does not promote the recognition that a photograph of a child may actually help to ease the pain in the future (Blood and Cacciatore 2014a:4-5).

The Importance of Aesthetic, Therapeutic, and Ethical Aspects

I have already mentioned that the post-mortem photography has had a great value to the mourners. Some researchers highlight the fact that it was not entirely clear what motives were behind the fashion of *memento-mori* photography in the 19th century. In particular, the photographs’ reception by family members is for us unknown as they were never the object of study (Iepson 2014:16). However, there are studies devoted to the reception of post-mortem photos by parents of deceased children—they may not be the most relevant as the subject is still under

research, but they already tell us much. We are not only aware of such photographs’ effects on people and their preferred outlook and style, but we know what should not be shown in order to respect the rules of therapeutic values.

The aesthetics is very important in this delicate subject. The photographs should be prepared in a black-and-white artistic manner. It is a reference to the traditional post-mortem photography, on the one hand, and a therapeutic tool, on the other. They cannot show any indications of pain. Parents ask for photographs without any kind of medical equipment on the face (Harvey, Snowdon, and Elbourne 2008:353). If the baby’s body is somehow deformed, the photography should disguise that fact and leave parents with more positive memories of their deceased baby. Sometimes parents want to be with the child in the picture, so the photography should express also the love and grief of the family members in the photo—the research shows that the parents feel the need to have an image with the baby, “even if it was taken shortly after one baby had died” (Harvey, Snowdon, and Elbourne 2008:353). The motive behind the commissioning of post-mortem photographs in most cases is the desire to recall the face of the deceased child, because the only present feelings are pain and loss. Therefore, it should be considered to help create the bond and a healthy relation with the mourned child. Thus, sometimes the retouch service is provided in order to create a picture that will help to fade away all the bad memories.

Sometimes artists are approached to create *memento-mori* photographs in colors, but these tend to show not only the skin tones, but also resemble some common photographs of healthy babies in decorations and have a connotation of fluffy, fun-

ny stuff. These kinds of pictures can trigger bad experiences connected with still-birth or other unpleasant things and greater feelings of loss, as the baby is no longer present and the images may also inadvertently reveal the pain of the child, which is overwhelming for parents dealing with their feelings.

Blood and Cacciatore (2014b:225) in their research assume that:

- visual imagery helps in the creation of parental identity when a baby has died (especially important for fathers, as the bond with the mother is natural and obvious);
- photographs help to establish a social identity for the deceased child;
- photographs help parents to create narratives to share with others (and narratives are crucial in coping with grief, helping to reconstruct meaning and repair existential crises);
- symbolic activities help embed painful memories, thoughts, and feelings into narrative structure (rituals offer meaning, validate loss, and mediate transition in identity during the grief process);
- photographs may allow more immediate access to memories and feelings;
- photographs help integrate emotional and cognitive processes (they work as transitional objects, simultaneously filling a void).

The value of the post-mortem photography is also a symbolic closure and a part of the rite of pas-

sage documentation. Anna Pietrzyk (2015:547) concludes in her anthropological study of the Polish funeral photography tradition that the currently present ambivalent attitude towards digital or analogue post-mortem photographs indicates that the photography still affects modern people, forcing them to react, which, though different and dependent on the individual character and sensitivity of a person (aversion, fear, disgust, crying, remembering the deceased family members, nostalgic return to a time in life when the death took place, and telling family stories), certainly confirms the persistence mechanism of the image-instigated interaction.

Why is it so important to adhere to the therapeutic aspect of the photography in its aesthetic black-and-white version? For most of the parents who lost their child, there is nothing more terrible in life that could ever happen. They feel as if they could never be alive again and that there is nothing left for them (even if they have other children), only the grief which replaces the lost child. Louise J. Kaplan (1995:118) observes that:

When a child dies, the parent loses a vital aspect of her own self. The flesh-and-blood child, his tangible presence in the world, is evidence of the parent's meaning in life. When a child dies, the parent longs for actual conversations with the actual child. Unlike the child who, when a parent dies, finds some way to reproduce the parent within her own self, when a child dies, the palpable presence of grief is all that is left for the parent...A dead child can only be memorialized in the parent's grief.

The photographs help to preserve memories, prevent inaccurate memories, honor the child, and

create a way to be with the child. It is crucial to the mourning process to create most appropriate conditions that will help to transform the bond and ease the grief. Sometimes it means also improving the reality and retouching photos or even creating a vision of the realm that will be more comforting—to avoid parents' reactions that can be summarized as "painful" or "hard to look at" (Blood and Cacciatore 2014b:228). Post-mortem photography is transforming pain into symbolic representation, which allows experiencing and taming it at once.

Conclusions

In conclusion, there are three aspects of post-mortem photography in the 21st century: 1) the ethical aspect, according to which we need to consider the cultural and religious beliefs of the parents concerned, as not all of them want to participate in that kind of practice and not all of them need that kind of practice (Blood and Cacciatore 2014b:226; 229); 2) the therapeutic aspect, which was highlighted by most of the parents from the survey taken by Blood and Cacciatore (2014a; 2014b) and can be specified as "not only contemplation of the image that produces the emotions...but the tactility of the photographs as object" (Brown 2009:21); and 3) the artistic aspect, which postulates that pictures should be taken in black-and-white, not to recall the actual colors, which may instigate bad memories. If needed, they should be retouched, cropped, and lit in an appropriate way.

I agree with Sheila Harvey, Claire Snowdon, and Diana Elbourne (2008:353) that the only way to research contemporary post-mortem photography is through a "mixed-methods approach." We may focus on the practical use of the *memento-*

to-mori pictures and their social values in restoring "the ordinary death." We may also try to explore the ethical aspects together with aesthetical preferences of parents and their reactions. There is also the interesting part of symbolic interaction between all the actors involved (parents, the deceased child, photographers, nurses, counselors), the space (hospital), and the things (photos). The sociological lenses give us a great area to explore the rituals that have arisen around this "new" practice and answer the questions—how the pictures help, how parents use them, what is their place in the lives of people mourning?

According to Aténé Mendelyté (2012:84), "these pictures have the ability to affect us deeply despite their remote historical and cultural context, and...behind the perceptual inconclusiveness of these images lurks the fear of facing our own finitude." And, as the last thought, I would like to quote John Berger,⁹ who once said:

All photographs are there to remind us of what we forget. In this—as in other ways—they are the opposite of paintings. Paintings record what the painter remembers. Because each one of us forgets different things, a photo more than a painting may change its meaning according to who is looking at it.

We should not forget about death, we shall embrace the idea of dying. This can help to deal with the pain and loss, this can also help to understand how the pain can be overcome by stimulation of the appropriate senses.

⁹"Quote by John Berger." *Quotery*. Retrieved November 27, 2019 (<http://www.quotery.com/quotes/all-photographs-are-there-to-remind-us-of-what-we/>).

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Ethical Aspects of Social Research: Old Concerns in the Face of New Challenges and Paradoxes. A Reflection from the Field of Biographical Method

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Abstract: The paper deals with the ethical aspects of the research process and contemporary changes in this field, which make the discussion on ethical dilemmas and concerns more dynamic and varied. Although in natural science and social sciences one can find a common ground related to the most general ethical principles. In the article I refer primarily to the social sciences. The article discusses three aspects affecting the dynamics of ethical discussions: the development of research in the field of natural sciences leading to many ethical dilemmas and forcing ethical codification of research proceedings also in the area of social sciences; the increase in sensitivity and social consciousness and not only awareness of research as such (processes of democratization, emphasizing human and animal rights, protection of minority rights, the process of individualization); the dynamics of contemporary social changes resulting from the development of technology, especially the Internet, which has become a global resource of data and their exchange. This forces qualitative researchers to consider the issue of data archiving, their reanalysis, and determining the boundary for creating Big Qualidata from them. The article discusses these three dimensions, with particular emphasis on the last of them, which will be commented on in relation to the specific methodological approach, which is biographical research.

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Introductory Remarks

The ethical aspects of research have always been a matter of reflection, especially for ethicists and philosophers of science. Recently, however, the discussion on ethical dilemmas and concerns seems to be more dynamic and varied. These days we can observe, especially in Anglo-Saxon literature and only slightly less frequently in Polish literature, a significant increase in the interest in this issue and a broadening reflection in both natural and social sciences encompassing the thoughts of researchers who directly, for instance, in the course of research, experience specific ethical dilemmas. As a result, nowadays, it is hard to reduce research ethics to issues related to different aspects of misconduct in science, which could be represented by fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism¹ (Galewicz 2009:48). In the article, I refer primarily to the social sciences. Although, of course, in both types of sciences one can find a common ground related to the most general ethical principles which should apply to everyone. However, this discussion seems to be already behind us. Therefore, more and more attention is not paid to general indications, which may take the form of general standards of conduct (although in practice sometimes not much may result from them), and it is becoming more important to focus on the issues more directly related to conducting research. And, here, the distinction between natural sciences and social sciences frames the reflection.

Thus, where does this contemporary ethics discourse come from? In my opinion, this is due to several reasons. Firstly, “putting the problem on the agenda” by transferring procedures from natural sciences, in

¹ This, of course, does not mean that these issues as such have ceased to be important.

the field of which, until some point, ethical issues were hardly considered at all. The development of ethical reflection occurred along with the accelerated development of science, especially in relation to those aspects of research work which were directly related to the study of human behavior, interference in the human body, or experiments carried out on animals and sometimes on people. The period of fascination with the possibilities of science and its development, especially in the positivist paradigm, was a time of medical, but also social, experiments (e.g., in the field of social psychology). This has provided us with a lot of valuable knowledge, but at the same time could raise concerns. From today’s perspective, this could simply arouse many ethical reservations. Certainly, they could not be carried out today. We have now come to a deeper reflection on not only what is ethical and what is not, but what is allowed and what is not. At the same time, this does not obscure significant ethical dilemmas. With the development of experimental sciences they seem to be growing. This has resulted in numerous regulations in the form of codes of ethics, committees of ethics giving permission to conduct research. These practices were implemented into social sciences, sometimes in the exact form, not taking into account the specifics of doing social research, for instance, its distinctiveness from research in the field of natural sciences.

Secondly, the interest in ethical issues is associated with the increase in sensitivity and social consciousness and not only awareness of research as such. Just as the first reason translated into the institutional dimension of doing science is associated with the process of institutionalization of contemporary social reality, so can the other one be associated with cultural and social changes. These include the processes of democratization and em-

phasizing human rights, including the protection of minority rights, the individualization process, et cetera. Within this perspective, we may be dealing with the desire to minimize the asymmetry of the roles of the researcher and the participant, making the researcher an equal partner of interaction and co-creator of the research process. Some go further turning this attitude into assumptions of new ethics called alternative.

Finally, the third reason, in my opinion the one which most activates the ethical discussion, especially in the field of social sciences, is the dynamics of contemporary social changes resulting from the development of technology. The development of the Internet, which has become a global resource of data and their exchange, forces qualitative researchers to take a stand on the issue of data archiving, their reanalysis, and determining the boundary for creating qualitative Big Data, which in qualitative research are called Big Qualidata. What is more, the situation of the participant as a person for whom the researcher is to guarantee anonymity often changes. In the era of a bigger or smaller presence of each of us in virtual reality, it is becoming more and more difficult to ensure anonymity. And, a complete change in the profile of the participant in the situation of qualitative research may deprive empirical data of the context, very important in this perspective, and thus the methodological sense. Another no less important factor is the fact that the Internet is not only a communication tool, but also a specific technological solution for data storage. Regarding empirical data, it enables their storage for personal use and, above all, archiving. Digitization of data, formulated a few years ago as a potential condition for receiving grant funding, has now become a matter of institutional and individual obviousness. We all have everything in our computers and clouds. It

is a matter of deciding to whom and how we will make our materials available and sometimes we have to face the loss of them when devices fail and we have not made backup copies.

My intention in this text is to refer to three indicated dimensions, with particular emphasis on the last of them, which will be commented on in relation to the specific methodological approach, that is biographical research. This is dictated by two considerations. First of all, I think that the assumptions of normative ethics should be confronted with applied ethics especially concerning social sciences, the main part of which is empirical research. And, this is not related to the relativization of one towards the other, but rather to the realization that the model indications are each time verified by research material, which in the case of social sciences is the social reality. In other words, it happens that strict compliance with ethical codes does not guarantee actual ethical behavior.² Therefore, it is good to consider ethical concerns using the example of particular research problems framed by specific methodology. Secondly, I choose the biographical perspective because I have been working with this method for years. Thus, my comments are the result of my own experiences, observations, and, above all, personally experienced dilemmas. To some extent, referring to Socratic maxim, "I know that I know nothing," the longer I conduct biographical research, the more dilemmas can arise, and the necessity to meet new challenges of the present day is also significant. I also treat this article as a continuation of the text published in 2018 (see: Kaźmierska 2018). The subject of both is the reflection on ethical issues in biographical research, which I treat as a voice in the discussion.

² This can be shown using the example of the discussion around informed consent, which I write more about elsewhere (Kaźmierska 2018).

In the first part of the text, I will focus on synthetic signaling of the first two reasons I have indicated for intensifying discussions on ethical issues. However, it is not my aim to reconstruct the ongoing discussion in the field of ethics, especially in qualitative research. What I intend to do is to outline the general background for the issues presented later in the article. Only, they seemingly do not connect with the next main part of the text. I consider them to be an important background to further considerations which are shaped by the ongoing discussions and approaches.

Human and Posthuman Ethics—New/Old Insights

When reconstructing (in a very general way) the development of ethics discourse in science we can say that it started to be dynamic when general normative ethics appeared to be problematic and when researchers were confronted with specific problems in the field of applied ethics. The starting point in modern sciences was the positivist approach evaluating any acquisition of knowledge according to the assumption that all methods which develop science are allowed (Wawrzyniak 2005:62). The source of this belief was the rationalist Enlightenment tradition which assumed that the multiplication of the wealth of knowledge is an unquestionable assumption (Rancew-Sikora and Cymbrowski 2016:27) while rationality and progress are the fundamental ideals of Western society (Kincaid, Dupré, and Wylie 2007:4). The development of natural sciences which prioritizes the development of science as knowledge of homo sapiens, or better—of humanity, has stopped devoting attention to the ethical dimension of some research and especially to the situation of individuals who were to be subjected to it. One of the significant

moments in shaping the discussion on the consequences of this assumption was the publication of Van Rensselaer Potter's *Bioethics: Bridge to the Future* from 1971 introducing the concept of bioethics. Potter was a biochemist and oncologist. Thus, his ethical reflection was inspired by his research experience: "Mankind is urgently in need of a new wisdom that will provide 'knowledge of how to use knowledge' for man's survival and improvement in the quality of life" (Ventura-Juncá 2011:82). Today, it is difficult to imagine scientific research in the field of medicine without the decisions of bioethics committees. They are one of the elements of comprehensive actions leading to the institutionalization of ethics through the introduction of ethical codes, the ethics committees mentioned, and the obligation to obtain informed consent from the participants. Regulating the behavior of researchers was taking place still in the normative paradigm, hence in a "natural" way "the phenomenon of managing moral processes in institutions appeared, assuming the hierarchy of moral competence...—a new civilizational expression of ethics authorization is the almost mass introduction of codes of ethics in state services, big companies" (Wiśniewski 2005:31), and let us add—in science, including social sciences. The codes mainly refer to normative ethics which in turn give standards for applied ethics. Apart from general ethics regulations, social research ethics should, in my opinion, be considered mainly as an example of applied ethics, especially in qualitative research. This is due to the specificity of social sciences, whose matter is an individual and his/her social behavior. At the same time the problem is that we are dealing with an "inappropriate imposition of a biomedical model of research ethics onto the social sciences...and the use of technocratic approaches to research ethics" (Mauthner 2019:678). As a result, sometimes, as the

authors say, “imagined dangers” (Kohn and Shore 2017:236) are formulated against quite typical research based on in-depth interviews and face to face contact with people.³ Whereas the first difference between natural sciences and social sciences, especially in the field of qualitative research, is related to contextual and situational character of the last one, it is very difficult to establish general, universal rules and codify the research process without considering its context. This criticism has been expressed by many scholars (e.g., Klockars 2000; Miller and Bell 2002; Wiśniewski 2005; Merrill and West 2009; Kaźmierska 2018). Their main argument is that we cannot directly implant the natural sciences’ standards to social sciences. The authors mentioned here form criticism from a “conventional” position. It should also be noted that one of the effects of the discussion and the tension between the standards of natural sciences and the attempt to implement them in social sciences is the emergence of a different ethical approach. The classic one, deriving from the normative perspective, was called conventional or humanist ethics, which means that it focuses on structuring relations be-

tween people treated as independent subjects. An important element of this view was the assumption about the unequal power relationship between the researchers and the research subjects. As alternative approaches, posthumanist ethics appeared, which shifts the focus from power relationship “toward the ‘world-making’ powers of practices of inquiry” (Mauthner 2019:670-671). The participant becomes an active subject in the research process and “there is no separation between finding out the world (the realm of knowledge) and ensuring that no harm is done in the course of such an investigation (the realm of ethics)...Knowledge production is an inherently ethical matter” (Mauthner 2019:680). As Mauthner points out, posthumanist ethics does not invalidate normatively understood research ethics, but at the same time it reconfigures its practices eliminating the asymmetry of power. In studies emerging from the normative paradigm there is a presupposed inequality of roles. It is the researcher who designs the study, its author and executor. The researched person, even if he or she is treated subjectively, remains one of the elements of this project.

³ “For example, a research project led by one of the authors on ‘Constitutional Reform in New Zealand and Other Commonwealth Countries’ entailed in-depth interviews with various categories of experts, including senior civil servants, government ministers, journalists, high court judges, and constitutional experts. However, the ethics committee refused to grant approval for a number of reasons. One of these was summed up in the panel’s comments: **Recruitment and coercion:** Given the status of the PIs [Principal Investigators] and the acknowledged presence of possible special relationships (Section C7) it might be that invited participants would find it difficult to decline. It would be desirable if a recruitment methodology were devised in which (a) a direct approach from the PI was omitted and/or (b) a process in which the PI was unable to ascertain who participated and who did not was put in place (e.g., this information was compartmentalized within the research team). In a design employing purposive sampling, this is not a simple matter, but the Committee would like to know if this could be considered to minimize any likelihood of coercion (Letter from the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, 2013)” (Kohn and Shore 2017:236).

A much more radical approach in this respect was presented by Denzin and Giardina (2007:18) who postulating alternative ethics say: “the purpose of research is not the production of new knowledge *per se*. Rather, the purposes are pedagogical, political, moral, and ethical, involving the enhancement of moral agency, the production of moral discernment, a commitment to praxis, justice, an ethic of resistance, and a performative pedagogy that resists oppression.” We can see that the authors neglect the classical aim of knowledge in the frame of rationalist, positivist paradigm. Precisely, they neglect the sense of academic science (Burawoy 2005) and they focus on more than an engaged approach:

subjects and researchers develop collaborative, public, pedagogical relationships. The walls between subjects and observers are deliberately broken down. Confidentiality disappears, for there is nothing to hide or protect. Participation is entirely voluntary, hence there is no need for subjects to sign forms indicating that their consent is “informed.” The activities that make up the research are participatory; that is, they are performative, collaborative, and action and praxis based. Hence, participants are not asked to submit to specific procedures or treatment conditions. Instead, acting together, researchers and subjects work to produce change in the world. [Denzin and Giardina 2007:20]

If we compare this idea with Burawoy’s proposal of varied types of social science: academic, but also public or engaged, we can see that he gives an alternative to different ways of building and applying the knowledge. Each way of doing science is related to a slightly different theoretical framework and the idea is to be able to identify it and to know in which framework the research is conducted. Whereas Denzin and Giardina leave no alternative. They are not focused on creating new knowledge, but on promoting local knowledge and unprivileged, socially excluded voices. We can see that such a perspective fits very well with the processes of decolonization, democratization, breaking down barriers and differences. It is also built against the mainstream way of doing science. In fact, it could be treated as a sensitizing strategy which helps to reflect on the research process. Nevertheless, it is difficult to accept this approach at face value, especially if applied to all kinds of qualitative research. Perhaps the alternative ethics could be helpful in fieldwork in local (postcolonial, marginalized, excluded) environments and communities, in the situation when power relationship is clearly defined

and extended beyond the research situation, for example, when a researcher represents a powerful part of society. We can treat the ideas of alternative ethics as a sort of laboratory showing the dynamics of relations between the researcher and those who are the subjects. We can also consider the idea of alternative ethics as a critical voice directed towards mainstream normative ethics. At the same time, it should be realized that these procedures also are problematic. First of all, if treating them not as a sort of utopian concept, we can say that:

Despite the tempting simplicity and suggestiveness of the postulates above, the problem of relations between the list of declared values and the world remains unsolved, just like in the case of codes of scientific associations. Creating general declarations and postulates is not directly related to the creation of knowledge about social reality, and even partly opposes it because it involves building a model of social relations which do not exist or are rare and which may prove impossible to implement. Local communities are treated as a model for all other groups. Even if we acknowledge the positive value of utopia for social change, we are not sure whether scientists should be the direct actors of this change. [Rancew-Sikora and Cymbrowski 2016:33-34]

As a remedy for such a polarized presentation of the ethical issues by Rancew-Sikora, Cymbrowski proposes the symbolic interactionism approach. It constitutes a good supplement to the normative and critical perspectives, it allows one to describe and understand the processuality and ambiguity of the modern world because it offers work at the source: on the definition of the problem, while taking into account the diversity of resources and daily practices of institutions that define them (Rancew-Sikora and Cymbrowski 2016:35). I personally find this ap-

proach closest to my perspective—it does not invalidate normative models, it does not unconditionally emancipate interactive processes, which are also subject to specific rules.

The framework outlining the activities of modern social researchers and ethical perspectives presented here in a nutshell constitutes the background for making specific decisions in the field of ethical choices or reflection on the ethical aspects of the research process. However, in my opinion, what is currently formatting them most is primarily the progress of information technologies which have forced a significant cultural change.

Archiving Biographical Materials—From Negligence to Mindfulness

When Pierre Nora (1989) claimed that uncertainty as to what kind of knowledge about ourselves could be useful to the next generations would lead us to record the memories of contemporary society uncritically, he perhaps could hardly foresee that what from a historian's perspective he called memory "archival" quickly became the basic data resource collected not for future generations, but for contemporary needs. Therefore, in my opinion, we can observe now a significant cultural shift reorienting the way of our thinking in this respect.

At the time when Nora described the phenomenon of compulsory archiving associated with the transformation of society aimed at dynamizing change and abandoning the reproduction of established forms of social life, he was rather referring to the postfigurative model of society and the "linear" paradigm of knowledge accumulation: from the past, through the present, to the future. Currently, in a prefigurative society of "mysterious children,"

as Margaret Mead (1970) had put it, technological advances have led to a reversal of knowledge transmission. The basic paradigm which stimulates the transfer of knowledge is its dynamic changeability, while the goals of education are determined primarily by the postulate of pragmatism of knowledge formulated from the perspective of the present and not its autotelicity. Today is no longer about having knowledge for itself, but about having knowledge that could be useful or applied. Therefore, in a way, we are dealing with a certain paradox—we archive data not to preserve knowledge, but to (re)create it. Referring to the hypothesis of cultural lag that refers to the notion that culture takes time to catch up with technological innovations (Ogburn 1922),⁴ it must be said that in this case social action quickly adjusted to technological innovation. Thus, the condition for the archiving boom was the creation of new technologies enabling digitization of empirical data and their unlimited accumulation. With regard to qualitative data and especially biographical research, for the first time in history, we have gained the possibility of unlimited archiving and thus sharing. This applies to both the once collected and digitized materials, as well as autobiographical narrations collected at present. What is more, archiving research has become obligatory, it is most often included in project applications as one of the elements of the research procedure. Natasha Mauthner vividly describes this change. In the article devoted to problems of archiving and data sharing, she wrote:

When I started out my career as a social scientist just a few years earlier in the late 1980s, it was seen as good practice to destroy the research data that we generat-

⁴ The evolutionist approach is not necessarily close to my heart, yet the presented idea well-represents the described phenomenon.

ed—particularly personal data—once these had been analyzed and written up. And this was reflected in data protection policies adopted by Universities and funding agencies. Now, the notion of “good research practice” was being radically, but uncritically, redefined. We were being asked to take it as given that what was seen as bad practice yesterday was, overnight, turned into good practice. [Mauthner 2014:178]

Perhaps this practice did not necessarily refer to all qualitative materials,⁵ especially biographical ones. They were not destroyed on purpose, yet we may agree that the need for taking care of empirical material for years has been neglected. Referring to biographical research, a lot of data collected by researchers were kept in their offices or homes, sometimes in the form of tape records not even transcribed. Also, not all written autobiographical materials survived. Just to give two examples considering Polish research—in 1992-1994 I took part in the project *Biography and National Identity* based on biographical narrative interviews conducted with Poles who experienced the Second World War. It was the first project in Poland with the use of tape recorded biographical narrative interviews. After years, on the wave of the archiving movement, we decided to archive both the recordings and transcriptions. It appeared that from more than 70 interviews collected by eight researchers, we could find at our homes and offices only 22 tapes and 57 transcriptions. The still available recordings and transcriptions of the interviews were archived in the years 2013-2014 in the Qualitative Data Ar-

⁵ It is enough to notice that one of the well-known sets, located in the British scientific environment, is The QUALIDATA Resource Center located in the Department of Sociology at the University of Essex. Established in the mid-1990s, it is now called the Economic and Social Data Service (ESDS). It provides access to a wide range of qualitative data from the social sciences. It contains research projects dating back to 1970.

chive in the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Polish Academy of Sciences (IFiS PAN). From the present perspective, I may say that the materials have gained additional value not only as sociological data, but also historical (at least in terms of oral history) material—testimonies of the war witnesses generation—the majority of the interviewees had been already dead. I also regret that some recordings disappeared, perhaps the cassettes were used to record other interviews, but it was just a standard practice in those days.

Taking one more step back to the past, we should bear in mind that for a few decades of the 20th century, when neo-positivist and scientific approaches had come to dominate international sociology, the biographical approach was still being cultivated in Poland, mainly due to Florian Znaniecki, who was an influential teacher of a generation of outstanding sociologists, such as Józef Chałasiński and Jan Szczepański, who continued and developed his work. Znaniecki used diverse biographical materials: private letters, written life histories, and written biographical stories on various topics. The last two were usually produced by various competitions organized by institutions, including academic ones. The authors of the best texts were rewarded and the texts were published. This was called “inspired memoir writing” and it became a sort of social action because collecting memoirs “soon became not only an object of academic research, but also a factor of public life” (Szczepański 1982:7).⁶ A number of institutions solely focused on this type of activity, for example, the Polish Academy of Sciences, the Committee on Memoir-Writing, The Society of Friends of

⁶ Polish sociologists’ contributions to biographical research based on collected memoirs have not become well-known due to the language barrier, as all their books were published in Polish (Bertaux 1981:6).

Memoir-Writing storing the memoirs. The collected handwritten documents reached upwards of about 900,000 (Wierzchoś 2008). Due to transition changes after 1989 (causing not only the lack of money, but also interest)⁷ the bulk of the material was neglected and then damaged. In 2002, the remaining documents were rescued by the KARTA Foundation and taken to the National Polish Archives where 165 meters of memoirs manuscripts have been stored (Gluza 2002). This is the example of both concern and negligence. For sure, biographical materials by definition were not destroyed (as described by Mauthner), but at the same time, they were not stored in a proper way.

These two examples show the darker and brighter sides of the past approach to empirical qualitative data, but it is necessary to agree with Mauthner that the definition of “a good practice” has changed in this respect and, to some extent, we should consider such examples as the situation related more to the past issues than present problems.

Nowadays, due to technical development and also awareness changes, the Internet archives are massively created, the role of the interviewee is strengthened, especially if he/she acts as a witness to history. Even if most researchers do not share the radical assumptions of alternative ethics, they strive to overcome or at least weaken the previously described power relation, which has always been

⁷ The lack of interest was caused, first of all, by the fact that some prominent actors of social/political life provided strong institutional support for mentioned institutions and activities. Although it was to some extent ideologically neutral, it was associated with an outgoing system and the diaries themselves were unreliable due to self-censorship. Another reason was that sociologists turned to problems that had been neglected for ideological reasons, and focused on all systemic changes that were taking place in front of their eyes. Researchers also had poor archiving expertise.

asymmetrical and put the researcher in a privileged position. At the same time, this optimistic and more reflexive contemporary image also has some drawbacks and generates ethical problems, and this is the problem I would like to devote more attention to.

Big Qualidata Data: Paradoxes of Technological Achievements

The possibility of archiving and, what is linked to it, aggregating more and more qualitative data can be associated with the Big Data phenomenon, as it was named at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries, which is based on a combination of analytical theories and modern technology to analyze mass data (Przanowski 2014; Żulicki 2017; Mauthner 2019). Empirical data collected during scientific research projects have a different status because they are collected in order to build knowledge (Żulicki 2017:182) in the first place. Secondly, Big Data should be associated primarily with quantitative data. However, it may be noticed that in “some of the ways Big Data discourses, practices and imaginaries are being taken up within qualitative research” (Mauthner 2019:672). The first symptom is using the concept of Big Qualidata and Big QLR (Qualitative Longitudinal Research). The second one is reformatting the way of thinking within qualitative research as if we were dealing with Big Data. Mauthner comments that she first came across this term in 2016 during the workshop entitled *BIG QUALIDATA: Tackling Analysis of Very Large Volumes of Qualitative Data in Social Science Research*. The main problem was to show the ways of using the software “to address the key question of the workshop.” “Can social researchers scale-up techniques of working with qualitative data and meaningfully analyze massively **more text**

than they can possibly read?" (Mauthner 2019:693 [emphasis added by author]). Such an assumption completely changes the status of qualitative material, especially in-depth interviews and life stories. After all, the application of these techniques is connected with searching the context and building a vision of the whole *Gestalt* by the researcher. Even if the final focus is on a fragment of the collected material, the starting point is the knowledge of the whole.

Therefore, we see here a significant reorientation of perceiving qualitative data. One of the differences between quantitative and qualitative data and the corresponding methodologies was in the essential meaning embedded in these terms. Quantitative research is based on large data sets, while qualitative research is based on their limited number and in-depth analysis of the material. The massification of qualitative data can fundamentally change the sense of analysis and research procedures. I wrote about a "softer" change elsewhere (Kazmierska 2018:396):

One very good example is the conviction that researchers can, or even should, apply new technologies to qualitative research. Computer-based qualitative data analysis software (Q-DAS) has revolutionized qualitative research in this respect. The belief that Q-DAS needs to be utilized has also entered the field of biographical analysis. The main argument, especially among young adepts of biographical research (mainly PhD students) who are well-acquainted with the new technologies, is that it makes work easier. The conviction is not accompanied by the deeper reflection that computer analysis of narratives is not just the application of a handy tool, but also frames methodological reasoning... Each method entails a different way of conducting

an analysis or doing biographical research in particular. Whether it is better or worse will depend on the researcher's purpose and approach—but above all, it will be different. Unfortunately, this aspect of methodological reasoning is very rarely considered.⁸

We can also find an elaborated review of the opinions for and against the use of Q-DAS in Krzysztof Konecki's work (2019:143-146). In the light of Mauthner's view cited above, it can be said that the phenomenon I am describing is not so disturbing, because it can be assumed that researchers using Q-DAS know their material. On the other hand, both Q-DAS and Big Qualidata analyses are part of researchers' characteristic drive to codify, classify, and categorize data. Of course, there is nothing wrong in this, it is more about distributing accents—attaching importance to the categorization of qualitative materials in a similar way as to quantitative data may be due to conscious or unintentional following of the normative paradigm. Already in 1990, a completely different time considering modern technologies (limited access to the Internet, limited methods of computer analysis), Edward Tufte (1990:50) described the process of data grouping in the following way:

pair, merge, harmonize, synthesize, organize, condense, reduce, boil down, choose, categorize, catalog, classify, refine, abstract, scan, look into, idealize, isolate, discriminate, distinguish, screen, sort, pick over, group, pigeonhole, integrate, blend, average, filter, lump, skip, smooth, chunk, inspect, approximate,

⁸ To contrast, a reverse example can be given when researchers reflect on the possibility of using software in qualitative studies in the frame of phenomenological research: "[w]hile we as qualitative researchers may believe we are actively shaping the use of this software, we ignore at our peril how this software also shapes our research practices, our relationship to research, and ourselves as researchers" (Goble et al. 2012:17).

cluster, aggregate, outline, summarize, itemize, review, dip into, flip through, browse, glance into, leaf through, skim, list, glean, synopsise, winnow, wheat from chaff...

This is a fragment of a more elaborate characteristic, which, let us repeat, was formulated at a time when the technical possibilities of using the indicated methods of data grouping were much more limited. It can, therefore, be imagined that modern technologies strengthen, at least among some researchers, the desire to use them.

Thus, we may be dealing with the first paradox when an individual life story (remaining in the field of biographical research) can become an element of a large data set which a previously designed program will browse for the content which is of a researcher's interest. This is, of course, technically possible, and these solutions are sometimes used on specialized websites (databases) containing biographical materials. For example, the website of the History Meeting House, modern and very well-constructed by the way, has, for instance, such functionality that by typing in the browser, for example, the name of the city or street, we can retrieve fragments of narrations and transcriptions in which this name appears. To be honest, until reading Natasha Mauthner's article, I thought it was a great technological solution since it allows you to view large batches of material. However, I did not take into account the fact that currently this facility can be treated by researchers as the only research strategy, for instance, for some, it may be enough to filter the biographical material without having to read/listen to the entire story. This raises big methodological concerns (why do we need the life story at all?) and, above all, ethical doubts. Meeting the narrator and recording his/her story involves

emotional, intellectual, and sometimes physical effort. Someone devotes their time, talks about his/her life, the narration often launches the process of biographical work, forces a holistic view on his/her own life. It can be a positive experience, but it can also be related to suffering, an effort to give meaning to one's whole life. In short, it is usually a demanding experience. Each time when asking for a narration, we convince the interviewee that we are interested in *his/her* life as a unique and unrepeatable constellation of biographical experiences. If we treat this individual story in the manner described above, as an element of Big Qualidata, which the researcher will not read, then this raises serious ethical concerns. It can be said that what constituted the decisive advantage of biographical research in building the researcher-interviewee relationship was not treating the interviewee as a respondent—a machine for answering, but as a narrator to whom the researcher hands over the initiative.⁹ In the situation described above, this frame is again annulled, the context of the relation suspended, and the sense of the autobiographical relation is overlooked. From my observations of research activities within the biographical approach, it follows that the scenario described above is quite probable, especially in the case of younger adepts of biographical research treating virtual reality and technologies creating it as the obvious or even the only possible way of approaching contemporary research tasks. Another group of ethical concerns is related to the area which was previously described as elements of "traditional" ethics, meaning normative ethics. The issue of anonymity returns here like a boomerang. It is becoming

⁹ Of course, it is difficult to talk about the total symmetry of the relationship and the abolishment of power in this case. After all, the researcher remained the researcher and the interviewee the research participant.

increasingly difficult to guarantee anonymity in a situation when almost all of us, whether intentionally or unknowingly, leave a trace on the Internet. Thus, you can make a deliberate search or accidentally google someone. Additionally, “a key ethical issue is that while different data sets may be innocuous on their own, when aggregated, they can compromise people’s identities and invade their privacy” (Mauthner 2019:673). For example, “In 2008, a group of researchers publicly released profile data collected from the Facebook accounts of an entire cohort of college students from a US university. While good-faith attempts were made to hide the identity of the institution and protect the privacy of the data subjects, the source of the data was quickly identified, placing the privacy of the students at risk” (Zimmer 2010:313). Of course, there are environments where such identification is more than possible, like these from social media, but it may be also problematic in the case of “traditional” recorded and transcribed narratives. Therefore, this situation generates another paradox—the more we want to respect someone’s privacy, the more we tend to anonymize, which results in the dehumanization of the data, and in turn, raises another ethical dilemma. For example, the issue of a broadly informed consent returns—which would guarantee the permission of the participant to use the material beyond the given research situation and the related question if even a broadly informed consent can predict all the future research and analytical situations?

Last but not least, there is one more paradox which leads to further ethical dilemmas. The technical possibilities of collecting and archiving qualitative data, in particular biographical materials, have led to a situation that I call *unintended data inflation*. In my opinion, there are two dimensions to this in-

flation. First of all, duty memory (Nora 1989)¹⁰ led to increased activity in the field of biographical data and especially oral history. The events which the 20th century abounded with in a natural way helped to search for witnesses to history and collect their accounts. In the last decades of the 20th century, archives began to be massively created. Social and biographical time—a wish to save the memories of the departing generation supported by new technology favored the collection and archiving of life stories. What is more, this activity, along with propagating the witness’s story and empowering his/her role in history, is seen as genuinely useful. It is part of the processes of democratization of memory and legitimizing the so-called voice of an ordinary man. It is not only about activities within oral history, but also about interpretive sociology. These motivations and their positive assessment cannot be denied and I am their ardent supporter. At the same time, however, this sometimes compulsive collecting of life stories in the context of intervention projects, for example, saving the memories of witnesses, can paradoxically lead to the deindividualization and objectification of these stories, especially if we consider the storyteller perspective. This is what breeds yet another paradox—we collect accounts to save them from oblivion because we have such technical possibilities (digital recording and archiving). In this way, a positivist, Enlightenment point of view is activated to some extent—the multiplication of the wealth of knowledge is superior to other effects of activities. I admit that I realized this quite recently during one of the biographical seminars when discussing issues related to collec-

¹⁰ Duty memory is one of the memory types distinguished by Nora. Duty memory is related to the awareness of the necessity and preservation of the past especially of the marginalized one, excluded from the mainstream memory.

tive and biographical memory about the German camp for Polish children established by the Nazi Germans during the Second World War.¹¹ Various post-war circumstances (there is no room for their detailed characteristics) meant that the memory of this camp practically did not exist at the level of the local community—the city of Lodz or in the Polish collective memory, let alone international/European knowledge. From the perspective of the issues discussed here, I am interested in biographical memory. Almost nobody was interested in the history of the prisoners and their biographies, and if any actions were taken in this regard, they were of an incidental nature. It is within this formula—the restoration of memory—that one of the most dynamic and distinguished foundations in this field has recorded several witness accounts in the form of audio and video. If we were to stop here, we could consider this action a remarkable example worth following—giving voice to history witnesses. The continuation of this story, however, is that all their lives these witnesses were convinced that their history was depreciated, and interpreted the meeting and the interview situation as an act of validation. It can be said that in a sense this is what had happened. However, the problem was that after the time of recording no one had ever contacted them again, did not say what happened to their stories. They had been archived and made available on the foundation's website, so it can be said that everything went as it should have. However, if you look at this issue from the point of view of the interviewees, being those representing these specific biographical experiences which for years had been strongly marginalized if not eliminated

¹¹ It was the only such concentration camp in Europe, whose prisoners were children from 6 to 16 years of age (in practice, also younger, 2-year-old children were imprisoned there). The camp existed from December 1942 until the Red Army entered in January 1945.

from collective memory, then such action can be considered not entirely ethical. Witnesses were treated as the story *donors*, not its subjects. This example illustrates very well, firstly, the illusiveness of the universality of certain procedural solutions, including those written in ethical codes, informed consents. Secondly, it emphasizes the need to assess the importance of the situation every time, not only in the methodological, but also in the ethical context. In this particular situation, leaving the interviewees to themselves can raise serious doubts, even if the action is taken in good faith and objectively can be socially useful as such.

Another important aspect of data inflation is the situation which concerns many researchers, including my professional experience. The contemporary work mode of research projects, which usually last two or three years, perhaps fits well within the framework of quantitative research, while in the case of qualitative and especially biographical research, this time limit in principle prevents the reliable use of collected materials. By reliable use I do not mean that the analytical work done during the grant period is unreliable. The point is that much of the analytical potential is not used due to the time pressure. When the project is finished, it is necessary to write a new proposal to meet the institutional requirements. Meanwhile, especially in the case of biographical research, the collected material could be used for research purposes for many years to come. It is in this sense that I have a feeling of the inflation of the biographical data which I have not used enough, although one of the most important conditions for a good narrative interview is to build a trust relationship based on the narrator's belief that his/her life story is important and unique for the researcher. We build this trust honestly, after which it turns out that we are not

able to live up to this promise by archiving materials and not using their analytical potential. In my opinion, this is a very important ethical problem referring to both the relationship with the interviewee and to the work ethos when we are aware of putting away the empirical data which could be analyzed. An apparent solution to this problem is the implementation of computer analyses described earlier, enabling viewing large batches of material. However, it should be clearly stated that this is not what we agree on with our interlocutors and it is not about the agreement contained in the informed consent, but what a life story is in social, cultural, but also epistemic terms—it is an integral story built from the perspective of a specific wholeness. “The meaningful order of one’s own life history has at its center the unfolding of one’s own biographical identity in relationship to the overall ‘gestalt’ of concatenated and coexisting life historical processes” (Schütze 2008:9).

To some extent, the solution to this dilemma is the increasingly common practice of revisiting and reanalyzing. This is possible thanks to archiving and access to data collected by other researchers. The revisit may also refer to your own materials. In such case, again, it is difficult to talk about the unambiguity of the situation. The argumentation presented above shows the advantages of reanalysis and additionally gives sense to archiving—we have resources which we can come back to, which we can analyze after years, for example, critically or simply reflectively referring to the analytical work once performed. One example is the return to the texts and studies mentioned earlier: *Biography and National Identity*. In 2014, the team of researchers met again to comment on the analyses and articles created at that time from the perspective of the twenty years that have passed since the study

was carried out. The result of the recorded discussion was published in 2016¹² together with a reissue of texts published in 1996 and other articles which were published later on. The researchers had the opportunity to refer to their analyses written at that time and comment on their texts from the present perspective. Considering the contemporary scientific publishing policy, issuing such a book was not associated with increasing the authors’ publishing output and the acquisition of additional points. Its value consisted in collecting scattered texts, showing the value of returning to the once collected materials, and above all—although this was not a clearly defined goal from the perspective of the issues discussed here—we “revived” the materials collected twenty years ago and thereby *empowered* their authors, that is, the narrators of their biographies.

The example shown is a form of a return visit undertaken by the same researchers. Therefore, it can be said that the original research context had been preserved and it is difficult to consider here, for example, a significant change in the analytical context and the new situation where there is a discrepancy between “to what people are being asked to consent, and to what they believe they are consenting” (Hammersley and Traianou 2012:89). It may then raise ethical dilemmas whether we are using the material in accordance with the narrators’ informed consent (written or oral).

The same author points out, however, that the situation is generally difficult to be clearly determined because:

¹² *Biografia i wojna. Metoda biograficzna w badaniu procesów społecznych. Wybór tekstów [Biography and War. The Biographical Method in the Study of Social Processes]* (Dopierała and Waniek 2016).

data are reflexively constructed within research processes rather than existing independently of these. From this point of view, data cannot be first collected and analyzed and then “re-used” by other researchers for the purpose of “secondary” analysis. Indeed, data cannot even be “collected” in the first place because they are always *constructed*...The conclusion drawn is that it is possible, and desirable, to use material that other researchers have generated; and that the process of analysis here is no different in epistemic status from that in primary research because the data are necessarily constituted, contextualized and recontextualized within any project. As a result, the problems of “fit” and “context” are no more likely to arise in research using data from an earlier study than they are in one where “new” data are produced. [Hammersley 2009:1-2]

Two conclusions follow this: firstly, even a return visit by the same researcher is always a new form of analysis. Of course, in my opinion, it is not a constructivist approach in the sense that it is difficult not to talk about a more permanent interpretative framework. Rather, the point is that the researcher’s analytical view is each time contextualized by his/her experience, knowledge, and reflectiveness. This was clearly seen in the return to the above-described project *Biography and National Identity*.

Secondly, as I have already noted, it is difficult to clearly codify the relationship between the narrator and researcher concerning the interaction itself (neither the researcher nor the interviewee can project what will happen during the encounter, and how the story will emerge and be experienced by both) and then the analysis process. One should also take into account the fact that the narration becomes an element of a larger data collection and

other life stories as a contrastive comparison also constitute the analytical context.

Another variant of secondary analysis is the researcher’s return to other people’s materials, which had been analyzed before. In the case of biographical research, this practice seems quite obvious in the sense that we can consider a specific type of autobiographical material, for example, narration, written autobiography, diary, and letters. In principle, all these data can be considered as independent cultural texts.¹³ Here, as an example we can point to the written autobiographies of the Chicago school, for example, *The Jack Roller* (Shaw 1966), or the autobiography of Władek Wiśniewski included in the 3rd Volume of *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* by William Thomas and Florian Znaniecki (1918-1920)—just to remind, the first research based on the biographical approach. Due to the centenary of its publication in 2018 the Department of the Sociology of Culture at the University of Lodz organized four seminars focused on the reanalysis of letters and the autobiography, as well as the authors’ methodological and theoretical approach. The revisit after 100 years based on contemporary knowledge and new analytical approaches was very inspiring and enabled us to discuss both Thomas and Znaniecki’s input and some mistakes they made. This example shows that it would be difficult to raise any ethical concern related to the data, whereas more ethical and critical com-

¹³ Also in relation to some autobiographical narrative interviews one can say that they have become cultural texts. These are such narrations on the basis of which you can create the so-called portrait chapters and in analytical work they become special portrait case studies. This is because their subject is, for example, a life history, biographical experiences, the manner of storytelling, et cetera, exemplifying very well a specific social phenomenon or a specific type of biography. For example, such an interview is the narration of Hyüla, a Turkish immigrant to Germany (Schütze 2003).

ments could be actually directed towards Thomas and Znaniecki (Waniek 2019). This kind of analysis helps to reflect on the development of ethical thinking and sensitivity which have developed in this case over time. Especially that today classic monographs based on autobiographies can be interpreted using contemporary procedures. Even if the reanalysis is critical, its aim is not to discredit the method used by the founders of the biographical method nor to question their results, but, on the contrary, to recognize them as fascinating and undeservedly forgotten (Czyżewski 1992:95-96).

Concluding Remarks

As I highlighted at the beginning, the purpose of this text is to join the ongoing discussion. First of all, I believe that this is a necessary discussion and considering ethical issues is a constant responsibility of every researcher in the course of their research. The direction of development of this reflection, outlined in the first part of the text, shows the constant tension between normative ethics, or as some researchers want—human ethics, and its posthuman alternatives.

Despite the suggestions of researchers of social sciences, especially qualitative sciences, it seems that the normative paradigm is not only dominant, but also becomes the basic frame of reference in the processes of institutionalization of science, to which we are increasingly subjected. I do not intend to refer to it in a generally critical way, putting alternative ethics in its opposition, which applies not only to the realm of (ethical) acting, but also to the realm of knowledge and “a broad socio-political philosophy which is at odds with that underpinning most social science” (Hammersley and Traianou 2014:9). The authors continue that in most

cases researchers approve of “a liberal acceptance of the division of occupational tasks and responsibilities and the limits associated with these; and a distrust of utopianism in favor of a realism that emphasizes recognition of the constraints on action” (Hammersley and Traianou 2014:9-10). I entirely agree with this statement.

Therefore, what is the solution? In my opinion, there is no simple answer. The concepts of human ethics are worth considering as long as they do frame researchers’ sensitivity and are not treated as a set of rules of ethical codes which will allow the researcher to protect him- or herself against the interference of ethics committees. In other words, the point is not about having complete documentation, completing all the formalities and losing sensitivity in the process of collecting material and contacting the research participants. Alternative proposals, on the other hand, may have the power to sensitize the researcher to the research situation, but respecting them also does not necessarily guarantee conducting research free from ethical tensions. Therefore, the basic reflection is the offer of constant discussion and sensitivity to the emergence of new problems and circumstances. Their examples are included in the second part of the text. I wanted to share them because, despite the growing attention which I try to devote to these issues in my work or discussions with other researchers, the issues presented in the article have, until recently, escaped my attention. I do not claim that these thoughts are insightful and introduce completely new problems to the discussion. Nevertheless, I treat sharing my reflection as an example, perhaps unfortunate because it is quite late, of the development of self-reflection associated with the observation of the dynamically changing frames in which one of the qualitative methods is used.

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Book Review

Konecki, Krzysztof T. 2018. *Advances in Contemplative Social Research*.

Lodz: Wydawnictwo UŁ / Cracow: Jagiellonian University Press

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A kind warning to the reader: this is not a book of sociology of religion. Nevertheless, it must be added that it is about social practices that could be part of religious institutions, but were born before them and are possible beyond them. I hope that this short advice would help to suspend, as far as possible, any classification scheme and be ready to surf in uncertain waters.

The book represents a significant contribution to the emerging field of contemplative social research. To start with the right foot on such slippery ground, with some eyebrows already raised, it could be of help to cite the author's own complex definition of the phenomenon of contemplation:

Contemplation is a kind of activity that leads to a certain state of mind, and at the same time, it is a method of obtaining knowledge about some objects at the present time, and also about getting knowledge itself, here and now, by mindful insight into the perceived

(and also imagined) phenomena or objects, and also into the self. [p. 21]

To develop the above to its logical consequences means having the courage to question the foundations of the social sciences as we know them. And, act consequently, in research, in teaching, and in one's own life as well.

Krzysztof Konecki shows a sincere acknowledgment towards contemplative practices, a type of social practice invented in many places under different shades by many social innovators since the beginning of the adventure of human animals as sentient beings, a practice intended to deal with their inherent impermanence, to find a way to alleviate the discomfort caused by this existential discovery.

As the author underlines, the process of knowing developed through these practices is a pre-linguistic one (p. 42). This embodied foundation of knowledge gives room for a critique to the dominant representa-

tive model of cognitive theory and its reductionism, allowing us to go well beyond the constructionist approach. From his point of view, paying attention to the Buddhist epistemology is deeply helpful to understand the processual and relative character of thinking. This leads the researcher to ground their pathway on the humble acceptance of the creatively fruitful “not knowing” perspective.

While his direct experience is a guarantee for the reader, his attitude of open curiosity is deeply grounded in a rich cultural background, ingrained in the theoretical tradition of symbolic interactionism in sociology nested with philosophical and contemplative studies.

Consequently, the once accepted contemplative experience as a fully human enterprise is a natural consequence to integrate its methods in the sociological toolkit. And, where an opportunity arises, new problems and obstacles, real or presumed, find their way.

In the theoretical Part One of the book, the first initial chapter is focused on a sociological definition of the identity to prepare the dialogue with the contemplative perspective. This is followed by a chapter claiming that meditation can be of help for social scientists to understand social phenomena and society in general. At the center of his reflection is the de-reification process: a liberatory attempt to get rid of individual's separation from the world, or, as the author puts it, “to cease thinking of any human activity in terms of the manifestation of the force of nature...as it would be an isolate and independent element of its creator” (p. 40). Konecki sustains that in sociological literature are present concepts similar to those developed in Buddhism, but they are not carried to completion in their consequences.

The author's emphasis on the interdependence of human beings and empathy never leads him to an uncritical definition of the community, being clear in this regard his concern for the suffering caused by an oppressive community that reduces the individual to the Meadian “Me.” His short suggestions to revive and expand the sense of friendship are very interesting and call for specific research (p. 16).

Nevertheless, some ambivalence arises throughout the text regarding two specific points in his integration of sociology and Buddhist epistemology. The frequent use of terms such as “true self,” “deep self,” “true essence” (pp. 51, 55), or true reality seems in contrast with the initial statements of distance from any essentialism. Moreover, this way of posing the problem of the search for meaning can lead to a metaphysical view about social life.

The second point is a hint of determinism that hovers in the discussion about the process of identity as a product of interactions. The related narrative seems in contradiction with the author's ethical support for individual's responsibility. The assumption that the self is the outcome of a socially constructed process of identity opens also the room for a parallel moralistic approach, as shown when the author supports the existence of socially constructed “false desires and values” (p. 56).

Leaving the reader the opportunity for a systematic exploration of such a broad reinterpretation of what is taken for granted, I prefer to pick up only some key concepts that clearly bring all the difficulties still open to the translation of a religious knowledge into a contemplative sociological method.

Take first the concept of *karma* that Konecki interestingly defines as distinct from Bourdieu's habitus

(p. 45). It could be intended as a set of inner reactions to life conditions that very often amplify our suffering: it is the awareness of them—that we can acquire through contemplative practices—that allows us to overcome it. As for Bourdieu these dispositions are inscribed onto the individual by social location, in the case of karma, individuals, whatever their past, inner and outer conditions, can innovate in each moment of our life, freeing ourselves from patterns: society is not a given, it is a relational process.

A second reference concerns the author's effort to identify a red thread between various forms of wisdom traditions, all oriented towards a harmony between man and nature—"laws of nature"—a *file rouge* of Eastern and Western culture (p. 14) and welcome them into the emerging contemplative sociology. In the Anthropocene, this could sound romantic and ineffective as we have the ability not only to manipulate nature, but also to create forms of life from scratch: not by chance the Israeli historian Harari (2017) titled his bestseller *Homo Deus*; see also Rose (2007) about enhancement medicine and *The Politics of Life Itself*.

Next, in dealing with empathy, the author attributes to it a built-in compassionate structure. If empathy is a means to achieve the understanding of others, including the emotional and sensorial dimensions, it cannot be identified univocally with a benevolent disposition. For a trivial example, a detective can empathize with a suspected crime offender for the purpose of just trying to understand their *modus operandi* in order to neutralize them, not to support them. In short, it must be recognized that empathic behavior leaves room for manipulation (Zaki 2013).

But, what appears problematic lies in the reference to craving as the origin of human suffering, a con-

ception acquired by the author from the official Buddhist version (p. 72). This dominant version cannot be accepted as a matter of fact. An exegesis of original texts shows that human suffering is simply caused by the awareness of our impermanence, that is an existential condition and not a moral sin. Humans experienced suffering when they discovered the precariousness of existence, a truly human existential despair. So far, craving is a consequence and not a cause of suffering, as the Buddhist teacher and thinker Stephen Batchelor (2015) convincingly supports. If the craving as a cause dominates the religious narrative, it is because at a certain point in its historical development a group of practitioners found the social conditions for separating from the rest of the population and by taking on the monopoly of the interpretation of the texts, thus legitimizing their own separateness and the new power that derived from it.

In Chapter Three, the focus is on the effort to integrate a critical approach to the economy with Buddhist ethical principles. The latter are mainly interpreted by the lenses of the Buddhist philosopher David Loy (2003), who expresses the belief that the so-called three poisons—ill-will, greed, and delusion—are considered as fully engrained in capitalism (singular): a form of production that institutionally engineers them, like never before, due to its profit maximization-based working principle. Unfortunately, it is difficult to contrast the capital accumulation from Buddhist Ethics as we have a rich empirical documentation on this subject that seals a different narrative. The excellent study by Hubbard (2001) on the Chinese Hsing-Hsing's Buddhist sect during the 6th century contributes greatly to the understanding of this relationship. The *Inexhaustible Storehouse* is the most relevant initiative of this religious institution within that context created by this sect in the context of institutionalization

of *dana* practice—the virtue of cultivating generosity. It engineered material gifts from civil society to monasteries in order to support the poor, as a salvific agency, monasteries granted donors perpetual merits. The overall economic system worked in favor of capital accumulation. This gave rise to an elaborate accounting system of individual moral responsibilities with a meticulous detail of actions with relative economic value: something at odds with contemporary claims coming from Western *Engaged Buddhists* (see specifically Chapter 7 [Hubbard 2001]). Moreover, we must take into account, among others, Robert Bellah's (1957) study of the role played by Buddhism in the affirmation of capitalism in Japan, with its focus on social obligations as a material basis for salvation or Enlightenment. In the same vein, Collins (1997) refers to Medieval Buddhism, namely, the Pure Land sect, Soto, and Rinzai sects—as driving cultural forces of market development, as well as direct protagonists of it through the economic organization of the monasteries (or “religious capitalism”: in the province of Henshu alone the monasteries owned 90% of the real estate). To add some irony to it, Buddhism is the only religion that did not reject openly usury (Graeber 2011).

These are not purely academic questions as among the contemplative practitioners the belief of Buddhism as an alternative social model is widespread in the Western world, even among scholars. On this point, I recall Julie Nelson (2011), who warns about the idealization (or blame) of any economic system (see also Giorgino 2018a) in order to avoid moralism and dualistic thinking.

These open topics do not weaken the perspective and the pathway. Interpretative oscillations seem to be part of a difficulty inherent in the effort to understand institutionalized traditions of wisdom and translate

them into secular form, despite the fact that they are identified under the iconoclastic aegis of the Zen tradition. In sum, it is a matter of choice over a crucial question: How far can we go in secularization?

The conceiving of these practices as not necessarily based on a religion is to say that the knowledge built on them is not a monopoly of a total institution. It can free up unexpected energies and transform them into an authentic process of commoning, a dialogue between equals, based on friendship. Social sciences can contribute to this process in the current network society by redesigning ecosystems in a wise and just way and encouraging collective awareness (Giorgino 2018a; see also Giorgino 2018b; 2018c on contemplative commons). The current expansion of a digital networked society could lead to what Michel Bauwens (2007) calls a “contributory spirituality”:

As we enter this new stage of individual/collective awakening, individuals are being increasingly called to practice the new life-form composed of groups of individuated individuals merging their collective intelligence.

A participatory approach would mean that everyone would be invited to participate in the spiritual search, without a priori selection, and that the threshold of such participation would be kept as low as possible. Appropriate methodologies would be available for different levels of experience.

Tradition is thereby not rejected, but critically experienced and evaluated.

He/she can create spiritual inquiry circles that approach the different traditions with an open mind, experience them individually and collectively, and where the different individual experiences can be exchanged.

The outcome of that process will be a co-created reality that is unpredictable and will create new, as yet unpredictable spiritual formats. But, one thing is sure: it will be an open, participatory, approach leading to a commons of spiritual knowledge, from which all humanity can draw from.

Faithful to a theoretical elaboration that never forgets the human condition in its concreteness, in Chapter Four, the author wonders if and how sociology can be a tool for *the art of living*. I believe that this is a core question for any sociologist, or at least for those who do not want the discipline to become a museum piece, as Ulrich Beck (2005) once warned. While Giddens, Bauman, and Beck, among others, are of inspiration for the recognition of ontological insecurity as the basis of post-modern individuals, their contributions seem to have reached the peak of the possibilities of sociological awareness. The author pragmatically splits his core question into four subquestions: What can sociology *explain* but not *solve* today? How can we improve the sociological understanding to solve ontological insecurity? How can we be inspired by Zen Buddhism to improve the sociological understanding of contemporary society? What is the relation between sociology and the art of living in the light of some Zen Buddhist statements?

In his dialogue with past scholars, his quotation from Mead (p. 94) is pivotal for a non-deterministic vision, and the reader can be grateful to the author for this reminder:

The "I" appears in our experience in memory. It is only after we have acted that we know what we have done; it is only after we have spoken that we know what we have said... But, if the response to it is a response which is of the nature of the conversation of gestures, if it creates a situation which is in some sense novel...then

there is something important occurring that is not previously present in experience. [Mead cited by Konecki]

Although this is a point of crucial importance, Konecki nevertheless comes to critically recognize the limits of "classic" interactionism: its centering on language and mind prevents the recognition of the sentient body (pp. 97-98). Along these lines, I have to add the valuable contribution of the North American phenomenological philosopher Eugene Gendlin (1997).

In Part Two, the author's determination to pursue a transformative pathway is manifested in different applications of contemplative social research. In higher education, academic activities are distilled and revised considering them as a crucial playground for aware experiencing. It means to open a direct dialogue with those who with various abilities are innovating methodologically beyond the disciplinary and academic barriers. To name one, he develops an inquiry into the academic organizational culture with a methodology relying on the three techniques of phenomenological reduction, imaginative variations, and horizontalization.

He also deals with one of the most intriguing and relevant aspects of higher education as service provisioning: the exclusion of the body as an intelligent component of knowledge in a teaching and learning practice. In doing this, he relies on the introduction of hatha yoga in academic courses and in his students' self reports about it. The teaching experience presented and framed in a sociological perspective is of the utmost importance as a contribution to personal and organizational well-being, as well as a tool of renewal of academic higher education theory and practice. Lastly must be mentioned his "zenic" experiments in public spaces inspired by

Harold Garfinkel as original interpretations of social situations.

In sum, the book responds to the need for open discussion between the various contemporary contribu-

tions on secular contemplation as an inner transformative process that is needed for any kind of effective “transformation” *out there*. In my view, it is full of substantive topics and I would not be surprised if it provoked a strong debate in the discipline.

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